Poems by Past Teen Poetry Winners

For details and registration, visit  www.yorklibraries.org/library-services-programs/poetry/
Deadline to register is January 19, 2024

“Bittersweet” by Avery Yoder – 1st Place 7th and 8th gr.

The last few days of May,
When all your fears and worries go away,
School starts getting a little too easy,
While the weather becomes warm and breezy,
No more quizzes, no more tests,
Just my life at its best,
Always craving the summertime heat,
But in the end it’s bittersweet,
I will miss my teachers,
I will miss my friends,
Though I hope summer never ends.
The beasts with skin so thick
With hair so coarse
Not a comb could touch
With flesh so pink
Yet infested with bugs
They lathered themselves
In thick gooey mud
Bathing in the putrid scents
Their eyes bulged
From their heads, not a care
They ate their scraps
They ate the grass
They ate anything in their path
They pushed each other around
Squealing in delight
Always hungry for another bite
Selfish and greedy they oinked
And they oinked
More, more, for their likes
They rolled in their filth,
Their feces and laughed hysterically
Eating and eating
One fell dead
Plunging into the muddy mess
Its carcass still warm
Another beast took upon itself
To clean the mess
Blood spilled into the pen
As the beast tore into the body
Others joined
Ripping apart the cold flesh
And devouring it
With ever-hungry mouths
Squealing and squealing they laughed
With a delight
Until every drop was gone
They feasted on what might’ve been
A brother or sister
In some other life.

“A Formal Apology to Her Majesty, the Moon” by Annika Swenson
– First Place 11th and 12th gr.

My dearest Moon,
Queen of the Night
My gosh, it’s been too long –
I owe you an explanation
as to why my gaze’s been gone.

Your platinum surface,
staring back at me
I find myself taken
from Her Majesty

Instead, my mind lies elsewhere,
on a set of copper eyes;
Miles made to millimeters
Over which my mind does fly.

A puzzle of perplexities,
hours, poorly paced,
Visions, Instructions, Curiosities,
across a sunset-mirrored face.

Vivacious whimsy; riveting endearment,
lightning crackles, blood in sparks,
tempest of emotions, weathered
this hurricane I battle in times apart.

Am I not to feel that element embrace
only to kiss the shores of seas unknown?
But my, that eye is sickly sweet
before the tides, the winds, are thrown.

And if I decide to return from my journey
back from such tropical hell
my mind, in absence of heart,
my soul does fail to quell.

His complexities exceed my musings,
a puzzle poised to pair;
and so you see, dear Moon,
that’s why my gaze lies elsewhere.
1. Find inspiration in the seasons, weather, animals, relationships, travel, joy, grief, loss, love, anger, fear, humor, school, your family.
2. Write with honesty. Don’t back away from your thoughts or feelings. Express them!
3. Read lots of poetry. Notice what makes others’ poetry memorable. Capture it, mix it up, and make it your own.
4. Try writing in different forms (sonnets, haiku, etc.).
5. Use imagery.
6. Embrace metaphors and stay away from clichés.
7. Stretch your vocabulary to find the best words to get your point across.
8. Use poetry prompts when you’re stuck.
9. Revise and rewrite your poems to make them stronger and more compelling. Eliminate all unnecessary words, phrases, and lines. Make every word count.
10. Use language that people can understand.
Top Ten Writing Prompts to Get You Started

(adapted from www.lovetoknow.com/parenting/teens/40-poetry-prompts-high-school)

1. Write about how you have changed from elementary school to now.
2. Write a poem about your favorite anything – musician, actor/actress, movie, food, season, holiday, piece of clothing, art supply, sport, etc.
3. Write about how a friend become an enemy or how an enemy becoming a friend. What happened? How did it change you?
4. Write a poem about your pet from its perspective.
5. Write a poem about the first great loss that you've experienced. This might be the loss of a pet, friend, or family member.
6. Pick an image that captures your imagination and create a poem based off the image.
7. Delve into a moment where you felt embarrassed.
8. Write about the relationship with your parent(s), grandparent(s), sibling(s) or friend(s).
9. Write a poem about a school, social, environmental, or political issue that you really care about.
10. Examine the fear that comes with the unknown.

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