

TERRITORY

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Astrid Moore

Ode to Nature

Astrid Moore, fifth grade, Target Range Elementary School

Oh! Nature
Your blossoms
Grow bright
But they
Close in
a long
winter's

Night.
Oh! The
Rough brown
Bark stretches
Tall but
Drowns again
In a heavy

Rainfall.
Oh! The soft
Petals you
Bring to me
In the spring
Right under
A tree.

Your colors
Blossom like
the stars in the night,
But wither
Away with
A glimpse of
White.

'Depth of feeling and wisdom'

Young poets celebrate power of words

Photos by TOM BAUER, MISSOULIAN

Dogs. Owls. Chocolate cake. Cycling. Running. Mount Fuji. An entire galaxy.

Give children permission to give voice to their imaginations, and poetry emerges, on an array of subjects as varied as the children themselves.

For a quarter-century, Missoula-area poets and writers have gone into classrooms around western Montana as part of the Missoula Writing Collaborative's creative writing program. The students learn the different forms of poetry, including free verse, then write their own poems and read them aloud.

Caroline Patterson, Missoula author and executive director of the Writing Collaborative, said that each year, she's touched anew by the students' poems.

"It's amazing how little we ask about their worlds. It's exciting for them to really explore their worlds, their emotions, their observations about the outside world. ... They learn a lot about how to use language, what is intriguing and exciting about language," she said.

The poems included here were chosen at random from among dozens in this year's Writing Collaborative program. Patterson's words could apply to every

one of the poems in this year's program, most of them written by the fourth- and fifth-graders:

"I'm just amazed at the depth of perception these young kids have, the depth of feeling and wisdom in these young kids observing the world.

"You see how important it is for them to be out in the world. We ask them to observe the color and smells and sensory details. (Poetry) makes them more alive to that." — Gwen Florio, Missoulian

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Lauren Hutchens

Running

Lauren Hutchens, fourth grade, Rattlesnake Elementary School

You have a place inside of you
that no one else has.
Sometimes you forget that.
Running . . . my place is running
with my Australian Labradoodle by my side,

my dog Moxie, running and trying to beat me,
yet always looking back to make sure
her girl is with her. This is my place
where I feel free,
where my memories take place.



Kong Yang

A Stick's Nature

Kong Yang, fourth grade, Chief Charlo School

Grab a stick
look at it
after that
grab one hundred more
lay them in a circle
climb a tree
then look in the center
grab a fishing pole
and fish
one stick
once you do that
you see Abraham Lincoln's fingerprint
you see all of nature's things
then hold up a stick
you see a blue bird
sitting on the stick

you think
about how the sky is blue
then you think
that this stick will become a tree
Once I get older
I'll get smaller and smaller
then there will be a museum filled
with Abraham Lincoln's fingerprints
and a scratch
that the blue bird made
once I get smaller
I will see the stick talk to me
as I eat a leaf
then I wake up and I see
it was just a dream.

Animal Kingdom

Priseis, fourth grade,
Lowell Elementary School

A bee is a fat seed flying in the summer sky.
A junebug is a flute losing her voice.
A fox is a sunset, orange and yellow, just staring at you in a bush.
A hare is a racecar going 120 miles per hour in the savannah.
A pug is a potato following her mama.
A wolf is the moon following your eyes.

Silence

Horizon, fifth grade, Ronan Elementary School

silence is not a train honking
silence is not a hummer starting up
silence is not a crying baby
silence is air
silence is a flower flowing
silence is not New York City
silence is a ukulele

Life Is

Kelly, fourth grade,
Lewis and Clark Elementary

My imaginary ghosts still go to the Pow-wow.
People that passed a long time ago still dance
and still drum because they miss
drumming and dancing.
I feel like someone is watching me
Walking around the Pow-wow.



Ella Secor

I Am

Ella Secor, fourth grade, Jeannette Rankin Elementary School

I am the kid
who has once moved.
Moving once.
Moving twice.
I am the kid
who once rolled the dice.



Jaylynn Buxbaum

Chores

Jaylynn Buxbaum, fourth grade, Charlo Elementary School

Time
to do chores. Are you
excited? I
hope you are because they won't do themselves.
they are your responsibility so,
do them right now.
right now is
the best
Go!



Ben Martin

Grandma

Ben Martin, fifth grade, Darby Elementary School

I'm learning how to bake
A cake in my grandma's kitchen.
She is instructing me by saying
Stuff like, "put this in with the flour"
And "mix that." Ingredients
Pouring into the bowl like rain
In a summer storm. The cocoa powder
Filling the air with the scent of chocolate.
Butter pouring into the pan like a mud
Slide the oven like the hottest thing
In the world bakes the cake in minutes
Filling the air with the aroma of sweet
Cake moist the frosting color like the most
Beautiful brown Grandma says
That I've done a good job and that
It was the best cake she'd ever seen

Sounds! In Space!

The! Rumpel, fourth grade, Paxson Elementary School

The alien chatter when abducting the earth
The back holes with baby peeps and dancing lollipops
Pops the joy of the NASA rocket zomp-z-zing
Its way to the moon the asteroids crashing
And the rushy sound of water on Mars
The chirping sound of an alien squirrel
Taylor Swift moon walking the moon and
Singing her way back to earth the zit zit
Zit zit of aliens flossing their way to the mall
The screaming of and giggling of the
Black hole the fishes rrrrrrrrrrrrring their
Way back to galaxies and the opppsksksk
Of visco girls spiraling in space and
Screaming "save the sea turtles"
With the last breath they have Oh the
Sounds in space.

Fuji Haibun

Virgil Jones, seventh grade, C.S. Porter

Looming spike of earth
gives a strong sense of sulphur
sacred mountain howls
A young Japanese man stands by the edge of a
pool. He prepares a canvas and points
his eyes toward Mount Fuji
Large grey brushstrokes fly
stopping at the mountain's tip.
then swallowed in clouds
The boy outlines the mountain and paints in the
clouds. He makes sure to put as much
detail as he can, pretending his hand and his eyes
are connected.
Splish, splash, sploosh, rain falls
a red umbrella from bag
covers the canvas

My Dog Shine

Victor Filler, fourth grade, Hawthorne Elementary School

Back when. was 4
You got me a dog
Furry as a blanket
Brown eyes like mud
Personality sweet as a loli-pop
And graceful like a butterfly
And to say the least
That dog gives me happiness
On rainy or rough days
And personally
I thought shine
Fit her perfectly

What Is a Universe?

Jackson Long, fifth grade, Target Range Elementary School

A belly of a planet-eating worm?
The inside of a hollow planet?
Or is it one of the many universes
spread across time and space?



Nolan Lippy

I Am, I Am Not

Nolan Lippy, fourth grade, Florence Elementary School

I am a bear growling through the forest,
I am not a zebra locked up at the zoo.
I am a bald eagle soaring through the starry night,
I am not a tiny pet bird dancing for my owners.
I am a fire of fury dancing with my flames,
I am not a tiny spark nobody notices.
I am an engine roaring to life,

I am not a model built to stay still.
I am a steam engine roaring through my obstacles,
I am not a frightened thing hiding from my fears.
I am a guy who aspires to do his best,
I am not a jerk putting vandalism on private property.
I am an athlete pushing till I win,

I am not a guy giving up on my dreams.
I am a scientist trying new experiments,
I am not a video gamer in my parents' basement.
I am a guy trying my best in everything I do,
I am not a slacker dropping out of school.
I am Nolan.