INTERIORS
2021-2022

Standout Submissions from Writers in the Schools (WITS) Elaine Wetterauer Writing Contest
Interiors:
The 2021-22 WITS Elaine Wetterauer Writing Contest

Every year, Seattle Arts & Lectures’ Writers in the Schools (WITS) program holds the Elaine Wetterauer Writing Contest as an opportunity to celebrate and uplift exemplary student writing from across the region. The contest is named for beloved English teacher Elaine Wetterauer who taught at Nathan Hale High School and was an early champion of WITS, of student voice, and of creativity in all forms.

WITS students and teachers submit an original poem, story, comic, or essay based on a theme inspired by a writer who is part of that year’s Seattle Arts & Lectures speaker series. This year’s 2021-22 contest theme, Interiors, came from the title of SAL speaker Charles Yu’s best-selling novel, Interior Chinatown. The theme asked students to look beyond appearances in order to explore what’s on the inside, and to share the truth about their thoughts and feelings.

In the student category, one winner and two student finalists were chosen, all of whom will be published in the upcoming 2022 WITS anthology. This year’s Elaine Wetterauer Writing Contest winner is Sebastian B. of Hamilton International Middle School with the poem “Inside of us.” The two finalists are Mazie M. of Leschi Elementary School with the poem, “Where’s the fire,” and Hayley B. of Seattle Children's with the poem, “Shimmer Lake.”

We are also thrilled to honor the teacher winner, Danielle Woods of Leschi Elementary and the poem, “Family stones.”

Compiled in this chapbook are additional outstanding submissions from student writers across the WITS program. We hope you enjoy reading all their words as much as we have as we consider who we are on the inside and how we relate to one another.
Inside of us
by Sebastian B.
Contest Winner

Inside of us
we might be hurt
but on the outside we remain strong
untouched
unfazed
undaunted
Inside of us
we might feel remorse or grief
on the outside we cover it up any way we can
we shy ourselves from reality
we shelter ourselves from Brutality
Inside of us
we might be like a dead tree
rotten and weak on the inside
from root to trunk to branches
but seemingly strong on the outside
Yet it only takes a small windstorm
to Knock us over
Instead of covering up
we should look past our fear
and seek advice from our peers
I lay awake Thinking

Thinking of a calm dark
Blue sky that shimmers
of a gleaming lake

Thinking of
the Sensation I would feel
from the warm breeze of air that
would glide right past me into the parting trees behind

Wondering what it would
feel like to be able
to feel the dark wet green grass
between my toes while I stare
at the shimmering luminescent
Moon which stares
Back at me
Where’s the Fire

by Mazie M.

Finalist

They said to water your garden with rain and thunder.
They said that moss could sing.
They hid anger in boxes so that no one could find it.
They could cure you with lemon and zest, and she could make a pot sizzle.
They fed their family hope and chickens.
They had friends that would greet them at their car.
They would pick rosemary with tears and mint with smiles but with howling under a new moon and taking the long way.
You never know where the fire is.
They said goodnight in our tongue. They said to learn times tables and eat the veggies too. They hid their drowsiness under their beds. They hid the fact that part of us wasn’t Christian. They could help combat a cold with banana. They fed their families with the finest fruits and vegetables from a garden with golden soil, then they remained still and silent, not defiant.
Tonight
by Maryam H.

Tonight as the clouds cried their songs of sorrow I dreamt of you.

The world crumbling beneath our feet as we drift apart. You sang our song for me once more.

About sadness and grief and pain. As I wake up I watch the wild wolf pups play. I imagine instead seeing a Cyberus. Three heads each to bite me and the next be more painful than the last.

And I think of you.

I would jump off a cliff to see you one last time.

But life wants us to suffer.

So we might as well let it.
The Feel of the River

by Elliot B.

I am from the heart
of the flies.
I am from the bank of the
river.
I am from the cork of the
fly rod.
I am from the tall beach
tree.
I am from coolness of the
river.
I am the feel of the fish.
I am from the smell of
the fir trees.
I’m from the waterfall.
I’m from the heart of
the Nisqually and the run
of the salmon.
“Honeychile”
by Haley M.

They said to finish all your food.

They had me sit in the salon chair as I asked, “Are we done yet?”

They hid their secret ingredients in food.

They argued in a different language.

They had me drink tea and greatly flavored chicken soup.

They fed me with words of love.
I Breathe

by Eve G.

I breathe fresh silvery air, fresh
silvery air that surrounds me.

The souls of my shoes leave
a track of shimmering stars so
bright so cold or so silver.

My soul is the color of nature,
a glistening blue river, a deep
mountain purple or maybe a mossy
green.

“Yes” is green, like a traffic light
signaling me to go.

“No” is a flash of red for
the moment of surprise, then to
a dark blue of sadness.

Joy is a rainbow of colors,
night in the sky above me.

Disappointment is blue with a hint
of red like sadness mixed with
a pinch of anger.

My courage simmers and shines
between yellow purple and green.

These are the colors I think
of and see, imagine, and love.
For You
by Lillia G.

The rain sings
as I walk to school

I dreamed a dream
of us holding hands

Your voice singing
me a song of things
you love

a bird flies over
us landing softly

as you ask me to
walk with you
I am so tired but
I don’t care I’ll
do it for you

I wrote you a
note as blue as
the rain saying “Hi”

I hope it will make you remember
us playing in the puddles while making
our shoes wet but I don’t care
To My Mom
by Eleanor M.

The rain sings.

I had dreamed a dream of us riding a unicorn through a thunder storm.

As you sing me a song of numbers

I sent you a letter in the mail just saying noodle, knowing you would understand.

Remember that time you read me to sleep? I do.

I remember all the times we had together, both good and bad.

When I was cloudy you brought a sun

and when I was rainy you brought a rainbow.

You gave me a shoulder and a hug when I cried.

You gave and never took.

You were the gold who brought out the beauty in my diamond.
A Dog Log Poem

by George S.

The fog hissed and settled outside while I dreamed of sunshine on your silky fur. You were singing me a song of a sweet and soft couch you were sitting on. So I looked past the couch to find a small wolf giving you tasty treats. I would have taken you on a long stroll even though it is dreadful to walk through cold air. I possibly could fill your bowl with dog food even though the stench goes on for miles. If I mailed a piece of paper saying “fear,” would you remember when you shook in terror of the crowd? I comforted you while petting your small hairy head
The rain is laughing down onto the ground. I look at the window waiting. I dream of your excitement that you pass around. You sang me a song about the universe, the reality, the ocean. I see a robin in you flying around with excitement. Skiing together until we collapse on the bright white snow. Think the word PNW.
The Girl in the Frame

by Simran K.

You call her kind
You call her sweet
like cherry pie
You say you are proud
You say nice things
or so you may think
You think about her
and think she’s got it all
Oh, how she walks through the halls
like she knows everyone & everything
How she is a straight A student
How she is brave & daring
How she does it all
But how she weeps
into her soggy, wet pillow
She shies away
All the things they said
running through her head,
or so she thinks
All in her mind of
what was wrong,
but that was all that was taught
You can never do it right, there is always some-
thing wrong
Don’t be cocky, you aren’t amazing
Don’t be selfish, others have it worse
your problems, your struggles
they aren’t real. You just seek attention
Shame Shame Shame
They ask, “The kind girl, is that really you?”
Solace
by Maya D.

Inside of me is a place only
I can explore
my place of solace of serenity
It is my last shred of
dignity
of sanity
it is the last bit of hope
that I can cling to
but it is not a book for
everyone to read
it is my private place
where I can think my thoughts
and live my life
that belongs only –
and truly –
to me
Pretending
by Ellen S.

Pretending is being someone you’re not, playing a character that only exists in your imagination. But is it really pretending? Did you really make this up? Or are you teaching us of a person that lives inside of you just out of reach that no one has met before? Has it been there all along, waiting to surface? Like the smallest city that only gets visitors when you play pretend. Has it been waiting to be let into your heart? Or is it already there in the part of your heart you’re too scared to show? Everyone thinks you’re pretending. But is it real? Are you living the person inside of you? Even for just a little? How long has it been hiding? When will it be found?
A Bottle That Grew Inside of Me

by Carmen T.

A bottle that grows inside of me.
I don’t understand how or why it works.
Sometimes, it overflows, so will I.
It only contains liquids labeled “emotions.”

These fluids are colorful and limitless. They can mix.
However, the colors never blend.
The Inside Outside

by Karsten F.

I am inside of a country.
We are outside the orbit.
Sun is outside.
We are outside my house.
We are all inside an outside.
You are of me. My thoughts, my brain is inside me. We are all outside of Earth, but inside the Milky Way.
You are never alone, you are inside of your heart. We are all outside and inside in some way.
Becoming
by Reese E.

A large oak tree
was once a tiny acorn;
An artistic masterpiece
was once a white canvas;
A humongous tower
was once many scraps
A delicious dinner
was once just ingredients;
A beautiful butterfly
was once a slimy caterpillar;
A strong, brave, fearless woman
was once a little girl.
New Room

by Erling M.

I stand in my new room looking out the window. It feels like a cardboard box. I punch my bed in pure frustration. I don’t want to be here. I wish things could have stayed the same.

I laid down on my bed and my cat comes and paws my face. I don’t care. She eventually loses interest and walks away. I am alone.
Living
by Oscar P.

We are hurt, but we don’t show it.
We are crying with delight, yet we don’t know it.
We must reach down
farther than we think
farther than far
down.
And at that moment, we can fully understand,
and adjust our life
our interests
and start a new beginning
rather than pushing away
the knowledge
the strength
the purity
the trust
And then we can know what it is to live.
Interiors
by Mana S.

The inside which goes deeper than first sight.
The stained-glass window that’s hard to see through.
Most can’t see through it, but sometimes
when light shines through
you can see past that window
to the interior.
The Window

by Lila D.

Inside the window,
    the red bird sings,
the sun shines bright
    on beautiful things.

Outside the window
    the cold blows hard,
the world is unfair,
    it tears you apart.

The warmth inside,
    the cold outside,
unfair world,
    beautiful things.

Only one can dream
    of living in a space
in between.
Window
by Calvin G.

What is
Inside a window?
Nothing? Not really. It is a
Doorway to somewhere, some
Other place.
Windows are the beginning of a journey.
Childhood Home

by Philip I.

A simple white house that looks like any random house to a passerby, but houses a happy family.

A simple white house that may not be large but is cozy and warm.

A house that if you look in through the window you will see a different world inside.
The Window

by Joselyn S.

The window in.
It’s rusty.
Nobody ever bothers to look.
But inside?
A whole world
spinning with confusion,
a new experience every second.
But we don’t get many visitors.
Do you want to be the first?
Puddles
by Calla S.

Wet air
dented ground
silently strolling
takes a look around
she looks into the puddle
all she sees is herself
Blink cat
Blink again
Now what do you see
she sees a lion roaring
a bird free
don’t let society block your personality
still air
black sky
Goodnight world
The Bell
by Evalyn C.

I can’t control my inner bell.
It tells me what to do.
Sometimes I hear a ringy-ding-ding.
It’s the bell singing.