



# Gwendolyn Brooks Youth Poetry Awards 2020



UCHICAGO **Arts**

## Honorable Mention Entries



### KINDERGARTEN (page: 3)

"Two Dollars" by Data Hunting – The Children's School, Forest Park

### 2ND GRADE (page: 4)

"Ice Rink" by Luke Hong – Avery Coonley, Elmhurst

### 3RD GRADE (pages: 5)

"Wait and Wish" by Daniel Hyde – Lake Forest Country Day School, Northfield

### 4TH GRADE (page: 6)

"World of Light" by Megan Pham – Fairview South School, Skokie

### 6TH GRADE (pages: 7 - 8)

"I Remember" by Daniela Kasalo – Fairview South School, Skokie, IL, Skokie  
"We Shall Overcome" by Vedansh Wadhvani – Fairview South School, Skokie, IL, Skokie

### 7TH GRADE (pages: 9 - 11)

"Writing to Reality" by Natasha Stoper Freidman – Ancona School, Chicago  
"Wind" by Liron Helmer – Midwest Academy for Gifted Education, Skokie

### 8TH GRADE (page: 12)

"Girl" by Eleanor Ross – Alcott College Prep, Chicago

### 9TH GRADE (pages: 13 - 14)

"Climbing Trees" by Nico Crabtree – The Chicago High School for the Arts, Chicago  
"you don't need a body to bury something" by Annie Wu – Walter Payton College Prep, Chicago

### 10TH GRADE (page: 15)

"Living With Purpose" by Holly Wood – Crystal Lake Central High School, Crystal Lake

For more information and to submit a poem, visit [ilhumanities.org/poetry](http://ilhumanities.org/poetry).  
If you have questions, contact Mark Hallett at [mark.hallett@ilhumanities.org](mailto:mark.hallett@ilhumanities.org).



UCHICAGOArts

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*Honorable Mention Entries*



## 11TH GRADE (page: 16)

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"My Name Is Madison and Yours Probably Is Too" by Madison Sniegowski – Oswego East High School, Aurora

## 12TH GRADE (pages: 17 - 18)

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"Bastards" by Jasmine Connolly – Dixon High School, Dixon  
"Or Don't" by Aimee R. – Nancy B. Jefferson High School, Chicago

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## Two Dollars

There were two dollars  
They had a conversation  
About their feelings

## Ice Rink

Blades scraping on the ice,  
Teachers giving students advice.  
Little boys and girls twirling around,  
To the jazzy, funky, and playful sound.  
Kids performing tricks on the slippery surface,  
And little Emma skates the furthest!  
Skating, twisting, and turning about,  
“2 more laps to go!” The instructor shouts.  
Meanwhile on the other ice rink,  
The sticks go: “clackety dink!”  
The puck goes swirling around,  
Bang! Crash! Number 76 topples down.

## **Wait and Wish**

I am hardworking and determined.  
I wonder when I will be at school again.  
Playing football with my friends, in the blossoming park,  
Or sledding down the hill, in the chilly winter.

I miss having lunch with my friends,  
Deep in conversation.

I hear the insects chirp outside my room while studying.  
I see my garden from my window and long to be at school.

Delicious meals of steak fill my mind as I dream of being at a restaurant.

I feel my book as I sit, reading endlessly.  
I worry that quarantine will never end, lying down on my bed  
After a day of hard work.

I dream of slicing the water when the pools open.  
Free in the cool water, at last.

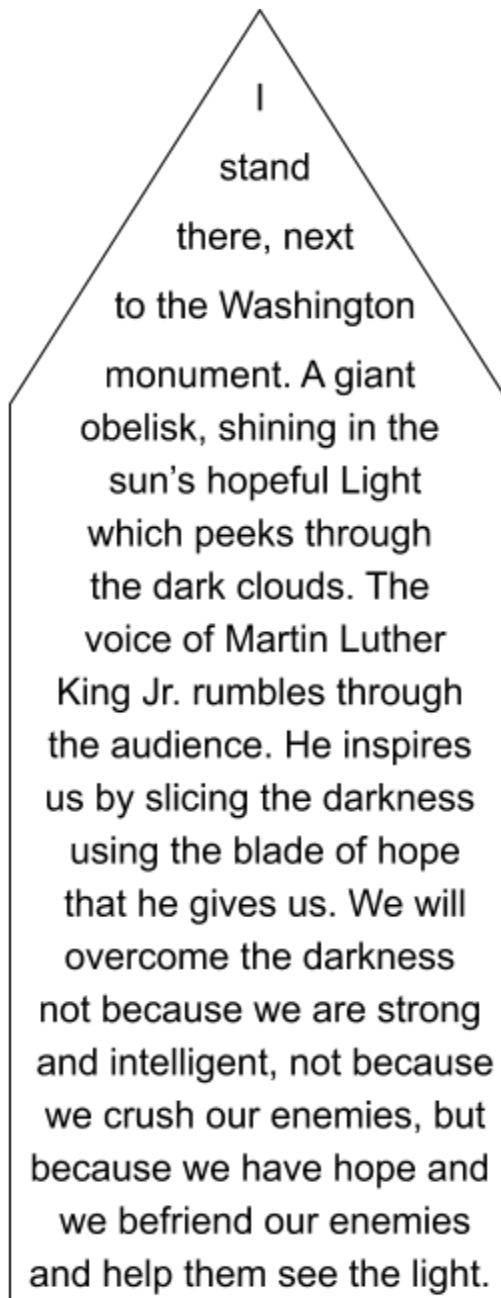
## World of Light

Space glows like a firefly.  
Sparkling stars shine and traverse  
through the tender universe.  
It is a painting that can just hypnotize you.  
Reach for stars.  
Space is infinite.  
The moon lights up like a lamp  
Its pure white gleams blinds you.  
Space is breathtaking as the  
Milky Way leaves you with a face of surprise.  
Sometimes, when you feel melancholy,  
all you have to do is look  
at the colors around you.

# I Remember

I remember the hot concrete against my feet.  
The blue pool water splashing everywhere as I jumped in.  
When I walked out of the pool, the warm air turned  
into an icy breeze, slapping me in the face.  
I remember the juicy hamburger that I ate at a restaurant  
close to the beach.  
Its juiciness made me want to devour every last bite of it.  
We went to the gift shop and I saw the most beautiful bracelet.  
It had radiant round beads and glistening charms.  
Its colors were just like the cool and breezy beach everyone loves.  
The emerald green, dark blue, and sky blue.

# We Shall Overcome



This poem was inspired by the painting *We Shall Overcome* by Loïs Mailou Jones.



writing to reality  
By: natasha stoper friedman

henry dumas, 1934 to 1968  
age 33,  
writes a letter to himself,  
talks about  
when he dies,  
he wants to be remembered  
for his  
writing.

the circumstances are  
unclear  
but  
but we know  
we know that  
as he was walking through  
a turnstile,  
a turnstile in a new york city train station,  
his life ended.

how it happened  
was shocking,  
was disgusting,  
fills people with rage,  
with sympathy,  
with frustration,  
he  
was shot  
by a  
new york city transit policeman.

afterward  
his writer friends  
at the party  
toni morrison  
threw for him

sitting and talking  
about his achievements,  
just as he wanted,  
laughing and smiling  
while crying  
inside.

they were talking  
about  
his books  
which  
were  
about racial tension,  
about white supremacy,  
even about science fiction,  
they were talking  
about his life,  
not his  
death.

## **Wind**

Wind is the earth's breath when it is lying down for sleep.

Wind sounds like nature's whistle rippling through the forest.

Wind looks like an arrow splitting the air.

Wind remembers when the earth was forming, and the ground was rising.

Wind is a memory of a time when the earth was empty and covered with forests.

## Girl

Some days, it can be nice to forget that I am here,  
Too.  
To mistake myself for what can be changed.

Girl is  
powdered sugar,  
pixie sticks without tang, or,  
even slight unpleasantness  
of paper packaging left to dissolve on the tongue.

I am told:  
Girl sheds. Shedding, peeling, sticky  
paper layer,

Nuisance.

Wonder why  
I have never really been able to get rid of the tang,  
or the paper, or whatever turns mouths blue.

I imagine this  
longing of girl lingering. And the music—  
Kim Deal's voice like smoke on lemon,  
dancing, rosy cheeked,  
sunlight humming on skin.  
These things are loyal--

Never to let hair fall loose out of pig tails, even  
when skin folds into prune.

This, I forget, is also the skin of a girl.  
An extension.

It can be nice to remember  
that I am there,  
Too.

## Climbing Trees

*"The tree's were always permanent. They  
were access to the aether, but still deeply  
rooted in the ground."*

*—Brit Marling*

A place forgotten. Memories  
shattered like glass, cutting through  
thin-skinned hands that scrape this sidewalk  
on a street I know I will leave.

I asked my father  
for climbing trees  
every time we moved.  
Trees where my small feet can push  
off the dry moss and fly like dust,  
becoming one with this streaming  
air I breathe.

Trees where I  
can climb to the top and  
feel held by these solid branches.

Trees where I  
inhale the divine wind  
that's given to me by the  
aether, and I still  
feel grounded through these roots.

Trees that,  
can still stand tall in my mind  
despite the chaos of  
a scattered assortment  
of recollection.

And I can remember a split second  
where I felt cosmic.

***you don't need a body to bury something***

I.

i like to picture that eternity is the absence of  
some people say it wears the face of death  
bloody and devouring; neverending  
maybe that's why grief is so daunting  
the concept of loss in five stages  
never done for once  
always repeated in rebirth and recycle  
eternity in grief and loving people that no longer know it  
love isn't supposed to be a finite resource  
I guess that's why it's so caught up in death.

II.

the sun is forgiving, honey sweet, almost golden  
snow blankets in powdery layers  
(I wonder if the ash of Pompeii looked like this when it buried bodies.)  
grief slips into cracks and widens them in chasms.  
the clock does not stop ticking.

III.

life goes on, after a newspaper obituary,  
or as close to one there is these days  
they only gain passing sympathy from a silent stranger  
there is loss in that too.  
maybe there's a funeral some lost summer day—

IV.

death does not chase after bodies  
I suppose it's strange anyways, the idea of a coffin  
who would've of thought:  
another box to fit in.

V.

mourn too, beyond a graveyard  
I am mourning every time I gaze into a mirror  
childhood has always been less of a skin to shed  
and more of something to bury.

They say  
To seize the day  
For the time will pass regardless  
And you choose how you use it  
Is the answer to lay around and sit  
Playing digital games and watching Netflix  
Or is there something more important in life  
Than GTA and stabbing someone's avatar with a knife  
Reload, reset, enter game  
These words mark a new start  
Another chance for users to play the part  
But life has no controller  
What is done is done the past has passed  
Every day waking up is a miracle that is never guaranteed to last  
They fear that an unlived life is more terrifying than death itself  
Just another deficient fifteen-page novel lying on a shelf  
They are wise  
For your troubles are troubles which dying men yearn for  
Your exploits are birthed from choices you deplore  
Regrets stand by faulty actions you have made  
Yet acting was not the fault which causes the dismay  
So before you need be reminded of why you shan't delay  
Do as they say  
Seize the day

## My Name is Madison and Yours Probably Is Too

My name is Madison,  
bet you haven't heard that one before.  
Madison means "son of Matthew"  
when really it should mean "daughter of everyone".  
So what's it mean to be named Madison on the off chance that you're not?

It means that you know at least six other people who share your name  
and you are probably friends with three of them.  
It means never turning around when your name is called  
because you know you're not popular enough for them to actually mean you.  
It means hearing someone ask "Which Madison?"  
and hearing someone else answer "The blond one".  
And as if it couldn't get any worse,  
they still don't know which one.  
It means searching for what makes you stand out  
a lot earlier than everyone else  
as you automatically lack the uniqueness many are born with.  
It means a sub asks the class if all the Madisons are here  
and just like that you become a group instead of a person.

So, would I change my name, my first form of identity?  
No, I would not.  
I am not basic even though my name may be.  
I may have been forced into a group, but aren't we all?  
Changing my name won't change me.  
So, to all you Madisons out there  
(and there certainly are a lot),  
you are not basic just because your name is.  
Next time you find yourself trapped in the prison that is your identity,  
Remember that the cage that confines us  
does not define us.  
We are what makes us feel free.



Bastards:

My sentences are children.  
Tiny, helpless,  
Little bastards  
Whose fathers I never met.

I get around with verbs  
Sleep with nouns, adjectives.  
Linguistic slut.  
Never the same one.

I carry my sentences in my skull.  
Nowhere near soft, there.  
Calcified cranium.  
They find no comfort, no warmth.

I do not love all of my children.  
Some disappoint  
Hopeless infants  
Sown by bum fathers; sloth begets sloth.

Some cave under the pressure.  
I demand perfection; accept nothing less.  
Impossible standards.  
I am not a kind mother.

She's flying solo  
feet don't stop for nobody  
free the mind from this xanax bared cell  
to fall is to drown in a promethazine pool of bitterness  
turn around...  
you forgot your baby's father  
he's too deep  
he's drowning  
you can't bare to leave him so you drown with him  
you found someone your feet are worth stopping for

why can't you stop for yourself  
you can't find anything to love  
look harder  
why can other people see your beauty but you can't  
be okay with being alone  
be okay with yourself . . .  
but how  
where do I start when I can't escape this cell  
free me from my mind  
no  
free yourself  
or don't  
even hell gets comfortable..



