

Pop Up Poetry in the Park Submissions 2023

Thank you to the creative writers from
Oswego High School &
Oswego East High School
who shared their work!



Avery McKeown-Robbie

"Eat the World"

People need to eat more of the world
Not country hopping in first-class thrones
gazing down like gods on her majesty mother earth
No, people need to eat more of the earth itself.
Get down on their hands and knees and eat dirt
Devour all three layers, each getting hotter and more unknown
Those self-titled gods need to be knocked off their oil and methane-filled horses and fill their senses with dirt,
The nutrients deprived dirt from overfarming
Filled with the carless thrown trash from ignorant pedestrians
Contaminated with toxic chemicals and pesticides from lawsuitsed labs.
Fill every taste bud with the screaming bugs and microorganisms
Who beg on their hands and knees for sins that they did not commit
Stop praying to the lord instead get down and beg for the forgiveness of mother earth at her holy decaying
body
Because there can be no man in the sky if there is nowhere for his sinful subjects to live
Take the early communion
The blood
The sick rivers filled with trash, who gave their fountain of youth away for your plastic convenience
Because without the sweet water, he couldn't have washed the feet of his disciples
The body
Those charred trees, who died for your industrial gain
Because Christ couldn't have passed without the wood his arms and legs were nailed to
People need to eat the reality of the world
Get down onto the decaying solid ground
And eat till they are sick
Sick from the acid dew found on the green-dyed morning grass
Poisoned from the industrial-modified leaves
ill from ingesting the decaying flesh of our extinct mammal ancestors
Screaming in pain from the trench of toxic tears of our mother earth
And then
Will will all be ill
Sick in our skyscraper, concreted hospitals
In our crinkling plastic beds
Heartbeats beeping on the industrial machines
And breathing through metal tanks and plastic tubes
Maybe then
People will want to eat the world that they destroyed

Emily York

Health

The state of being free from illness or injury

The state of being free from illness

The state of being

The state of living

The state of existing

Of being

Free

Because who could I have been if I had the stamina

To allow myself to dream

Alone in the hospital bed

But away from my worry

In a dream

If I had the courage to hope for more

To brush away all the broken hair

With confidence

To have the needles prickling across my skin

With ease

Without fainting

Because beneath the surface of my

pale

Radiant

“Healthy”

Skin

My organs fail to conduct the beautiful symphony of equilibrium

My body attacks itself with

Intention to challenge my vigor

To test my abilities to withstand severed cells

My ability to “fake it till I make it”

Like my father told me to do

After he agreed with the doctors

How I look like such a

“healthy

young

woman”

Because my hair falls naturally

To cover my bald spots

It still itches with pain but

Because my skins glows

from restricted blood flow

Its thin like glass to

showcase my purple hues

But somehow so thick nobody can truly

Perceive

The shackles

of my

Disease

Chloe Thavong

“Drink me”

Dippin my hands into the river
I cup water, casting ripples at my touch
my hands full, the pool of swampy liquid drip drips,
Running trails down my forearm-
seeping through the cracks between fingers
Looking down, lays my reflection,
two shiny orbs peering back at me
My mirrored self tells me to drink.

I bring my hands to the tip of my lips
sipping the adam's ale down
which fizzes at the back of my throat,
its thick oil coating the top of my tongue
I croak

It was like I under a spell, parched for days,
frantically scooping, just to guzzle it down
Each cup, it gets harder to swallow
And yet I yearn more to the point where
I shove my head in the water
My body jerks as my lungs fill up with water
My gut urging me to get up and breathe
Despite that, I dive into the small body water

That seemingly shallow river turns into an ocean
Vision blurs; the murky currents grip at my limbs
pulling me down to a fathomless pit of darkness.
The last my air escapes,
that forms to bubbles drifting to the surface
Disappearing as the waves crash together

Zeffy Esguerra

“An Ode to the Creative”

To the clever ones, the quick-witted,
The trouble-makers,
The quiet but strong ones
And those who live life in singsong,
The rule-breakers;
The artistic, the inspired, the original;
Ingenious, innovative, imaginative, inventive;
This is for the people who do not need an incentive
To illustrate the warmth of light and the frigid darkness,
The pains of life, little joys and comfort,
And everything in between.
For those of you who feel as though your craft
Is cast aside, left in the water
Like the boosters on a rocket.

Remember

That the boosters are the sole reason
Those rockets are even in the air,
The ones that are most crucial to the launch,
The ones who lift them above everything.

This is for those who feel as if their feats go unnoticed
Let this be your anthem
Let it lift you up higher than the rockets,
Higher than the ceilings that set limits
That cap you at your supposed max even though
You have the capacity for more.

For those who express themselves in the
Loudest, boldest, most vibrant ways
But are silenced and beat down.

Let me be the first to make a sound.

Miya Patterson

“Skin”

Trapped.

The feeling of being in an unpleasant situation in which you lack freedom.

And yet here I am.

Trapped in a skin that should feel like a burden.

Trapped in a body that I should feel ashamed of just because everyone else is.

I should feel like my rich, delicate, dark, brown skin isn't fair enough to be seen.

Like my loud mouth and outspoken personality is ghetto and unprofessional.

like my big, kinky, curly, “hot mess” of a fro is ugly and untrained.

Like the curves on my body should be hidden due to the fact that it's “too much” going on.

I should feel like I am not enough.

Like I need to shift my being in order to be accepted as a human.

I should feel trapped in the skin that was passed down to me from royalty and success.

But I don't.

Instead I feel trapped in a society that makes me feel as if I should hide my skin.

Like I should disregard the layers of wisdom and strength that was left behind by my ancestors.

Like I shouldn't have the right to voice my opinion because it's not important unless it's white noise.

I feel trapped in a school that feels as if I have less than, just because I have more melanin than that white kid who needs more than you could even imagine.

I should feel trapped in my skin,

but I only feel trapped in places where my skin is unwelcomed.

Max Keehma

“Lemon Slices Through Hurricane”

you were born a lemon into a hurricane
a whirlwind of misfire,
you taught yourself how to bake,
turning yourself into a sweet lemon pie
to not let your bitterness envelop you whole,
you made lemon slices through your hurricane;

the recipe was a tattered hand-me down
from which your pages were torn,
worn with time and aging,
bends at the corner of bittersweet instructions,
but you still taught me how to
know when my lemon juice was not answer

serving side dishes of your favorite sweets
with your baking hymns in concrete.
350° with that sweet lemon taste
and courses of entrees served
with your worn down hands and smile,
battering through your own hurricanes
with those compassionate hands

i may not know, how to bake a meringue pie
or how to cook from those recipe books,
but i will always know how to
make lemon slices through my hurricane

Esmia Garza

“In Defense of My Mother”

My mother
Is the brightest person I know.
No one else sees that though
Until their lives fall apart,
Because her talent and love
spreads with the wind,
Like a wildfire’s glowing cinder.

People say she’s no good for me.
That she’ll burn me up,
Then snuff me out.
When drugs are top priority,
I’ll be left sitting on the ground
When the siren sounds.

They don’t understand
That I’ll never forget
Wintry evenings as a kid
Sitting on the kitchen counter
Asking my mom about her day
As a fragrant pot of hot cocoa
Fills the air.
Or late summer nights
Where we color each other's hair
With bleaches and dyes
that sting our scalps
and stain our chewed-up fingertips.
A bad habit I got from her.

Every bad memory
Is followed by the good.
So In defense of my mother,
She’s human
Not a match ready to light.

Ella Hansel

“ode to the phoenix”

sometimes, the sun reminds me of You,
because You believed You were immortal,
because You believed You were like a phoenix,
because You believed that so long as You could sprout your wings
and take to the sky, nothing could hurt You
but even so, like the sun, You burned to the touch
and i found my hands growing scarred the longer i held tight.
it reminds me of You because you shone,
but contrarily, not as a star, because there was no guidance
in the cruelty of Your vision.

You were more like the fire-breathing phoenix,
because You could only fight with fire.
because You believed love was not the key to success,
but ultimately, it is those who know love
that are good, and those who are good
that are remembered.

still, the sun reminds me of You *because* it is a star,
because stars live billions of years and yet die,
because people live and they die,
because phoenix's are not immortal, they are reborn.
but still, they die, neverendingly.

the sun reminds me of You
because in the end, the immortality You crave is a facade
hiding the reality of a dying star.

Luisa De Leon

“Cold Sweats”

I have this dream,
This dream makes me feel obsolete,
my body numb and floating
my temptations still lurking,
peeking around the corner of my conscious.
Eyes remain closed
but I can still see my sins in front of me.
Their soft curves turning into
sharp points.

Sharp ringing forces my neck to

crinkle

&

crackle

and alllll the hurt I've harbored,
try to spill out of my mouth in screams.
But instead cold comes from all around
and surrounds.

Forcing my gums to be abused,
tongue coated in warm copper,
with my jaws fused,
giving off a slight

chitter

chatter

Leaving my brain battered.

So this pain

Oh this pain

forces me to crawl out of my skin...

and there lays my limp figure,

no place for me to hide my triggers.

I feel I'm no longer in a world that forces
me to abide by their stride,
I can leap into the depth without fearing death.

I'm alive

Alive

Alive.

I will strive.

As fast as the goodness progresses
of course it must

Die.

Back to the emptiness of my mind.
That makes me believe I can finally be small.
But still no face may place me in as much pain
as the same I name my own.

So this dream, this dream
don't seem to be the seam
in my cloak of succession.
It more so appears to be a part of my fears
that I will show no progression.
And that a fraction of action
would be impossible for my fragile mind.

My skeleton shakes and shivers in its place,
my body, a statue forgotten in a wilting garden
my pores, leaking my secrets
my nose, stings with shame
my skin, as cold as a dismissed corpse
there's pain swirling inside my brain.

And nothing but darkness present.
My dry lips ripping themselves apart
My throat croaking out a heartbroken song...

What did I do to deserve this?

Molly Crouse

My brother was born 1 in four million,
and every day he kept breathing he kept breaking records.

My brother will never drive a car,
will never microwave his own oatmeal,
will never have a girlfriend,
will never be able to speak his mind.

But he is still alive.
He breathes on his own,
he can walk,
he knows some words.
While he functions as a toddler
he is 5'8"
and he looks like my dad
and laughs like my mom.
Even if he never gets potty trained
I'm proud of him.

My brother has lived 15 years longer than expected.
My brother can almost do a pushup.
My brother knows the words to Perfect by Ed Sheeran
and my brother is loved.

While he will never walk on the moon,
on his seventh birthday
when he took his first steps
they ripped across the universe
with the same weight as Armstrong's.

My brother will not be valedictorian,
but Sam making it to high school
deserves a standing ovation.

Gomez-Lopez-Hernandez syndrome:
You better update your website,
cuz case #29 is gonna blow
your mind.

Emily Chorvat

"Little Dipper"

"Look up at the sky."

Your parent would say

on a starry night

that they let you stay up late.

"Do you see the pictures in the stars?"

They would point out the Little Dipper,

among other constellations.

Did you ever actually see the Little Dipper?

Or did you just stare blankly up at the stars,

lost in their light?

Funny how adults always see

which friends won't stay

your friends,

long before

you want to believe it.

You're just

too lost in their light

to see the full picture.

Katey Harris

"Maple Seed"

In my honest state I never knew your real name until recently

To me you were always *helicopter leaf*
The flighty foliage I'd cluster and hurl to watch you gyre
To my budding tutu rain-bootied self you were laughter
You were swaying fae trickling from above
You were symphonies vibrating through my eyes

But now you've changed

You, your beauty of mature delicacy
You, the lesser of a greater oaken soul dispersing from your greater whole
You, the dance you perform as you fall to germination: death and fertility
You, beholder of the seed that is what weighs you down yet is the reason you fly so elegantly

You have always been
my copper sun peeking through my lightness
my glow festering from my fog
my mane glistening from fire beating down

The way your thick veins peeked from your thin brittle skin like mine
The thin protective coating you have unable to face a cut
The way your grace rises and falls in your fleeting time of air

You, know what it is like to hold your beginnings and end so close together
How you descend so closely to your brethren
How you are weighted by your fated fading and expansion
Gliding through the wispy air knowing you are destined to hit the ground
How you know the magnitude of those greater than you
Guided by your fertile givings and gifted freedom from your mothering hive
You, exist as an individual divine

My beautiful, beautiful maple seed

Benjamin Martinez
"The Gordian Knot"

Has never been undone,
Never been beaten,
By the hands,
Of any human

But he Could
Like an engine to oil,
Hands ribboned
As he danced through
Splintering blisters

The words he spoke
Like a waterfall,
With an icy dew.
Words of matter
That eddied the river

You could moor your sail
To those words.
And rest for eternity,
Knowing safety
Was one knot away.

I knew him once.
A prodigy of gears
And magical boxes,
Always ready
For the opportune
Moment

A soldier and scout
He scouted with us
For just under a century,
With words of wind
They flew in our minds,
And danced as if
Waltzing from breeze to sea.

He taught us all
To fear the knot
For there is a knot
For you and me
And the failure
granny knot

I sent prayers for him that day
When he left
For the gates,
In the sky

I was unready,

It shattered my world.
I was his last.
The last scout
He saw, turn eagle.

I went to see him,
For once last time.
In the end.
His last choice
What should he wear?

His last breaths,
He chose to wear ours,
A scout till the end.
And he truly was.
But for him,
A scout he will be,
forever beyond

I will hold my wimpers
And poor painted frame
I know He'd wish for us
"Do not fret".

He wants us
To remember our oath
A scout gives service
And that we will do

But if I could say one last thing,
Goodbye,
Enemy of the Gordian knot.

Ashley Vargas
"258 Dobbins Street"

The creaking wooden gates
no longer indicate an arrival.

They are no longer met with the sounds
of sizzling beef ribs, crispy half-burnt corn husks,
and slurred shouts of greetings.

Now it's met
with crunching dead leaves
and a silence so loud that my ears ring like pathetic bells.

The yard fell into an infinite slumber with him.
The fence's bright orange lacquer has begun to chip and undress,
revealing the dull rotten wood beneath.

The grass is forever damp
with tears and has turned an ill foreign yellow,
reflecting his departure.

And no longer houses baby rabbits and croaking frogs
that seemed to hum their tunes
every time he walked through those transparent sliding doors.

No longer does it smell of moss and wet dirt
that etched itself into the cracks of his fingertips and chipped nails.

No longer are you here;

But I hope someday;

That the treasures hidden in my prints
and scars swimming along my skin
will draw me a map back to you.

We'll be met with a chorus
of winged children and scaled women
as soon as another rough-and-tumble chuckle escapes your lungs

The trees will sprout with peaches and pears
bearing the fruits grown from the sweat you spilled on their bark every waking day

This garden is awake
blinking with tired eyes from loud voices and even louder bodies surrounded by a warmth born of joy and light

With the creaking of an old wooden gate
I will find you in our garden of Eden

Lina Raimondi
"Magic Trees"

Eat--eat your broccoli!
Your body will extend like the trees you swing from in the backyard,
You will become so vigorous, my child.

Have you heard?
Magic is intertwined with that piece of green you grip in your little hand,
I know you can't wipe the disgust off your youthful face
But you won't regret biting into it.

Oh, you will shine like the brightest star!
You will slay dragons with an intimidating shiny sword sharper than a thorn,
You will defeat the monsters that lurk under your bed when your eyes beg to sleep,
The boogey man will find himself a new child to pick on and leave you be.

Eat eat your vegetables, child,
You will climb the highest trees in the entire town,
Your soft hands will interlock with the moons,
You will steal saturn's ring and win the hula hoop contest.

Have you heard?
Those pieces of broccoli are enchanted--
Oh, you will waltz in ballrooms with a prince, spinning around like a merry-go-round.
You will stroll through the castles halls and wear a bedazzled crown,
You will climb the beanstalk--
Up,up,up you go into the mystical village filled with giants!

I beg you--
Eat your broccoli, for you are only able to eat these once
The magic will soon disappear, as your spine extends
Before you know it

As time goes on and the days go by
The colors painted around you will soon fade.

All the things you desire will vanish--
So, eat, eat, eat the magic trees.

Ryker Stevenson

"White is not the color of freedom"

It's the intense color of lights shined in your eyes.
Having so many glaring beams pointed towards you,
Knowing that when you fully illuminated everyone will see
everything, you try so desperately to hide.

It's an entirely overwhelming culmination of every other color.
It contains all other shade yet lacks all of their beauty,
Erasing it all till only white remains

It's the feeling of being in a doctor's office,
Waiting for them to poke and prod you.
Somehow the walls look both sterile and dirty.
The fluorescent lights vaguely flickering above you,
The incessant buzzing drilled into your ears.

I close my eyes and there I find the true color of freedom.
The black void behind all of the world,
Visible to only me,
a small world where I can think of anything and everything.

It's the color of pure unbridled silence,
The absence of any outside stimulation.
No voices, No colors, No feeling
The only thing that makes me feel truly alone.

It's the endless expanse of space,
The beautiful endless oblivion right above us.
Sprinkled with small dots of white and clouds of purple and red.
I wonder if the stars feel the freedom I so desperately crave.

Inaaya Siddiqui

“Rising Sea Levels”

I see the ocean pull its arms toward me--
I see the person I wanted to be
Stuck in the torn tides of torment.

I see excellent encapsulations of ethereal ends
I see that I could not make amends with my dead ends of doubt that spiral out like a water spout
Rising heights of the sea just as big as me and my broken; beheaded dreams.

I see within the deepest of depths the death of a daring dream of fulfillment
I see the fountain get higher and higher as I aspire to be the friend I most desire to be
Stuck beneath the spawning spree of salt.

I see that someone like me can no longer be
I see that I can no longer be someone worth your sympathetic longing for me
Not anymore at least.

Madison Glaser

“Ophelia”

Before the fog of frost and periwinkle settles in,
before the halo of violets rings around her neck like a noose,
before they find her,
heaven whispers her name.

Oh, fallen angel!
Oh, mourning dove!
Oh, body of pureness and pearl dust!
What has led you to this fate
to lie among the clipped wings of baby birds,
savaged and slain
clinging to pansies and poppies,
as you sing tunes of madness?

Still,
a mere fawn,
sipping from rivers of chamomile,
doesn't weep over waterlogged drapes.

The quaint doe,
doesn't dream
of warm rosemary and cotton sleeves.

So here she'll stay.
Her hair clinging to roots,
wading in hell's waters.



Kara Baaske

“Spoiled Guilt”

Guilt is spoiled milk
Seeping through the cracks into you nose
Nauseating you intently
In the back of the fridge
Curdling and molding
As it remains untouched

Guilt sits in the back of your mind
Rubbings itself between your thoughts
Making itself unforgeable
So you try to erase it
Scrubbing your thoughts clean
Harder and harder until you bleed
Trying to wipe your memory clean
But guilt is stronger than any soap
Stronger than the smell of any candle
The spoiled milk can not be covered
Just like guilt it will always be stronger

The guilt has eaten away at your soul
Slowly until there is nothing left
It will contaminant you forever

You've spent your whole life running
But guilt will always be faster
Chasing you so you don't forget

Everyone tells you it is time to move on
They tell you that you made the right decision
But guilt is a distorted mirror
It will flip and twist your thought
Until you forget the truth
You are wrong
You made the wrong choice

The guilt will never go away
The spoiled milk has soaked all your clothes
Founds it way into your walls
Making the smell inescapable
And unbearable
The guilt is now spoiled too
So no matter how hard you try cover it up
It will follow you for the rest of your life.

Ronja Schmitz-Wiencke

"I fall in love with strangers"

I fall in love with strangers
Just a glance is enough

On the train,
Sharing a sidewalk,
Walking up the fruits aisle of the local grocery store.

It's the way he picks fruit, a sly knock of the watermelon,
an odd choice with the lumpy strawberries,
but still choosing the pristine, bright green, limelight flooded bananas.

It's in the way she orders coffee, hair tucked behind her ears.
I watch the outline of her nose, sharp and bent--
I'd fall in love with that nose, I think,
sloping like the great peaks of mother earth,
with the nearby oceans encased in her skull,
the landscape of her is mother earth's match.

It's in the way freckles adorn collarbones,
ornaments of the body, delicate and oh, so slight,
and the ocean wave hair of people whose faces I haven't even yet seen.

Scattered like constellations,
scars decorate their bodies,
endearing even in all their tragedy.
I fall in love with strangers.

His crooked teeth, smiling brighter than the moon
A caring gesture to a passing animal,
"No, you go ahead," he seems to say,
not knowing anyone is watching.

She has stripes like tigers
folds like the sand at an ocean floor
cracks and creases like canyons
contoured by the hand of god.

Do we forget we are also nature?

It's the subtle habit of clicking her pen two times,
before she writes in those loopy letters--
It seems to echo my heartbeat.

Watching her shake her leg
to some invisible beat, her eyes staring lazily out the
speeding train window, sunlight catching her beautiful, moon crater skin,
I am reminded of the planets, our very own solar system.

Overwhelmed, by the beauty of flaw,
I often wonder
Do others look at me this way?