

GORGEOUS,
HERE ON EARTH



STANDOUT SUBMISSIONS FROM THE
WRITERS IN THE SCHOOLS (WITS)
ELAINE WETTERAUER WRITING CONTEST
2020-2021

Gorgeous, Here on Earth:
The 2021 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 for years at Nathan Hale High School and was an early champion of WITS, and of student voice and 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 2020-21 contest theme, *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous*, came from the title of SAL speaker Ocean Vuong's best-selling novel. The theme asked students to explore intimacy, honesty vulnerability, and share their vision of what it means to be "briefly gorgeous."

In the student category, one winner and two student finalists were chosen, all of whom will be published in the upcoming 2021 Writers in the Schools anthology. This year's Elaine Wetterauer Writing Contest winner is **Alder Metcalf** of Leschi Elementary School with the poem "Let Life Be Life." And the two finalists are **Thijs Buning** of Catharine Blaine K-8 School with the poem, "Your Mother, Tree," and **Mathilde McFadden** of TOPS K-8 School with the poem, "Fire Light."

We are also thrilled to honor the teacher winner, **Danielle Woods** of Leschi Elementary and the poem, "Persistence."

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 the many ways we are, on Earth, briefly gorgeous.

Cover art by Nicholas Reymond, on Unsplash.com
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Let Life Be Life

by Alder Metcalf

Contest Winner
Leschi Elementary School, 5th Grade

Let life be life again.

Let it be the physical interaction it used to be.

Let it be the people without masks again.

Life is not life anymore.

Let it be the sunny days it once was.

Let it be the not so pixelated teachers again.

I can't even remember the times when I didn't miss you so much.

You, me so far apart but so close at the same time.

Your Mother, Tree

by Thijs Buning

Finalist

Catharine Blaine K-8 School, 5th Grade

My children you grow
from my generous branches.
Nourished and fed
by the light of the sun.
Grow through the summer,
all the warm days.
Turn brown in the autumn,
and falling we part ways.
I watch you decay,
sadness in my eyes.
Then up you come,
your spirits rise.
And regrown you are
by the light of the sun.
Your mother, Tree.

Fire Light

by Mathilde McFadden

Finalist
TOPS K-8 School, 8th Grade

The light from the moon shone like one thousand stars on the beautifully red, rich fire that night.
The night where we danced till we dropped and cried tears of joy, for that night was magic. No
one could have felt ugly or fenced because we were all free under the protection of connection.
In beautiful October is when it happened with crunchy leaves all orange as the sun in summer.
We were all gold that night with crowns staring into our souls like words flying off the pages of
a book. When you feel this, time stops and all around you is still like you're frozen in time. All
of you know too well that it's just a dream, or is it.

Persistence

by Danielle Woods

Teacher Contest Winner
Leschi Elementary School

Persistence side steps into the room
wearing the same outfit as yesterday
And the day before
Rumpled from sleeping and waking while sitting up

She speaks in a tone so firm
That men all around accuse
Calm down!
Bossy.

She is not impressed with no
But she finds comfort in the challenge
She's a builder, a scientist, a world Jenga champion
Searching for one more try

She has a dream to achieve
And fears it too
Will the end taste as sweet as the start?
Who is she once she's done?

Persistence comes from a big family
Courage, Determined, Endurance are her aunties
Not yet, maybe next time, and no thanks
Are her distant cousins

Her heart beats fast and loud
Integrity never questioned
Others ask her to slow down, self care
Before she tries again

Outstanding Contest Submissions

From Earth to Mars

by Weston Bandli

Catharine Blaine K-8 School, 4th Grade

From Earth I launched,
Into the deep space I go,
As the stages of my body flies away towards earth
My engines boost us up into deep space,
To orbit around Mars,
As the fairings separate and reveal the big satellite,
Orbiting around Mars,
As the fairings fall down to earth,
As we travel through the satellite,
We are traveling around Mars at high speeds,
As it takes an hour to do a full rotation around Mars,
We witness the beautiful red mountains of Mars,
As the space shuttle docks onto the satellite,
We travel back to earth,
Leaving the satellite there to discover more of Mars,
Then back to your house,
Having dinner,
It was a long,
Long day.

After the Rain

by Lenin Boswell

Catharine Blaine K-8 School, 4th Grade

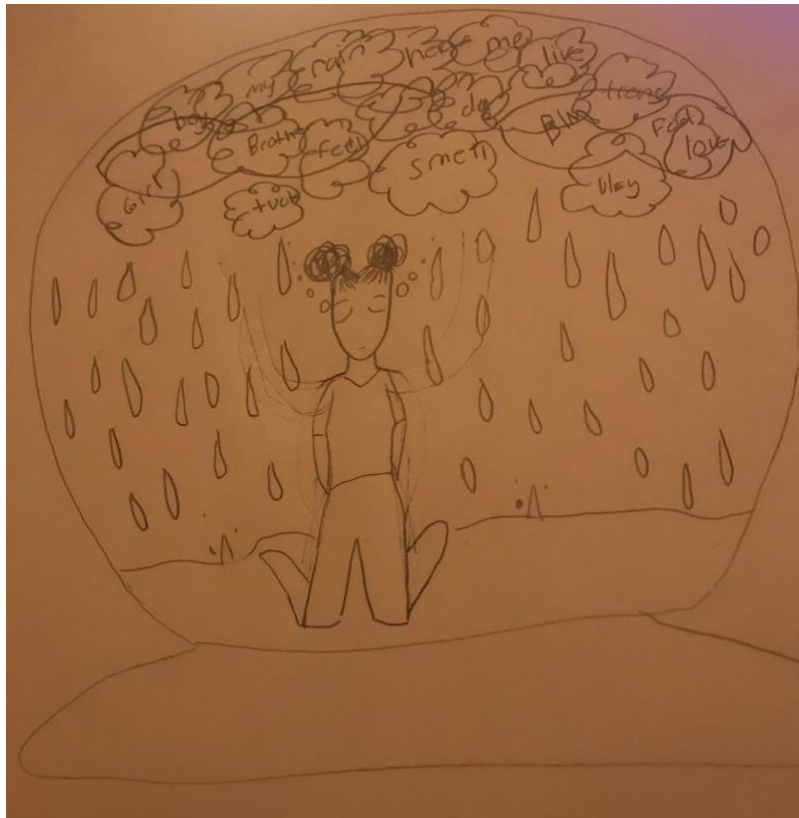
after the rain, it smells like a crystal lake in the summer.

after the rain, I feel a spritz of water on my pants from jumping in a rain puddle.

after the rain, I can hear everybody coming outside to smell the rain.

after the rain, I can taste the water when I am running.

after the rain, I can see the water dripping off the leaf.



28 Days Gone

by Ian Bridges
Seattle Children's

Everything around us is taken for granted,
from the Sun to the Moon to the very wind at our backs.
It is with us so often, we don't think of it as essential or vital
Just...there.

When it is taken from your life, you notice it. You crave it, you hunger for it, like food to a
starving man.
When you are alone, surrounded by four walls away from fresh air, cut off from the sun, absent
to feel the very wind
Or even to hear the rainfall outside your room.

You forget how important they are to you-how it feels to exert your legs to climb simple steps.
How the sun glints off of the leaves of the trees.
How the wind sails past you and creeps against your skin, like the cold embrace of a thousand
needles.
It is strange how inviting the clamor of a city can be after so long away from any noise-
the only sound for you the beeping of machines, the pacing of nurses, and the beating of your
own heart.

There are few who know of this curse.

There are fewer who have lived it.

When I had been released from the hospital after my bone marrow transplant, I knew this feeling
firsthand.
I felt as the sun kissed my skin after a month of absence, I shivered as the wind crawled against
me.
I sighed in fatigue when I had walked up a hill for the first time in weeks
and I had grinned like a child on Christmas when I was able to feel the rain on my head again.

Now I know, nothing should be for granted. It all can be taken away, and once it is you don't
realize just how vital it is.
How important and crucial it is, until it is gone.

A Poem Is...

by Tripp Ciro

Catharine Blaine K-8 School, 5th Grade

A poem is rain dropping from the sky.

A poem is people rising up for what's right.

A poem is falling and getting back up.

A poem is not only you but us standing up, showing the world who we are.

A poem is falling all together.

A poem is us getting back up and finishing what was meant to be done.

Remember, a poem is anything, but nothing is as strong as us united with one another.

Shout Out

by Beatrice Faber-Machacha

Leschi Elementary School, 5th Grade

Here's to Friday nights, popcorn
and movies. Here's to Monday
mornings, the shadow of the week
looming overhead. Here's to the snack
aisle, an abundance of refreshments.
Here's to big sisters, the bossy
and protecting. Here's to mothers,
cheering you on and giving you kisses.
Here's to Just-Add-Water pancake mix,
easy and ready to go. Here's to rice
crackers, the crispy crunch sound. Here's
to Wednesdays, the day lost
in the confusion. Here's to geography
class, teaching people that Africa is NOT
a country. Here's to blue, the color of the
sky, the ocean, and everything
in between. Here's to adults' tears,
the rarest of all, but the most meaningful.
Here's to different languages, the perfect
ingredients for a big soup of ethnicities.
Here's to hamburger buns, to cherry on
top. Here's to British accent's, the *Te*
and *Er*. Here's to lives, the always
and never.

Emotions

by Pera Graff-Cullins
TOPS K-8 School, 8th Grade

If I were a color I would be the wild brilliant colors of the sunset bleeding reds and golds

If I were a shape I would be a circle with no end and no beginning always spinning

If I were a movement I would be the shattering of glass as it hits the hard stony ground

If I were a sound I would be the lonely forlorn cry of a sea bird echoing against the rocks

If I were an animal I would be a lone wolf wondering the deep snowy forests lost but never found

If I were a place I would be the depths of the ocean dark and fathomless and unknown

If I were a time I would be midnight on a moonless night when the world is blanketed in darkness

If I were a song I would be the haunting melody of a ballad sung at the misty dawn

If I were a number I would be the number 13 always unlucky

If I were an emotion I would be sadness and rage I would be the tears on your face and the blood on your hands

If I were an element I would be fire burning wild and free until I burn out

Behind my eyes is hidden rage fueled by pain and destruction and loss

Spring

by Zinnia Hansen

2021/22 Seattle Youth Poet Laureate

1

on our tippy-toes,

we dance to a tambourine.
it's a terrible thing to feel yourself tingle

on the crest of a wave that's going to crash.

new-grass sorrow,
full of green-smell, dying,
hot sand, it rained yesterday.

caught in a storm drain,
cherry blossoms are struggling
under a dry breeze.

awake, wrapped in our jean-jackets,
we swelter and freeze.

2

Mama, our umbilical cord was never cut.

Mama, this is why
I lace my fingers through yours.
Mama, this is why
I hide under my sweaty sheets.

Mama, the sun carries scissors.
Mama, Mama, Mama, I never should have left your belly.

3

what would it be like to hold a non-linear perception of time? around and around we'd go,
growing and dying in the wombs of our mothers, watching the moon change phase. we wouldn't
shiver come spring, fresh and fearing Ragnarok.

in the ancient Slavic creation story, Father Sky God seeds Mother Moist Earth. lightning strikes.
it's a myth with a beginning, and presumably, an end.

but what if there were no fathers? a blasphemous thought: the mother, the daughter, and the holy
spirit. Russian nesting dolls filled with moist earth.

4

the sun rises.

icy March, boiling April.

thick socks and stinky feet.

we've already started to die.

alas, we drum our beginnings

and dance to the tingling beat
of an implied ending.

Mama, I should never have left your belly.

black

by Amaya Hunter

Catharine Blaine K-8 School, 5th Grade

black is a color with no escape

black is the sound of nothing

black, the taste of depression

black is the night that you think "what if"

black smells like sweet and spicy chicken wings

black is the time of day where you know it is going to be a ok

black is the color of the main leader of the spider community a.k.a. black widow

black is the core of a pineapple

.....black.....

Dear Swift Bunny,

by Vayuna Lamba

Catharine Blaine K-8 School, 4th Grade

Dear swift bunny,

I don't know your name but every day I see you from far away,
and your sweet velvety fur puffs up my heart.
And if you run off I'll run after you, if you hide I'll hide with you.

If you want to be friends with me I'll always want to be friends
with you just tell me swift bunny.

Oh swift bunny just run faster and your body moves side to side back and forth and sooner or
later a warm blanket around me forms melting away the anger in my heart.

Oh swift bunny winter is coming, so I have put out a pen and some carrots are inside so if you
want me to feed you, you just write back to me

Your future friend, Vayuna

Reaching the Moon

by Saioa Ouyoumjian

Catharine Blaine K-8 School, 5th Grade

On a hill all alone, the moon is my only friend.
Every night I see it come over the mountains,
basking my flowers in a soft glow.

Reaching the moon.
The moon talks, telling stories and giving wisdom,
after each talk I pull my strength to grow.
The moon needs a friend.
1 inch then 2, my leafy arms curl towards the moon.

5 years have passed, I don't see the moon as often anymore.
The moon is hidden by thick smoke,
basking my flowers in an endless darkness.

When the moon talks his stories are sad and unsure,
try as I might my strength disappears.
The moon is not the same.
1 inch then 2, my leafy arms curl towards the ground.
My only comfort now as my once pink flowers
turn gray and fall to the ground is,
I will finally join the moon.

Let Childhood Be Childhood

by Tatum Richards

Leschi Elementary School, 5th Grade

Let childhood be childhood again. Let us
be free again. Let us eat baby food again.
Let us not have to wear masks again. Let
us go to school again. Let us get away
with things again. Let just go back
to the good old days. Let me sleep
on my dad's back again.
Let childhood be childhood again.

The Brightest Spark

by Lily Solem

Leschi Elementary School, 5th Grade

I was born on the sun, I was the brightest
spark you could see for thousands
of miles. I flew all the way to earth
and created the first ocean. I designed
the golden gate bridge, bright red.
I designed the first computer to answer all
of your questions. I drank mango smoothies
with Michelle Obama. I created the first
tsunami and sent it to Mercury.
I traveled the whole world in my
submarine and Ferrari. I drank the moon's
lake with Amanda Gorman and Nikkita
Oliver. I sailed to the south and stopped
slavery. I met a sasquatch and ate fresh
huckleberries. I made the first dictionary
and then all the moons shone their light
on me. I am so perfect, so awesome, so
incredible, so surreal, a tornado,
earthquake, dragon, or anything else can't
stop me. I mean.....I.....can roar
like a lion in the jungle

Dear Earth, Dear Humanity

by Nico Tobias
Seattle Children's

Dear Humanity,
I want to let you know that however brief life is,
and however challenging it may be,
one has the potential to turn their own single life
into something impactful for everyone.
Selflessness is key, and you must have a conviction
in yourself to be your best self for others,
for the people around you, the people you know and love.
This means doing what's best for the Earth,
for nature, for the living things that surround all of us.
It starts with one person's willingness to do what's right.

And likewise to you, Dear Earth,
we both go hand in hand in the natural world,
that's just the way it works.
This is my pledge, my optimistic hope—
what I want to do, what I want to dedicate myself to,
for how I'm going to live on this Earth,
and how I'm going to live with people.

I think we need to leave things better than we found them.
Humanity and Earth go hand in hand, and right now,
all have the ability to make a difference.
It all starts with the little things, and revolves around selflessness,
to leave a little more than what's originally there,
to give more than we take,
to preserve the natural beauty of Earth,
a blessing all humanity will benefit from.

I think of the mountain ranges and forests and lakes,
the beautiful and mysterious ocean,
the coral reefs, the cities under water full of life,
a rainforest full of color, vibrant plants and animals,
the almost intimidating expanse of icy tundra,
the wide-open grasslands and savannahs,
there is so much beauty in the natural world.

My life is such a small sliver in the span of time,
and in that brief moment
I need to work to my utmost ability to help Earth,
to help humanity,
to be the most beautiful we can be, together.