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ABSTRACT

A project of the Montana Arts Council Poetry-in-the-Schools program, this book contains a selection of poems by elementary and secondary level students and discussions of the program by participating poets. The poems and discussions are divided into the following sections: "Open Window"; "In Light of Five Hours," by Ann Weisman; "Group Poems"; "Missoula's Poet-in-Your-School Program," by John Holbrook; "Blues & Brights"; "Poems in High School," by David Long; and "I Grew Wings." Included are a section on recommended resources, an index of contributors, and a list of participating schools. (LL)

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# I AM AN UNKNOWN GREATNESS ★

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH  
EDUCATION & WELFARE  
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF  
EDUCATION

DO NOT BEAT UP THE CHILDREN. THE  
TEACHERS SHOULD BE HELD RESPONSIBLE  
FOR THE CHILDREN'S BEHAVIOR. THE  
CHILDREN SHOULD BE TAUGHT TO  
BE RESPONSIBLE FOR THEIR OWN  
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BE TAUGHT TO BE RESPONSIBLE FOR  
THEIR OWN BEHAVIOR.



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## YOU

The day you came  
I never knew you.  
Now I do but it is too late.  
I wish you could stay longer.  
I have enjoyed your stay.  
You brighten my day.  
As the sun, you're always smiling,  
trying to make us learn.  
I've learned something:  
not just poetry, but you.

*Cathy Chamberlain  
Loma Elementary School*

This poem sounds like a person  
who is trying to find out who he is.

*Laura H.  
Opheim High School*

**I AM AN UNKNOWN GREATNESS**

**POEMS & NOTES FROM MONTANA'S 1974-75  
POETRY-IN-THE-SCHOOLS PROGRAM**

**Edited by David Long**

This book is a project of the Montana Arts Council, Poetry-in-the-Schools program, supported by the participating schools, and by the Montana Arts Council through a matching grant from the National Endowment for the Arts.

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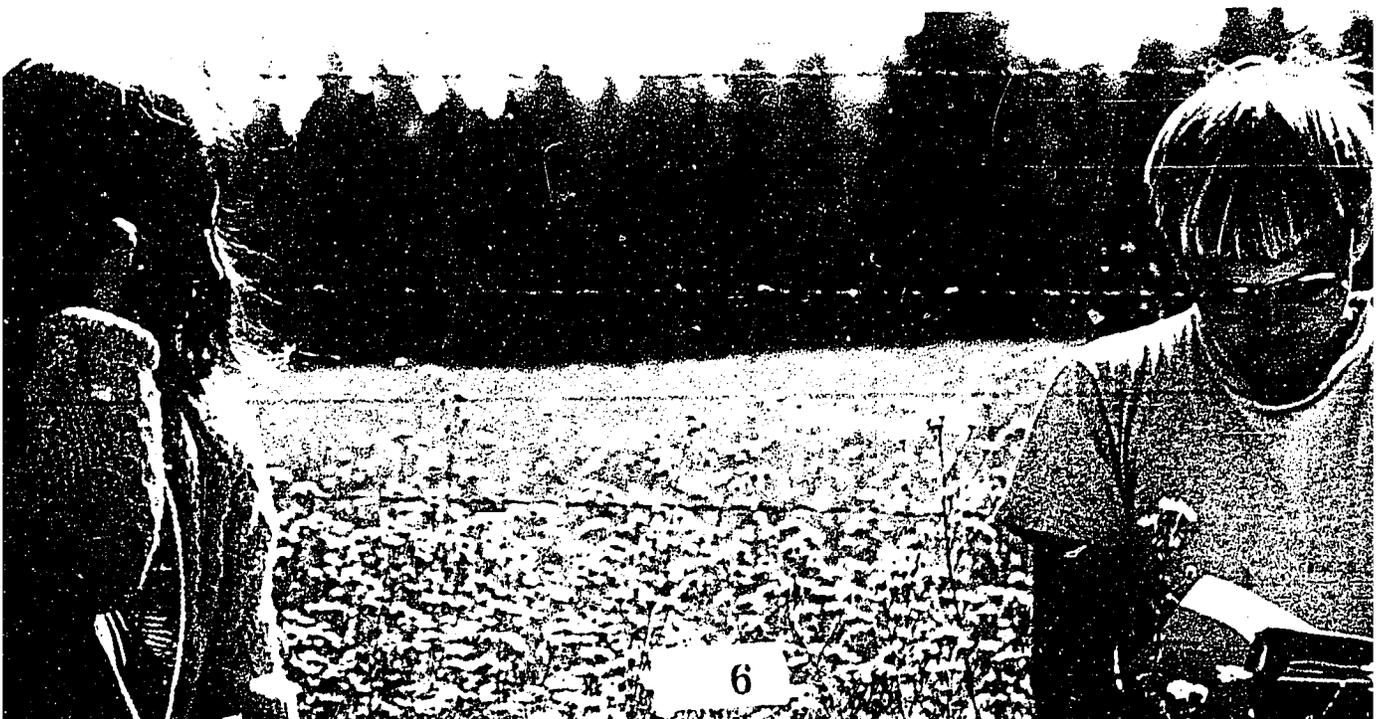
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Photo opposite: Poet Jane Bailey with Wade Schott at Sunset School in Greenough, September 1974.

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To MICHELE BIRCH  
dedicated friend of the students, teachers,  
& poets in Montana, 1971-1975.

# OPEN WINDOW

## THE ACCIDENT

The truck  
Zipping along on the highway  
On a bitter morning  
The driver  
Not knowing  
Around the next corner  
A sheet of ice  
As long as the truck itself  
Is waiting for him  
The truck hauls around the bend  
Hits the lumpy ice  
The cheap tires don't hold  
Off over the ledge  
Down the steep rocky ledge  
It smacks into the oak  
And stays  
The glass shatters  
And the chill of the morning  
Freezes the dead driver.

*Pat Brenner  
Russell Elementary  
Missoula*

## MY HEART

My heart is like an angry bird.  
Angry birds are like blowing kites.  
Blowing kites are like drifting slopes.  
Drifting slopes are like flowing waters.  
Flowing waters are just like you.

*Marshall Hayworth  
Loma Elementary*

## TELESCOPES

Once we dissected a frog  
in science. The teacher  
cut him open  
but didn't kill him.  
He killed the part of his brain  
that feels.  
He exposed his heart  
and we all had to go up  
a row at a time  
and watch its heart pump.  
We had to put our fingers on it  
feel it working.

The next day when  
we came back to school  
the frog  
pinned to its cardboard deathbed  
was in the garbage can  
a Kleenex stuck in dried blood  
around its heart. Suddenly  
someone yelled "It's still alive!"  
and I looked and there  
through Kleenex  
the tiny beating.

*Susan Murdoch  
Great Falls High School*

## THE SEA AS I SAW IT

The sea as I saw it, was blueish green,  
The sea as I saw it, was full of seaweed.  
The sea as I saw it, it saw me.

The beach as I saw it, was golden with sand.  
The beach as I saw it, had shells from far lands.  
The beach as I saw it, it saw me.

The sky as I saw it, was blue blue blue.  
The sky as I saw it, had a golden sun.  
The sky as I saw it, it saw me.

I felt the sea, I tasted it too.  
I felt the sea, it tasted of salt.  
I felt the sea, it felt me.

I felt the beach, I felt the sand.  
I felt the beach, it's smooth and rough shells  
I felt the beach, it felt me.

I felt the sky, its cooling breeze.  
I felt the sky, its warm warm sun.  
I felt the sky, it didn't feel me.

*Kathy Horesji  
Lewis & Clark Elementary  
Missoula*

My strawberry looks like a baby's  
fist with a grass bracelet.

*Connie Hahn  
Jefferson Elementary  
Missoula*

Rain is like a teardrop  
that is running down  
the face of the air.

*Plenty Coups High School  
Pryor*

## SEEING

Water on the streets  
from heavy rainfall  
in the raingutters  
breaking on the pavement  
water drops shoot up like dolphins

wreckages, planes  
decaying for a hundred years  
once soaring like eagles

brown destructed houses  
a broken toilet  
then a mansion white as roots  
and through the clouds  
mountains, snow.

*Debi Morrow  
Billings Senior High School*

## FALL

Invisible the wind that howls,  
falling leaves all around.  
Sky darkening earlier every night.  
Everything changes like  
the changing of the jackrabbits.

*Ella Crawford  
Browning Junior High*

## HERON IN AUTUMN

Heron is a small blade of grass  
in a rolling field.

All the roads are dusty now,  
filled with holes.  
The cottonwood's leaves sound  
like soft chimes in the wind.  
As I walk through the trail on  
the other side of town, the dead  
twigs crackle below me.

The summer's dead, it is autumn now.

*Shelley Sharp  
Heron Elementary*

## passing indian john hill

passing indian john hill  
& 11 cows on riverbed  
driftwood & river stones  
later on a graveyard  
enclosed by cyclone fence  
& montana cattle car  
nothing moves  
but this pane of glass  
too cold for hand or tongue  
passing indian john hill  
you ask about indian john  
i give you the cows & driftwood  
gravemarkers & cold glass  
ask if we can go faster

*Kim Anderson  
Sentinel High School  
Missoula*

The leaf floated softly through the air  
like it hadn't a trouble, hadn't a care.  
To see it better I laid on the ground  
and I saw it hit without a sound.

*Chris Sieben  
Paxson Elementary  
Missoula*

## AN ENDLESS WILDERNESS

When a season comes another one goes, but one's also here  
never deserting us. The Sky, I think is an important thing.  
Sometimes it's a burning torch or rolling hills.

The sky is an endless wilderness of colorful things,  
in fall full of fluttering wings.

The sky is flaming with the sunset that comes just  
as the sun is sinking behind the mountains.

The sky is an open mouth, not really a mouth to be afraid  
of for fear of swallowing you up, but  
a mouth that you could go into and look at all the colorful things  
sitting glowing on their shelves.

*Nedra Chandler  
Longfellow Elementary  
Bozeman*

## RAIN

I like the rain. It's like standing in a giant shower.  
Who knows when it will stop, surely not us.  
The rain is a giant waterfall coming down from the sky.  
When will it stop?  
It will stop when the lakes in the sky run dry,  
as dry as bread left on the cupboard for four days.

*Sara Croft  
Browning Junior High*

## THE GRASS

I come and go and come for many years,  
for every year that comes my way.  
I never forget to come for you.  
I go all over the world.  
I am like frogs covering the land.

*Carrie Connelly  
Browning Junior High*

## THE BUTTERFLY

Over my head, I see the bronze butterfly  
that flies in the air like a feather  
that has gone away from its home.  
The bronze butterfly is as free as the wind,  
going and coming as it pleases.  
Its wings are like the flapping  
of mud flaps on a truck.  
I wonder if the bronze butterfly  
will always be over my head.

*Margaret  
Opheim High School*

## EAGLE SONG

I see an eagle sitting on a rock at the top of the mountain.  
He looks around the green rich land below. He gets ready to fly.  
He spreads his beautiful golden wings out. I look up at him.  
He has sharp silver claws, his eyes are shining gold.  
His beak is pointed and sharp.  
I see he is all shimmering!  
He sees a little snake on the ground. He dives for it  
and now the snake is in his sharp claws.  
I see he is great and beautiful.

*Denise Stump  
Rocky Boy School*

## AS THE DEER RUN

As the deer run, I see visions.  
One of the visions is that when the deer run  
they know I am there. When they stop,  
I hear noises of other animals. The blue jay  
makes a noise like a robin. And when the wind blows,  
I hear the leaves fall from the trees.  
As I walk through the forest, I see animals like bear  
and squirrel. I see the mountain tops and think;  
How do the animals live in such a cold region,  
so high above.

*Darrell Armstrong  
Browning Junior High*

## MY DOG

My dog is big and never sleeps.  
Its legs are the lightning streaks  
that come during a storm.  
Its eyes are like the stars in the sky  
that glow during the night.  
It has the body of sun  
which gives warmth to flowers and trees.  
Its head is the moon which glows in the nighttime.  
Its ears are the sky,  
high above the earth.

*Robert Eagleman  
Rocky Boy School*

## CAT

My cat's eyes are like the design  
of a marble.  
His tee'h are sharp like a dull  
rusty knife.

*Lodge Grass Elementary*

## THE HORSE

The horse running in the wind,  
the tall grass running with its colt.  
When alone, she calls to her mate  
and he comes trotting with the greatest of ease.

*Peter Wolf  
Sunnyside Elementary  
Great Falls*

## THE RACCOON

Raccoon, raccoon, as you lie  
I like to watch you in the eye.  
I like to sit and fix my tie.  
I also always want to cry  
and then I am going to die.

*Mike S.  
Irving Elementary  
Bozeman*

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## GRANDPA

My grandfather wore shoes covered with mud  
and the soles falling off.  
And he was wearing baggy trousers  
with an old belt to hold them up.

A couple of buttons had popped off my  
grandpa's plaid shirt and he held a pipe  
in his teeth. His fluffy grey beard was  
singed from it and so was a shabby hat  
that shaded his eyes and hid  
the expression in them.

*Chrissy Heinen  
Jefferson Elementary  
Missoula*

## GRAMMA'S HAT

When the sky's silver flowers  
bent down to kiss the earth,  
Granma's hat was stolen  
from the pantry shelf.  
Dad wanted to call the militia  
but mother calmed him down.  
He should know by now  
that George Washington  
would take care of everything.

*Terri  
Ronan High School*

## GRAMPA

I dreamed I was canoeing in a sardine can.  
I was floating down the pulsating rapids  
of your mind, flying through life and time,  
love and hatred. I saw  
all that life has not begifted to me.  
I saw things through your eyes  
that are now impossible for me to see.

*Terry DeBonde  
Bozeman High School*

## MY COUSIN, TORI

There she is, Tori  
Playing in the sun.  
She's a little redhead.  
Fell in the pool,  
got all wet,  
waddled around.  
Told her mom.

*Cheryl Rippley  
Rattlesnake Elementary  
Missoula*

She doesn't know  
that I know  
that she's writing  
about who she  
likes in this room  
of girls and boys  
She's saying who  
she loves that  
might be in any  
room. He's in  
the fifth row of  
any room he may  
be in.

*Lisa O'Reilly  
Lewis & Clark Elementary  
Missoula*

## THE GUNSLINGER

The quick tall gunfighter  
could flash a silky smile  
that would send chills up  
his opponents spine or  
make his knees feel  
like ashes. His jawbone  
stuck out as if it was  
cut out with a hacksaw.  
But most of all,  
his expert swiftness  
rented quite cheap.

*Scott Tichenar,  
Meadow Hill Elementary  
Missoula*

## THEY FIT IN THEIR PLACE

All people are dull wedges.  
They fit in their place.  
The youngest are colorful circles.  
They don't fit in their place.

When they become older their colors fade.  
They start to fit in place.  
The children lose their colors from no thought,  
And no ideas of their own.  
They start to become dull,  
But they fight to hold their ways.  
The others sand them.  
Then they become a dull fitting wedge.  
They fit in their place.

*Dave Bumbeck  
Prescott Elementary  
Missoula*

## IMAGES

The sun is a pingpong ball that bounced too high.  
A rock is a tear from a forgotten child.  
A tree is a carrot that grew too large.  
A doorknob is a diamond that someone forgot to polish.

A man is steel that someone didn't temper.  
A woman is a willow that cannot be broken.

*Kathy Walker  
Ronan High School*

## CHIPS OF WISDOM

Chipped chrome winks  
Like sun on waxed paper.  
A wooden fence  
Will pinch you if you get too close.

Your throat will fool you  
If you talk too fast,  
And a grin cheers you  
On a burned out day.

*Cheryl Boehning  
Stevensville High School*

## IT WAS HOT

It was hot.  
We were walking in the desert.  
The heat knocked us down.  
We touched the sky.  
We saw a vulture's nest  
with three little ones in it.  
The vultures flew high,  
waiting for someone to lie down and die.  
We set camp in the crevices of the hills.  
The sand looked like a blanket of salt.

*Mary Ann D.  
Ronan High School*

## COUNTDOWN

A silent proud pad ready for launch  
the school sits in manganese moon shadow  
empty of its unfolding world stories  
some open to all  
some locked in heavy time mists  
the pad is burning for its proverbial Einsteins  
leans more toward black light Archie Bunkers  
a star number of cardboard incidents await  
all tied by universal dental floss to the silent pad.

*Gary Parks  
Granite High School  
Philipsburg*

## THE RED THING

One afternoon while I was  
playing baseball  
I looked up in the sky  
& saw a red thing. Soon  
it landed right on my foot,  
so I screamed as loud  
as I could because the pain  
was just killing me.  
And then suddenly it stopped  
and I looked down at my foot  
and it was gone.  
And I began to play again.

*Lucky  
Ronan High School*

## VISITING THE GALLERY

An ancient ladder  
hung against the barn's wall.  
It led up through a hole  
in the floor of the loft.

I walked across the damp hay  
to the column of light  
falling from the hole.  
I left the dark  
musty room below me  
when I climbed the rotted rungs  
to the loft.

I became myself  
in the midst of the tree slices.  
The hot sun  
burned lines in the weathered boards  
of the floor.  
The same sun  
was mother  
of those dead trees.

I shared the air  
with flies and pigeons  
whose door was the large  
open window,  
framing the country  
in front of me.  
A single entry on the gallery wall,  
painting itself as it hung open  
to the birds.

*Joe Scheer*  
*Bozeman High School*

## COUNTRY SUNSHINE

As I sat on the countryside,  
The sun shone brightly in my eyes.  
A slight breeze sent a chill up  
my spine as I sniffed the oak  
and the pine. I laid my head back  
on the young spring grass as  
the dew on the ground glittered  
like brass.

*Gary Fabricius*  
*Prescott Elementary*  
*Missoula*

## MY RADIO

My radio is a wonderful thing.  
It keeps me up at night.  
It turns me on like a bear with its cubs.  
It also is a terrible thing.  
It keeps me up at night worrying.  
The news is like an earthquake  
falling on one million people,  
making them suffer, little by little, by burying them.

*Kurt Grosse*  
*Sunnyside School*  
*Great Falls*

## MY BRAIN WAVE

My brain wave is made of a turquoise cloud.  
When I sleep, it floats in the air.  
When I'm awake, it's my head.  
I feel like the six million dollar man.  
I feel good all over the place.  
I don't feel sick,  
and I don't feel mad.  
I want to play.  
My brain wants to work.  
I feel good.

*Kenny Watson  
Rocky Boy School*

My breathing sounded like a stream. I wanted to be a poet. I wish my dog was here, wish I had a canoe and cabin, wish I could see the brain and how it works. To actually really see what the universe is like in a ship. I miss my old friends and wish they were here, wish I could live to the end of man, live in South Dakota, wish all the relatives I ever had were here, to have a potter's wheel, to go hunting and get some deer, to have a cat and an aquarium, to have all the records in the universe. to be able to see into the future, to have a spaceship, to live under the water in a home and as a fish, to have all the dinosaurs alive, to make airplanes, motorcycles, fly like a bird, have an airplane. I like to swim.

*Joe D.  
Morningside Elementary  
Great Falls*

Boy howdy man. It sure is wonderful letting all your thoughts wander and roam into space. It feels like a comet sitting in the sky all along just thinking about all of things it is going to do as it zooms through space. I feel like a dove about to fall in love with my world and all the things in it. My hand is getting tired from doing all of this writing and expressing all your thoughts away. I sure hope I become a poet. I sure like those days in Florida when we went to bayfront park and swam like a bunch of little fishes out of water. Now my face shows my very very best friend.

*Tom A.  
Morningside Elementary  
Great Falls*



## IN LIGHT OF FIVE HOURS

*Ann Weisman*

In light of five hours my friend, in certain beams, is like an everlasting decade. But the five hour beam we have shared is but a trifle through an hour glass. I believe you learn by every situation, by every union, for every mind can teach us something. The answer is yes to the knowledge I've gained. ... As always time shared is short, too short at times for memory. In light of five hours you've shared has been beautiful.

*Jerry Zindler*  
*Bozeman High School*

And now, we ask, "What happened in these five hours?" A poet came to Bozeman High School and conducted creative writing workshops. During the course of that week, something living and growing emerged. This is how it happened.

As my year as a Poet in Residence progressed, I felt the need to find my own theme. I had borrowed ideas from my co-workers, but I was using their approaches, not my own. Then, early in the winter, I found a poem by Robert Kelly, titled "The Masks." And I knew I had found my theme.

We normally think of a mask as something to hide behind. I began asking my classes if there was something more to a mask. Perhaps, I ventured, a mask is more than a shield. Could it be that a mask is a receptacle of power and that when we put on a mask, we take on the power of that mask? When we put on a mask, the power changes us, but we do not lose our Selves. Instead, new dimensions of being are added to our Selves.

The week begins with a discussion of mask. The students accept my definition without much difficulty. The masks are our keys to our imaginations. The creative part of our minds, so often hidden in a dusty corner, is now brought to the surface and will be stretched and asked to grow.

We begin trying on masks the first day. I read poems dealing with the theme of the mask we will try on. I have found many traditional Native American and African poems that lend themselves well to this. They are a good place to begin.

"Choose an animal. Perhaps one you always wanted to be. Or one you've admired. Or one who has been a mystery to you. Create a mask of that animal in your mind and slip that mask on the inside of your head. Then write a poem that tells me what your life is like."

### A WOLF I AM

A wolf I am, strong and beautiful  
A wolf I am, misunderstood.  
I am not just a killer,

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a hunter I am, having pity  
on the sick and weak,  
sparing them of their sorrows  
and sending them to their maker.  
A wolf, I am hunted by  
dog and man and bitten by trap.  
A wolf I am. A wolf I'll be.  
And wolf, I'll die.

*Dan Webster  
Ronan High School*

### **SQUIRREL**

As I run along this tree trunk,  
I can feel the cool bark under my paws.  
It is cool on my paws as April rain on  
moldering leaves.  
This bark is rough but it gives a good grip.  
God bless rough tree bark.  
Without it all I could do is slip around  
like grass in a hot fry pan.

*Rose Goldenstein  
Bozeman High School*

### **POEM**

A dog is a dog and a cat is a cat  
and a boy is a boy and a girl is a girl  
but who is me. Me, I do not know.  
Who cares if I'm a dog or a cat  
or a boy or a girl. I do not care.

*Woodrow Bear Child  
Browning Junior High School*

"Choose a season, or a time of day, or a celestial  
body. Slip its mask over your brain. Tell us, in a  
poem, what your life is like."

### **I AM THE MOON**

I come out after the sun goes down.  
Coming out, spreading light rays  
not as bright as the sun,

like a man with a flashlight  
who is helping his friends,  
the deer and other little animals,  
be able to see in the dark to eat.  
Sometimes I come in a shape of a banana,  
or a bowl that is pouring out water,  
or just the plain old me, the shape of  
a round yellow cookie that has just been baked.

*Keith Aylesworth  
Ronan High School*

### **NIGHTFALL**

Friends, I come in pleasure to a man inside.  
He plans infinitely the unmended soul.  
I come from where no memories are today as  
tomorrow's.

All are afar, trusting no more.  
Now, I won't forget.  
I am not too enabled  
for I have seen you far and near.  
I am nightfall, who is not clear,  
a reality, not known from quantities,  
from old and new.

*Jeanne  
Opheim High School*

As the week progresses, we explore other  
realms. "Become a dreamer. Tell us of your  
dream."

### **POEM**

I dreamed I was a beautiful eagle  
flying in the beautiful sky.  
I dreamed I was a chief sitting in  
a beautiful teepee smoking a pipe.  
I dreamed I was water going down  
the steep hill, crying.

*Fredrick Coffey  
Rocky Boy School*

### **I HAVE ALWAYS DREAMPT OF FLY AWAY HANDS**

I have always dreampt of my father's hands.  
5 o'clock sweat, raising children is dirt.  
Crop failure hands with thistles under his fingers,  
made of plows.  
I have always wanted to own them,  
passing year hands.  
I know I could wear them well,  
with every finger as a child.  
I could hold them and  
pray they don't fly away.

*Mary Anne Miller*  
*Ronan High School*

The week moves on and we try on a variety of masks. We become oppressed people and we become braggarts. We become hosts, inviting guests to magical places. We become wanderers — we listen to music and the music takes us on a journey. We even become people who can talk to animals or parts of our bodies.

### **ENDLESS HIGHWAY**

While I listen to the radio,  
I drive at a calm, slow speed.  
I look at every road sign,  
wonder when I get to the next town.  
I go on a highway that seems to go forever,  
sign after sign, hill after hill.  
I think of the sleep I missed.

*Bob Adams*  
*Ronan High School*

### **THE SHELL**

The beats of my heart sound  
like an ocean roaring through my fearless heart.  
The shell gives me a funny feeling  
that it is going to die with me someday.

*Marshall Hayworth*  
*Loma School*

### **LITTLE FLY**

Little fly — little fly, come and land  
on my thumb. Come and be my friend.  
I will take you everywhere I go.  
Come little fly, come.

*Stephanie*  
*Irving Elementary*  
*Bozeman*

### **COME TO THE UNFORGOTTEN**

Come onto the unforgotten.  
The land — peace and freedom and happiness  
that is never forgotten.  
No wars to fight,  
all light to night,  
the pleasure never forgotten.  
The wonderful colors to see,  
the beautiful sights to see.  
comfortable freedom for ever and ever.

*Brian J. Phillips*  
*Irving Elementary*  
*Bozeman*

We try on as many masks as possible because one mask cannot excite everyone's imagination. I tell students this, so that no one feels that he or she is a failure because they did not write a poem one day. This is important. Keys to the imagination are as varied as we are as people.

The end of the week looms ahead. In the high school, we leave masks and begin the sticky business of revision. The poems have been written in fifteen or twenty minutes and they need work. So we work, and refine them into finished pieces. In the junior high and elementary, we make masks of our poetry person. I then ask the students to write a poem, telling me what it is like behind the mask.

### BEHIND THE MASK

On the mask is dreadful eyes,  
but what's behind it? Days of dawn  
or maybe sounds of crying,  
who would ever know.  
What's behind the mask?  
Could it be sounds of voices, people singing?  
Oh what is it behind the mask?  
Could it be darkness of clouds?  
What is behind the mask?  
I think its the feeling of other people  
you care about or it could be just what it is.  
Who would ever know.  
*Cheryl St. Goddard*  
*Browning Junior High*

### MASK

A mask is a face to face  
with the material that you made,  
facing a face of one face you made  
of a face that you thought of.  
Masks are a bright thing to wear on Halloween  
but not on any other day  
or maybe at night either.  
*Calvin Weather Wax*  
*Browning Junior High*

In this week, we have been many different things. We have expanded our imaginations and expressed ourselves in language. Sometimes, we have even learned something about ourselves. As Delora W. from Browning Junior High says,

"I like writing these poems because they're fun and it brings out all the hung up problems in you and after writing your poem, you feel free, more out of control and you can understand your problems easier. It sort of lets out the beast in some people."

The week is ended. I have given myself, both thoughts and feelings, to the students. And they

have shared their thoughts and feelings with me.

### THE POET

There was a poet.  
She was very nice,  
even if the mice clinked  
crawling across the floor.  
She taught poetry when she  
reached in her bag and said,  
"What do I get, some smiles  
or hymns of the world today?"  
So she stayed a week and taught  
poetry and also she reached in her bright orange bag.

*Marty Hayworth*  
*Loma Elementary*

# GROUP POEMS

## I DON'T LIVE IN THE DIRT

When the last stars were too dim to see, he stood and looked around. The birds chirped like monkeys faraway. He felt like he'd been sleeping in a cloud. He saw one star and it spoke to him like a tree. It seemed to say "you can be afraid if you want but if I were you I'd look where I was standing." He looked at his feet where a tiny forest of mushrooms was growing. He asked the mushrooms "do you know where I live?" The head mushroom started laughing and just said "how could you be so ridiculous, worrying about home, how silly, home is where you pop through the ground!" "But you don't understand," he said to them, "I don't live in the dirt, I live in a house. You should see my house. It's white as girls' shoes and it's tall and it's full of windows that are like squares of air and it has stoves and floors like shiny rock and it's made of trees with their fingers all tied together and it has a roof that keeps everything dry and it has curtains like hanging grapevines and it has an indoors that's like being inside a coconut and it has a huge red chimney."

*3rd Grade  
Collins Elementary  
Black Eagle*

## EYES LIKE A BLACK SUN

Once I saw a cat, but I never saw it again. It had fur like the inside of a pillow, like the black of a witch's hat, like a sweater worn by a star, like the moon putting on its shadow, like a fish eating snake fire. The cat went into the river where he lives. I see footprints in the snow. I hear fighting under the water. At night I dream of an eye shining like a black sun.

*Grades 1 & 2  
Collins Elementary  
Black Eagle*

## GREEN

Green scrapes and squeaks.  
It is a hard honking and scratchy.  
Green is bouncy.  
I saw a green box — it said "Close me."  
I saw a big green bike squeaking.  
I saw a green puppy going around town.  
I saw a green hippo swimming in a regular pond.  
I heard a green chair singing "Three Blind Mice."  
I heard a green flower say "Pull me, pull me."  
I saw a green carrot but I didn't eat it.  
I saw a green fish swimming in green water.  
I saw a green dress that laughed red laughter.  
I saw a green kid doing nothing.  
I saw a green tree dancing.

*Primary Class  
Loma Elementary*

## THE FUNNY COLORS OF GREEN (LIKE WHEN GREEN IS MIXED IN WITH PURPLE)

Green feels like sleeping in the grass.  
Butterflies are green in the same way.  
Bananas are green and they like to grow.  
Green feels very heavy and soft.  
Green feels like cotton.  
When green talks, it says, "I don't know."  
Green grows around in circles.  
A bird is green and an elephant is green.  
Green is the color of a monkey.  
Green sounds like a tornado  
and the tornado is in a field.  
Green is the color of a cow and a horse.  
The globe is green all over.  
The sky is green all over.  
The green leaf flies up.

*Mrs. Thomas' Class  
Hall Elementary*

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## **RULES FOR KINDERGARTENERS**

Don't go by a ship making big waves.  
Don't drive like a cop.  
Don't go in the forest unless you know there's not too many animals.  
Don't go by red ants.  
Have thunder rods on your house.  
Don't jump over the mountain.  
And don't climb mountains either.  
Don't go by grizzly bears.  
Drive your combines slow and straight.  
Don't push logs out into the river.  
Do get messy when you eat chocolate cream pie.  
Don't get near a witch.  
Be funny like a clown.  
Don't get lost.

*Darin, Bruce and Kevin  
Carter Elementary*

## **SILLY RULES**

If somebody falls off a tree, they'll get in the street.  
When a worm tickles you, it doesn't tickly.  
Breathe under oceans.  
Let houses fall down on you.  
When someone punches you in the stomach, it doesn't hurt.  
When you paint a picture, the rules are not to press down.  
When somebody paints a building, it keeps dripping in their shoes.  
You get cold when you're in the sun.  
A house will fall down if you paint it.  
Leave the pictures in the house.  
When you paint a star, it cracks and breaks up and falls on your head.  
Don't let cars run over your toes.  
If you see a hole, the door falls down.  
When you write your name, it's not there.

*Mrs. Sperry's Class  
Irving Elementary  
Bozeman*

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*Handwritten scribble*

## MY THIRD EYE

My third eye can see foot odor.  
My third eye can see everything happening at once.  
My third eye can see snow falling on the sun.  
My third eye can see seeds growing under the Mediterranean Sea.  
My third eye can see Santa Claus swimming in a volcano on Pluto.  
My third eye can see a pig as big as rabbits dancing in a toilet bowl.  
My third eye can see polar bears floating in the air over a nudist camp.  
My third eye can see my next door neighbor's girdle.  
My third eye can see green turtles flying by the window.  
My third eye can see Frankenstein wearing a bra.  
My third eye can see a war going on under the ocean.

*3rd Grade  
Whittier Elementary  
Bozeman*

## HOW IT GOT ITS VOICE

Before cars, before dinosaurs, before the first blade of grass came up through the dirt, it drank from the river, it fell in the river. It swallowed water, small fish, weeds, animals no bigger than the world looks like from the big dipper. In its black stomach the water grew and spoke to him, it growled, it snarled, it grew louder and bigger until everything started to look at it. The grass said you look like rocks clanging together, like a pine crashing to the ground, like I sound when lightning hits me. It looked at the grass for a minute and said I'M ALIVE! Then it swallowed the grass whole.

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## THIS THE MORNING

This is the morning that I washed my face and it fell off  
This is the morning that I put my make-up on and when I looked in the mirror my face was upside down  
This is the morning I got up and took a bath and when I got out my head fell on the floor  
This is the morning that days go backwards  
This is the morning that my dog ran around and around outside chasing nothing until he died  
This is the morning I put my shoes on backwards and they fit  
This is the morning the floor wasn't there and we had to walk on the walls  
This is the morning that you flew off the deck into a flock of geese going south  
This is the morning the rats eating my fingers woke me up  
This is the morning my socks went to ashes when I went to put them on  
This is the morning I saw the world in black and white  
This is the morning popcorn reversed and went back to seeds  
This is the morning I turned on the shower and worms came out  
This is the morning that a bird came to my window and sang Bach  
This is the morning that I happened and I missed it  
This is the morning that the toilet flushed the wrong way  
This is the morning that I fell out of love and was happy  
This is the morning that I woke in your arms and was lonely  
This is the morning I washed my teeth with Crest and they all fell out  
This is the morning when my cheerios get up and use the lumps of sugar as stepping stones to a chairlift to the ground  
This is the morning when everything is round but cannot seem to roll  
This is the morning that the landlord broke a stick of licorice over my head as I bent over to touch the ceiling  
This is the morning that the hospital threw out the stockpile of blood into the streets and the blackbirds bathed in it  
This is the morning that made all rainbows black and blue  
This is the morning that weeps over the living and not the dead  
This is the morning that I heard two drunks talking about an old, grey witch at the hospital and found out it was my mother  
This is the morning that I saw a mantis eating a grasshopper and it looked like Tom Jones and his mic  
This is the morning that the Mafia came and pulled out my eyelashes with pliers  
This is the morning that I disappeared  
This is the morning that I was born again  
This is the morning that the Tidy Bowl man jabbed me with his oar  
This is the morning that I woke up and my mind was blank and the first thing I did was blank  
This is the morning that Snap, Crackle and Pop went Bing, Bam and Boom  
This is the morning that the sun turned red and the earth cracked open and everyone fell inside  
This is the morning that people were sick of having mornings  
This is the morning I woke up and had a cramp in my bed instead of my leg

This is the morning the t.v. watched all of us And the radio turned me on  
This is the morning when books started reading us And boats flew and planes sank  
This is the morning Morse Code intercepted us  
This is the morning deer hunted me And guns gave life  
This is the morning King i sal's oil turned to Kool-Aid  
This is the morning that my alarm clock was blown to bits by a 50 mm howitzer and it kept  
ringing  
This is the morning that a brigade of 300 gophers took over my bed  
This is the morning after last night, whenever *it* was  
This is the morning that I finished what I started tomorrow

*Ronan High School*

## ARGUMENT

"Of the last survivors on earth  
Oh! It would have to be you!"  
"Particulates," I fumed.  
"There's a plastic shark gnawing on your knees with stainless cardboard teeth," said Rick.  
"Glassy chocolate Johnson's feast on your soul," I cursed.  
"Your greasy shirt smells good," said Rick.  
"Positive atrocities melt your funny mother, miss," I chuckled mischievously.  
"May tennis shoes melt and dribble from your ears in red hot feathers to sear your armpits," Rick  
choked out.  
"Gastric juices constant from your sister's brother while Janice feasts on your singing  
Bosanova," I replied, though almost stymied.  
"Go fly a banana to the milkyway and drown," screamed Rick.  
His concession still in mind I followed up slyly, "Incantation frivolously merits our favor though  
knowledgeable temptations are visited frequently," and closed in with, "Our point is clear,  
concede friend."  
"Your magic belt buckle remarks! I think you need a new pair of french fries," Rick commented  
wryly. Alas, I fumed anew, thought boiling back to the top of my mind, "Your inconsistent  
castles fall from the Roman Empire with scrambled eggs toppling their Stoic personalities," I  
hissed. Rick capered to a nearby rock where he stood quivering, shaking his finger, and said  
accusingly, "Your seedless pickle has misfired again, and the broken hubcaps assault your mind  
and it collapses in your ketchup bottle."  
I trembled, and marched off toward Dandelion muttering, "Banglesnaps!" all the way.

*Rick Morrow & Ken Harvey  
Billings Senior High School*

# 3 *sestinas*

## CABIN FEVER, 25 BELOW

I saw the sky  
shine on the black snow.  
The ponderosa cracked  
like a rock bleeds.  
Needles fell on the tile  
like weather on the mountains.

Crisp and purple were the mountains  
under the diamond sky  
polished like glazed tile.  
Breathing away the snow  
I watched my eyes bleed  
as dawn began to crack.

As my eyelids cracked  
I could not see the mountains.  
All around me roses bled  
into the famished sky.  
Rodents made of snow  
boogied along the tiled

ice, which was tiled  
along the blue crack.  
The bubbled shadow on the snow  
moved down the mountain,  
moved like planets across the sky.  
I saw icicles bleed.

I saw the stars bleed  
reflecting on the tile  
of the deadening sky.  
Nothing but endless cracks  
and terrible festering mountains.  
The charred snow

ate up the barnacled snow.  
I still bleed  
along with the mountains  
along with the bleached tile  
that now cracks  
like green stones in the sky.

The sky becomes snow  
as they crack and bleed  
like tiles crushed by a mountain.

*June Safford's Class  
Bozeman Senior*

## FOREVER

There was an old rusty gate  
stained with light  
paint that the children used to rush  
up on, now splashed with red  
blood where they threw the blue jay.  
It was the end of his journey!

He starts a new journey  
through a marshmallow gate  
to find the divine Blue Jay  
whose beak glows in the light  
like a mirror. In his red  
eyes a knife rushing

like the starlight rush  
of still another journey.  
For a while, red  
nightmares, swampy gates,  
subways filled with moonlight.  
Only one stoned blue jay,

alone. A blue jay  
frightened by the icy rush  
of the fire whose light  
blinds his journey.  
Another petrified gate  
touched with red,

kissed by red  
salamanders. The blue jay  
crashes through the gate  
in a frantic biting rush,  
this endless journey  
winding through foggy light

through the only light  
coming from the red  
trees. A journey  
in which the groundless blue jay  
keeps falling and rushing  
at the closing gate.

No gates in this distant light.  
Only the rush of smothering red  
and a single blue jay  
in his one circling journey.

*Columbia Falls High School*

## **INSIDE A GLITTERING BONE**

We reached for outer space.  
Running down our cheeks, tears  
like a crazy jigsaw puzzle,  
like a Labrador dreaming of a bone.  
He had magic on his face  
& his mind stretched

out & his stretched  
fingers struggled for space.  
He wasn't afraid to face  
an Amazon of world tears  
or the light from his own bones.  
He couldn't imagine. It was like a puzzle

the kind of rotting puzzle  
you find stretched  
over buried papery bones  
in the farthest black space.  
His retreating tears  
dried on his face.

Also on his dripping face  
something like a future puzzle  
except that tears  
can't be stretched  
into the dark space  
inside a glittering bone.

Everywhere, horse bones,  
everywhere, green wretched faces  
winking & disappearing into space  
into a majestic puzzle  
that might have been stretched  
forever over a god's tears.

He dropped diamonds like  
an eagle's tears,  
he flew like an arrow of bone.  
His arms outstretched,  
his aspen leaf face  
making a last puzzle  
& dreaming of space,

the space between space & tears  
& his paralyzed puzzled bones.  
His face was stretched like fire.

*Pace Program  
Chief Joseph Elementary  
Great Falls*



## MISSOULA'S POET-IN-YOUR-SCHOOL PROGRAM

*John Holbrook*

What's Missoula's Poet-In-Your-School Program all about? It's about School District #1 and the Montana Arts Council (via funding from the National Endowment for the Arts) putting their heads and hearts together during the summer of 1974 so that I would be employed full-time, primarily as an artist, a poet, and secondarily as a language arts consultant, working with more than 6,000 children (K-8) in 18 elementary schools.

Was this a bold and innovative step for a school district to have taken? You bet it was. I can't brag enough about how well the program was received this past 1974-75 school year. I found support everywhere and its successes grew beyond all of my expectations. Students, teachers, administrators, parents, and a lot of down-to-earth folk are very proud of the fact that Missoula is unique among all but one other school district in the nation. Only the city of Minneapolis, as far as I know, has another poet working full-time.

What are the general aims of this program? They are these: 1) to establish at an early age an audience for good poetry, especially contemporary American poetry; 2) to provide students with an opportunity to see a 'real live' poet at work — listening to me read and talk about my own poetry, asking how I made my poems; 3) to create a stimulating environment for students to write their own poetry; 4) to make myself available as a resource person very much interested in supporting and/or complementing existing language arts programs.

What are some of the general goals I felt the program was capable of achieving? I felt that through readings (it cannot be emphasized enough that poetry, as an oral medium, is a tremendously important performing art) children would become better listeners, that by sharing my work and the works of other poets I could help them develop an appreciation and tolerance for a variety of experiences and attitudes of others. I felt I could help students — in their study of language— feel good about themselves and the creative/learning processes they would be going through. I felt that I could assure them that their writing was and *is* a reflection of the importance of their own lives

and that their growth as human beings and their continuing study of language both involve the same living process. I felt I could encourage students to explore in greater depth their own creative impulses, that it was fine to be able to have as much fun with language as they could with toys or at play. I felt the way I could make my presence felt through language in my own poems would encourage them to expand the boundaries of their own language usage. I felt that my enthusiasm for good writing would make them become better readers, perceptive and appreciative of not only their own writing but that of others. I felt I could encourage them to begin to view all literature as an effort — and a rewarding one — to respond to one's experience in creative ways.

Was the program a success? Judging by my own delight, the fun I had watching the children having fun creating, how rewarding it was for me to share with them their joy of language, how important it made me feel to step back while a child stood up in front of class reading his poem and realizing right then and there the usefulness of his imagination, how great it was to hear from librarians that students were cleaning out the shelves of poetry, how neat it was to hear a teacher say this kid hasn't done a thing all year and now look at him! or that this girl or that boy were wanting to spell better to improve what they had written, and how grand it was to have giddy students stuffing poems in my pockets in the lunch room or between classes while walking down halls, poems they had not written in class but during recess or lunch or at home...yes, I'd say the program was a success. And by a landslide!

What's a typical session like for students when I visit their school? If I haven't met with a particular group before I always devote our first

meeting to becoming acquainted with one another. I start off reading poems that are immediately comprehensible, fun, humorous, even nonsensical. I share several anecdotes about the kind of stinker I was when I was their age. This usually creates a lot of laughter, an easing of apprehensions. Laughter has a way of breaking down most any barrier one might run into. When I tell them I once got my fanny tanned good for blowing up a light bulb in a lamp sitting on a coffee table next to our sofa with a bull's eye shot of pickle juice from a huge dill pickle I happened to have been munching on, we all zoom right up to the ceiling like a herd of bubbly angels. I move then to poems written by some of my favorite poets, a few deceased but most still alive and writing. And they really like hearing that a lot of these people are good friends of mine too. I start off with poems I know will be accessible to their age level experience and competency with language, and from there to poems where figurative language, imagery, and rhythm become the heart of the matter, this stuff we call poetry. I finish our first session reading 4 or 5 of my own poems with careful explanation of when, why, and how I wrote them. I talk, too, of what my intentions through language were for each poem. And I never forget to tell them how much work each poem took, how many revisions I lived through to get the thing exactly the way I wanted it. Then I read them, and more often than not am asked to re-read them immediately. These sessions, depending on age level, last anywhere from thirty minutes up to a full hour.

Do I have a favorite approach, a sure-fire set of exercises to guarantee each child will write a good poem? No, not really. My emphasis is not that each child should write a "good" poem (this would be impossible) but rather making sure

they are having fun doing it and that they can feel proud for having written something that only they were capable of writing. Poetry is where you find it and if you're lucky, if it happens to be your day, you can make it happen on paper. For one child language and experience, freedom and control might come together as a new event and we call this a "good" poem. And while one exercise might trigger something beautiful and exciting for this child, it might not be quite the cup of tea for another.

So what does one do? One comes to class well-armed, with an armada of tricks and games, and he tries a few of them and he takes home with him reams of poems the children have written. And he reads them and takes pains to write complimentary notes on each piece of paper. He takes note, too, of the relative successes or failures of each exercise and goes from there. And where does he go? He might decide to follow through with his original plans, sticking with a preconceived set of exercises where each one builds upon or reinforces previous assignments and ideas, or, he may completely disarm himself and try something altogether new to him, something one might have accidentally stumbled upon spilling coffee on the newspaper at breakfast.

One such exercise came to me while I was sopping spilled coffee up from a daily crossword puzzle. I found myself unconsciously rather than intentionally composing a 'found' poem one morning with the words and phrases entered in the down and across columns. I bought a new paper on my way to school, cut the columns out minus the box of squares to be filled in, made enough copies for each child, told them what I had found myself doing, and passed them out. Here's an example or two of what one might expect to happen:

We used to  
Make fun of Jacob's brother.  
Crinkly fabric,  
Elliptical,  
Broken words.  
He was an Ohioan,  
One of the Tylers.  
A jumbled mind.  
He knew only orders.  
We used to  
Make fun of Jacob's brother.  
Like gruesome carnivores  
We tortured him.  
Then we were young.  
And boys.  
Now we know what we did  
To Jacob's brother.

*Chriss Frissell*  
*7th Grade*

Or this frighteningly prophetic poem about Watergate written by David Main, then an 8th grader, just as news about the scandal hit the stands three years ago:

#### **WATERGATE**

Edison's my middle name  
and things are not the same.  
The bug in the rug got caught  
and Wallace and Noah are getting hot.  
The re-birth of a new era came  
today as dull sounds echoed  
throughout the White Herdman's hut.  
The lawyers and Hindus rushed  
and gushed like Abominable snowmen  
in time to the whoopee dance up  
and down the Danube.  
As the Pharoah of Little Egypt wielded  
his big hammer of light wood,  
and the Teapot dome sailed by,  
wolves quartered him with their  
government power, lean and hungry...

as they cried "Adhere O-Chief!"  
he tried to back off  
but they backed him down,  
aliens, angered with slender swords.  
All this as dull thuds echoed  
in the Herdman's hut.

Recently I talked with a class of 8th graders about the possibility of finding material for poems anywhere, where one least expects it. I had also talked with them about figurative language and the importance of vivid description, and of making comparisons between unlike things for the sheer fun of it. I sent them home with this assignment: before you recklessly gulp down all that stuff on your dinner plate, see if you haven't got something there worth writing out. Dave Raykowski came to class the next day with this beauty:

#### **I SPILLED MY MILK**

I spilled my milk,  
the river flowed rapidly through  
the spinach  
and on down *between* the deep  
crevices of the baked potato  
and off the cliffs of roast beef,  
down into a pool of gravy  
where it waited to be tended to.

I'd like to conclude with one more poem, a touching and wonderfully honest piece written by Lolly Herron, a 5th grader. As all her classmates did, Lolly listened attentively for more than half a period about the importance of our deepest feelings and our memories of them. She wrote this poem during the time that remained, perhaps 10 or 15 minutes:

#### **I'M SO SORRY**

I'm sorry  
for what I did  
I didn't mean to  
take the baby birds  
They were hurt  
so so bad  
I'm sorry they died  
I did everything I could  
to save them  
I fed them  
I watered them  
I even buried them close together

# BLUES & BRIGHTS

## HOLD EVERYTHING

The world runs like the ocean currents,  
I flow like the riffle river.  
I have grown a husky beard,  
while you, a few nubs.  
Voices sound like far off, rolling thunder,  
mine must sound like electricity feels.  
I have read the book while they  
have not read the title.  
My dessert is gone and you  
have just buttered your bread.  
I have been happy, sad, mad, and wondering,  
and you are happy.  
My heart has pumped gallons of blood,  
and yours is being primed.

*Ron Trow  
Lodge Grass*

## GAMES

One night you threw  
rocks at my dog  
and burned holes  
through my skin.  
So, I looked at the sky  
and pretended it  
was interesting.  
But it was just  
a game.  
You won, of course,  
you always did,  
and I gave in again  
cursing you and the  
playing of games.

*Paula Verplogen  
Havre High School*

## PORT ANGELES, WASHINGTON

I saw phony.  
I saw cheap.  
I saw the Skagit River again.  
I heard you walking.  
I saw myself.  
  
I saw wind in my boots.  
I heard the eagle soar.  
I felt the handprint on the wall.

I drank your beer.  
I shared your bed.  
I ride a chrome bike.  
I heard good book walking.  
I saw cold sun waking.  
I know your door is always open.

I felt lonesome wind.  
I heard big ships sailing.  
I saw jump.

I ran.  
I saw free.  
I felt foghorns blow.  
I heard rocking horse people  
eating marshmallow pie.  
I saw walk, don't walk.  
I heard my wolverine.  
Looks like thunder.  
I'm much too old.

*Rick Morrow  
Billings Senior High School*

## IN MYSELF

My form sits in class  
with a faint murmur of  $x + y + z$   
but my soul soars outside the closed walls  
over mountains and forests  
like an eagle  
I fly  
I sit at home my mind in a song  
I float with melody  
my body sits empty  
my eyes looking clear  
but I am not there  
I fly to the sky's end  
I am an eagle  
today I fly  
Tomorrow I take out the garbage.

*Lorri Vinion  
Russell Elementary  
Missoula*

## LIFE IN AN EGG

Life in an egg is very hard for me.  
I am as wrinkled up as a prune.  
If I try to move,  
I get even more scrunched up.  
I don't like it in an egg —  
it is so small, even smaller than me.  
It's as small as a two inch rock,  
and I'm 4 foot 5 inches.  
It is a very hard life for me.

*Kelly Siefert  
Opheim Elementary*

A little quietness  
would allow me to think  
and I want to think  
If I had a pair of ear plugs  
maybe I could think  
I want to shut out all  
the outside noise  
I want to sit and think  
of what I could write into a poem  
I want to sit and think  
of how things could be  
I want to sit and think  
about the future  
I want to sit and think  
about quietness  
the quietness that  
allows me to think.

*Tim Runkel  
Ronan High School*

## A LILY'S LIFE

A lily  
is beautiful  
and then when  
it grows  
it is ugly  
and that is how it goes.

*Ronna  
Elmo Elementary*

Bring a ring and a button  
and ink through the snowstorm  
it will be cold. So hang on  
John!

*Susie Britton  
Cold Springs Elementary  
Missoula*

It feels like flowers are growing at the bottom of the river.  
It feels like the cool and warm, like roses growing.  
It feels like the wind blowing cool and strong.  
It feels like a fish burped very softly.  
It feels like a car that is very noisy.  
It feels like a cloud that rains all the time.  
It feels like a circus parade with a clown who is  
    juggling and making a lot of noise.  
It feels like elephants stomping and roaring  
    and making a lot of noise.  
It feels like my mom washing dishes and doing it very softly.

*Mike  
Whittier Elementary  
Great Falls*

I like to be outside when the sky looks like  
a huge blue sapphire  
I like to chase a rainbow right after a  
summer rain  
I like to stand on top of a haystack,  
pretending I'm a giant  
I like to look toward town on a clear  
night, as it shimmers like a wedding band  
of many diamonds  
I like to eat watermelon on a hot summer day  
I like to float down a creek on an innertube  
and pretend I'm a duck out for a swim  
I like to play basketball and play dirty

*Jennifer  
Granite High School  
Philipsburg*

## **WHERE I SIT**

As I sit on the sun bathed porch,  
I see the cats on the rug asleep.

The dog runs by chasing a butterfly  
barking with happiness. The smell of  
bread baking and supper cooking puts  
me in a trance. My father walks by  
whistling a strange song. A hawk flies  
over looking for food.

And here I sit and let my life age.

*Susan Compton  
Heron Elementary*

I dreamed that I was a lion and I was in the circus in Ohio. I had lots of lessons but at the show I did not know anything and I was taken out of the circus and then they took me to California to put in an animal prison. And then they tried me in the show and I did good in the show there because it was nice there. And in Ohio it was cold so I did not do good in Ohio. And that was my dream.

*Michelle Hensley  
Lewis & Clark Elementary  
Great Falls*

## UPSET

This is the morning that the horizon  
moved down from the sun.  
This is the morning that a dark grey cloud  
held me to my bed.  
This is the morning I woke up to insane laughter  
from the alarm clock whose tongue was ablaze of fire.  
This is the morning silence stole my ears and  
voices stayed in my pocket.  
This is the morning when the night before  
kicked my head and said "don't forget."  
This is the morning my Levis swallowed me  
and threw up.  
This is the morning the day died but  
the cat laughed and ran away.

*Steve Woodwick  
Havre High School*

## ALONE

I have four lone wolves  
and the darkness of my head.  
I wake, flying through space,  
grabbing at stars to slow me down,  
while flowers bloom,  
now worrying if the sun  
will shine or die.

*Colleen Wright  
Ronan High School*

## BESIDE MYSELF

Beside myself, I am alone.  
Alone with all my thoughts.  
I live alone. I die alone.  
I have no one but myself.

I don't live behind bars.  
I am in jail in myself.

*Anita Arcannel  
Browning Junior High*

## MOON FACE

Blister moon kiss my face  
while I ride white horse wagon

Brush my face oh lonely sound  
your nights not come for muskrat's revenge

I listen to lonely skylark's moan  
she tells stories of pain

Grass grows high under eyelids  
stone, my brother, sleeping

I know you well black man of cheese  
where you once plowed up whispering winds

Hold my hand on rising sun  
dear moon has left me alone

in cups of red noodles  
Please not today that ripping cold

who snowbound lost has trapped my hand  
I have not to step over mountain peak

I have only to touch  
moon face tonight.

*Kevin Helvey  
Billings Senior High School*

## I DREAMED

I dreamed that my body fell into my mind  
like being swallowed by a great snake.  
I dreamed that there was death, and blood  
flowed like honey in a way that it sweetened  
the death and corrupted man.  
I dreamed that all the world was a ball  
and as the gods played basketball,  
they flattened it with one mighty blow.  
I dreamed that children lined the walls  
like paint, and cracked and dried,  
then fell away unwanted.

*Ginger  
Bozeman High School*

I was galloping down the trail  
of my drive way

It was windy and snowy

I tied my horse to a small post

I strutted into the saloon

I said, "whiskey please"  
My mom slapped my face

I pulled out my sixgun  
and shot off a cap bang!

My mom screamed and  
dropped my milk

She told me to clean my room  
I kicked my broomstick

and bawling, ran up to my room

*Marc Smith  
Jefferson Elementary  
Missoula*

When I am in bed I hear  
cars rambling by  
and my dad watching T.V.  
in the other room  
and talking with my mom.  
And have you ever thought  
about dying?  
I sit there in bed with my  
nose plugged up,  
having to go to the bathroom,  
afraid to get up  
in case my dad hears me  
and spansks me.  
Thinking of my bird, just  
like he's in jail, I get up  
and pet him, and go back  
to bed.

*Terry Murphy  
Central Elementary  
Missoula*

## **BORED**

I feel like an old book that looks brand new.

*Carol  
Plenty Coups High School  
Pryor*

Dresses are bad  
Blue jeans are the best  
especially when they are faded  
They seem to go with everything  
but your mother.

*Michelle Kemper  
Rattlesnake Elementary  
Missoula*

## **LONELY**

I feel like a ripening apple in the month of December.

*Plenty Coups High School  
Pryor*

## THE HORSE

I was born a horse.  
I lived in a beautiful green pasture where I grew.  
I knew nature, no longer small.  
Then, they took me away to a big race track  
where I saw suffering, many colors of people,  
confusion of eyes.  
Now I am old and despised.  
I am left in the bad pasture with bad water  
and no food.  
I am old.  
To be old on the earth is bad.

*Guilherme Corrua Lemos  
Opheim High School*

## I AM FROM LONG AGO

Long ago there were open plains.  
Long ago the buffalo roamed the land.  
Long ago smoke rose from teepees.  
Long ago rivers ran free from pollution.  
Long ago the sky was a pure blue.  
Long ago the spirits talked with my people.  
Long ago my people lived free on this land.  
Long ago my will to live died.  
I am my people crying out.  
I am the spirit that flew away.  
I am the baby that laughs nomore.  
I am the mother that cries.  
I am the grandfather who remembers.  
I am an Indian.

*Brenda Ellis  
Billings Senior High School*

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Breath drawn in. arms above my head  
goose pimples chasing up my legs  
as I walk gasping. deeper and deeper into shadowy water.

Minnows nibbling at my skin  
I dive in  
and swim, stretching out, pulling back,  
pretending I'm a frog  
coming up for a shivered breath, swimming like  
a dog with his head up  
gazing at the peaks beyond the lake  
they're holding up the pastel sky.

I swim way out until  
I'm in the middle,  
the shore looms dark but strangely friendly  
I welcome loneliness  
turn back now, stretching towards shore  
then running up the salt-smelling sand  
to crouch by the fire, warming my chattering bones.

*Kathe Jarka  
Paxson Elementary  
Missoula*

## JUST ME

I am the enemy to small fowl.  
I kill and I am a scavenger.  
Living in a dark, lonely place,  
I exist alone. I have no friends,  
no nodding acquaintances, just me.  
Today I saw another fox,  
running across the slender horizon.  
But it was only a glancing thought  
that I might know him.  
I sometimes wish I weren't what I am,  
who I am. I exist alone.  
I have no friends,  
no nodding acquaintances.  
Just me.

*Martha Steele  
Whitehall High School*

**Dear John,**

I am  
sorry  
I  
put  
sauce  
in your  
underwear  
it was  
so funny  
I kissed  
my girl  
friend  
and  
she  
is  
only  
8  
and  
she  
wears  
lip  
stick  
and  
that  
night  
I had  
lip  
stick  
on  
my  
lips  
and  
the  
next  
day

I  
put  
lip  
stick  
on and  
I kissed  
her in  
the lips  
and she  
went  
crazy

*Mike Ward  
Whittier Elementary  
Bozeman*

### **THE BASKET**

Once upon a time, there was a basket.  
Its name was Alfred.  
It had not a thing in it.  
I am sorry.

*Allison  
Irving Elementary  
Bozeman*

### **NASTY**

I'm sorry  
for the way I acted  
those nights.

My hands roamed  
like the Nomads of the desert  
the gentle curves of the desert  
so soft, so desirable.

I can only hope you'll forgive me  
for what I've done and  
for what I am going to do.

*Dale Phipps  
Busby High School*

## THE DAY WHEN THE FLOWER WIND CAME

This is the  
day when the flower  
wind came on the 2nd of  
july when it hit us soft all  
the blue flowers bloomed the  
fastest then other flowers  
did when it hit the  
people were filled  
with laughter of all the  
city looked real pretty I think  
this city is prettier than it  
was before but the most  
pretty of all was  
when  
the  
flow  
ers  
grew on  
the houses  
too  
thats  
how  
come  
they  
laughed.

*Paula  
Lame Deer Public*

## THE RAINY WEEK

The rainy week is bad for me.  
I can't go out.  
Rainy days remind me of five things.  
One is I think it's the end of the world  
and we might be drowned.  
Two is that I think that all the animals  
will die of pneumonia  
and I think it's spooky without wildlife.  
Three — when it really rains hard,  
I don't like it because it gets too muddy.  
Four, I don't like it because all of the winos  
have no place to go and it's cold  
and they might catch pneumonia too.  
Five, I hate rain because it might flood.  
I hate floods. I don't like the looks of them  
when all the houses are floating down  
and the cars are covered with water.  
That's why I don't like rain.

*Mike Ollinger  
Browning Junior High School*

RainRainRainRainRainRain  
RainRainRainRainRainRain  
RainRainRainIRainRainRain  
RainRainRainRainRainRain  
RainRainRainThirstyRain  
RainRainRainRainRainRain  
RainRainRainRainRainRain

*Janet Pogue  
Billings Senior High School*

## A GREAT LOVE POEM OF ALL TIME

Stephanie can't live without Gregg,  
Anita is Brian's dream come true,  
John and Paula are inseparable,  
Jason is the cutest curly-haired kid,  
Cindy is just fantastic,  
we're all in love,  
and everything is roses.  
this week

*Scott Tucker  
Great Falls High School*

My memory is a camera  
It will never ruin  
A snowflake never melting  
Your footsteps in my vivid  
imagination.

*Tilly Donnafield  
Busby High School*

## WHITE XMAS

the raw redness of those cliffs  
& the car radio humming  
white xmas  
& me humming  
white xmas  
licking the red dust from my skin  
I saw the cliffs shake  
& Crosby skipped  
a couple bars  
I knew my mother  
too far down the road  
was crying  
the wet kiss  
on the back of my hand  
shook with the car  
going faster & faster  
white xmas white xmas  
the disc jockey kept saying  
this is only a test

*Kim Anderson  
Sentinel High School  
Missoula*

THURSDAY my book report  
was due in history.  
they had corn dogs for  
hot lunch,  
it snowed again after  
three spring days,  
Lanny Jenson took a swan dive  
off the school bell tower,  
and we talked about it  
ALL THE WAY HOME.

*Scott Tucker  
Great Falls High School*

## CHANGE

Oh, Oh. lookout!  
Here comes another change.  
So soon? I barely got over the last one!

*Cammie Brown  
Ronan High School*

## POEMS IN HIGH SCHOOL

David Long

My first aim in working with high school students is to find means for them to get to know their own voices, something that's already theirs. But "voice" is a tricky word, what is meant? Poetry is, first and last, the spoken word. In these paperback days we shouldn't forget that poetry shares roots with song, chant, prayer, and storytelling. What's down on the page in black and white might be thought of as the *footprints* of the real poem, the one made out of breath. Just as no two snowflakes or fingerprints or sunsets are alike, no two voices are. Each comes out of a different body, and each body is the vault of a different set of visions, memories, ideas, dreams, imaginings, frustrations, skills, cravings... The job is to hear exactly how we sound, and then to see what new territories of expression the voice can lead us into. Of course, there are plenty of distractions. For instance, the average high school student in America, I'm told, has watched somewhere over 350,000 television commercials, not to mention the shows. The figure is fortunately less for the rural Montanan, though clearly the thoughts and sounds of the national culture are strong in all of us these days. But how do *we* sound? What's rattling around unnamed in our imaginations? How can we get at that energy?

By "voice" I have in mind several things, ranging from the sleepy grunts we give each other in the hallways every morning, to our most carefully considered speech, to our most anguished crying, to our most passionate yelling and singing. The point is, regardless of the situation we find ourselves in, we respond, we feel things. We all bump into moments in the



history of our lives that need speaking about, when we stop and say, *wait a minute, this is important...*

In the classroom I don't necessarily look for the well-made poem. I look for the raw edge in somebody's language, that open nerve, words that sound like they've never quite been put together that way before. It still amazes me that at this late date someone sitting there on a Thursday morning in the back of Miss Fly's sophomore English can utter a line *nobody* in the history of the universe has come up with before. Say it in a new way and it can never look quite the same again. See it that new way and even the crummyoldeveryday world is that much more mysterious.

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My own evolution in the Poetry in the Schools program, especially in the high schools, has been away from heavily structured "language games" — at least as a steady diet. I realized that it wasn't too hard to come up with something that looked like a pretty good piece of writing, but was somehow empty. I wanted to get beyond that. I've come around to the poet Phillip Lopate's belief that "a poem that doesn't deliver the emotional goods is a waste of time." The "writing starters" I use now are mostly short on devices, and less and less as the week's residency progresses. Hopefully they provide just enough structure that people's ideas fall into them naturally, just enough to engage the gears. One note on any poetry device: there are no guarantees. A group that's in the mood to write one day, may want to listen another. Or maybe that sure-fire exercise you cooked up back home just isn't going to be right for that class. Everything I do in the classroom relates in some way to how real poems get written; after all, nobody wants to feel like what they're doing is trivial or silly.

The voice, like any good muscle, needs exercising, stretching. It needs to say some things it's never said before. Most of us are pretty good at the usual everyday kind of talk, the trading of information, answering questions like: "What time is it?" When I'm first with a class I try to show that words don't always have to fit this kind of contract, that they can be like the stone or clay of a sculptor. They aren't always logical in the usual way. Supposing the answer were: "The plums are humming." What time would *that* be? The imagination has its own logic.

Sometimes in a class we'll do QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS. Everyone gets a partner, maybe someone you don't know very well. Each person, separately, writes out six questions (who, what, when, where, how, why) on one side

of the sheet, then six answers (same order) on the back side. Each question and each answer are completely separate, just individual lines out of the blue. They don't have to have anything to do with each other, or even make much sense. But they all should sound interesting. When that's done, we go around the room: first person reads the first question, second person answers with his/her corresponding answer, and so on. *Why does the cat's fur bristle? Because it's my birthday and no one is home.* I call these collisions. What happens when you run one person's words, ideas, images, against another's? Doesn't this happen everyday inside us anyway? It usually turns out to be a lot of fun, full of surprises and sharp jogs to the imagination.

There are lots of other ways to set up collisions. For instance, have everyone pick some interesting words out of their heads and write them on the board — good physical words like "porcelain" and "fidget" and "sparrow hawk." Then write a prose poem (or one with lines if you like) that tries to uncover the story that's going on between some of the words. Can you bring the most dissimilar words together somehow? Can you make sense out of it? Another note here: I'd heard that expression "make sense" often in the classroom; seemed like that's what everyone was supposed to be doing most of the time. And yet, in the way it's usually used, nothing's being "made," just "fit into" the regular logic of the world. Then it dawned on me that this was the business of the poet: to make sense where it didn't exist before, *from scratch*. Anyway, the point of the collision sort of game is simply to loosen up, to get over a fear of really working the language.

One of the misconceptions about recent poetry is that it is no longer concerned with rhyme and meter, with form. In the classroom I usually avoid teaching traditional forms because I

think they can be a needless damper on a beginning writer's energy (though there are exceptions: see the *sestinas* included in the "group poems" section). The poem, after all, is about feeling and experience, not about rhymed words. But I am careful to show that most contemporary poets do care a great deal about sound and pacing. Inexperienced writers often can short-circuit the natural force of their poems by trying to make them into a perfect form — the urge to stick in the first thing that rhymes is pretty hard to resist, and often the real image isn't awakened. But some kind of pattern can be helpful in doing a poem, so I sometimes suggest picking a formula to begin each line: I saw..., Let..., I'm tired of..., and so on. The variations are infinite, and I've found that almost anything will work. It's a way of writing as old as the Bible and the results are often startling, chant or prayer-like. I particularly liked this by Chris Proxiv of Billings:

I curse this god-forsaken land on which I fight.  
I curse the hail which ruins our crops.  
I curse the frost that freezes our unripe vegetables  
and fruits.  
I curse the fire that kills the hogs and burns the barn.  
I curse the truck that burns in the hayfield.  
I curse high prices.  
I curse the gas company for not letting us buy gas.  
I curse the man who lets his cows trample our hay.  
I curse the neighbors who lock their gates.  
I curse the contaminated water we drink.  
I curse my wornout shoes and ragged clothes.  
I curse winter.  
I curse our road without any gravel.  
I curse the creek when it runs dry.  
I curse the bare pasture where my horses stand.  
I curse our septic tank when it backs up into the  
basement.  
I curse the water line.  
I curse the land company for giving us a loan.  
I curse the crooked men.

I curse my father's rugged face and think "why us?"  
I curse the eight-mile fence.  
I curse the night.

I try not to have too narrow an idea of what a good poem looks like — it varies so much from voice to voice. One of the worst distractions in the way of discovering what your kind of poem is, is worrying about what a poem *ought* to do. It's a problem writers of all ages have. Better to just let it all come out first and then later see what you've got and shape it. In the high schools, there's another big distraction: being too *abstract*, trying to talk about everything at once. High school writers sometimes think you have to weed through all the real experiences and only put down the organized ideas, the truths — as if what really happened weren't worth anything. But, of course, poetry's different from philosophy. Poetry is about how things happen (real or imagined), and how we feel about it all. Being too vague or general can quickly frustrate good writing, and needlessly. Want to write about something big like LOVE? Okay: what/who do you love? what's he/she/it like? what kinds of things does it make you feel? exactly how does it all happen? Love's like light: hard to talk about without saying what it falls on, what it lights up. Leave the essays for another time, tell what it's like to haul rocks for a friend, or what the moon looks like over the Bear Paws in June or September. What about love's odd moments, when she spills Hawaiian Punch on your art project, or his eyes suddenly turn you into water. How about showing what a complicated mixture of emotions love can be, as the speaker in Rachel O'Keeper's poem does:

### TIME

It's two-thirty A. M. now  
Bars dark, streets silent.  
The dog whines at the door to come in.  
You're home now, I know because I heard you.  
You stumble and fall  
I get up from our bed to make you coffee.  
You begin to cry and tell me you're sorry.  
I help you up and bring you to bed.  
I'm sorry too.

Or what about feelings that are less obvious,  
those confusions we all have, as in Donna  
Swank's poem:

### WHAT IS IT

in the pit of my stomach  
a dead bird  
the decision not made  
the mother  
in the dark kitchen  
her coffee cup with the broken handle  
or a train wreck  
or something I ate gone sour  
my sister crying  
he doesn't love me  
I hate him I hate him

Or this nearly perfect little poem by a  
third-grader, Richard Lee Henderson, from  
Great Falls — who hasn't had a day like this?

One morning I was going to fix my bike  
I went outside to fix  
and forgot to fix my bike.

Most residencies in the high schools last a week.  
A lot can happen in this short time, one of the

most important things being that teachers,  
students and poet can all get to know something  
about each other's real and imaginary lives.  
Though we believe many of the skills of writing  
can be communicated, the poet doesn't bring  
with him/her a cellophaned package of goods.  
It's something else, something more important.  
I often wonder what will remain with people  
after I've moved on. Maybe the images from a  
few poems — theirs and mine — and some ideas  
about making poems, but I'd guess mostly it's  
an enthusiasm, an attitude. Or so I hope.

# I GREW WINGS

## IF I HAD BEEN A SHOOTING STAR

If I was a shooting star  
I'd go through the universe very far  
I'd also have a very large mass  
of ice, snow, and a lot of gas.  
I'd zoom past the planets  
and way past the sun  
I'd go faster than any comet has done.  
I'd be discovered from a tall tower.  
I'd look just like a great snow shower.

Then I'd turn into myself  
And I'd wonder and wonder  
Why did I look like this?  
When I had looked like the thunder  
I was in Black and in the dark.  
I zoomed right past a meadow lark.

*Robbey Allen  
Roosevelt Elementary  
Missoula*

## THE EARTH

The earth is as round  
as a silver dollar.  
It sparkles like the snow,  
like it's rare.  
I like you humans.  
You treat me as if  
I were a bouncing ball,  
rolling around the universe,  
like I was keeping on  
trucking down the road.  
and keeping you humans  
safe and safe.

*Darrell Stump  
Rocky Boy School*

## STAR

I am a star.  
I help the scoop in the Big Dipper.  
I shine like a sapphire.  
Sometimes, I'm the first star out,  
and people all over the world  
wish on me.

*Debby  
Opheim High School*

## SHE FELT CRAZY AND STRANGE

She heard her own name calling her saying come into my arms and I'll feed you, keep you in a warm house with children laughing, playing, so she went further into the strange world. Just then she sees a handsome guy. She asked him are you the one who called me and he said yes I did. I know it is a strange place but it's the same way I got here. I tried to get out but I couldn't, there's no way out except to stay here forever. But one day she went to see the king of the world and said to him how do you get out of this place to get to my own world and live with the flowers and trees. there is no way out of here.

*Traet Keller  
Whittier Elementary  
Great Falls*

A girl in dull brown  
In a dull place  
She drifts off to sleep  
A dream drifts into her mind  
She dreams she is in a field  
She is wearing a bright red dress  
Picking plums of the darkest purple  
A prince rides by  
In a beautiful orange cloak  
He asks the lovely maiden  
To come away with him and be his wife  
But the maiden, handsome as he is  
In his beautiful orange cloak,  
Shakes her head, saying no.

*Marla Getschman  
Central Elementary  
Missoula*

It seems as if the blue light was calling my name. When I went forward so I was surrounded by this light, it was just like a door opened up and showed a palace in the water. There were people dressed very elegantly and they looked just as I did except for one thing: they were very tiny; only a little over a foot high. There were magnificent horses and they were very small too. It was like a story you'd read in a book, but I was really there and I was really seeing it. They didn't act as if I were even there. There was a rich velvet throne and my name seemed to be coming from behind it. I walked over to it and it seemed to tell me to sit down. When I did the people all stopped. One came forward and spoke to me. He asked if I believed this. It was the same voice that had been calling my name. When I said I did, they told me to go back to my home and tell everyone what I'd seen. If they believed me, then they'd know we were like them and they wanted me to come back. If no one believed me, I was never to return. I already knew I wouldn't return.

*Marie Hobnes  
Granite High School  
Philipsburg*

## THE CHANGES OF THE SEASONS

I am that great emperor that tells the trees  
to drop their used clothing and settle back for a relaxing time.  
I control the geese, shooing them north.  
They dare not stay when my anger turns to cold, harsh emotions.  
I freeze life away. I blow my winds strong. Power, power, power...  
my life, my self, my way of living. My want for company  
mellows my temper. I welcome the songbirds  
to homes I have prepared. The trees dress in their finery  
and flowers dance at the order of my breezes.  
I search them. I burn them. I cool them.  
I haven't time or patience to stay spring, summer, winter, fall.  
I am an unknown greatness.  
An anonymous king.

*Kelly Kunz  
Whitehall High School*

## MOUNTAINS

Two birds building a nest in Washington's eye on Mount Rushmore.  
Two penguins sliding down Mount Snowslide in the north pole.  
Two mountain goats climbing up Mount Matterhorn.  
Two people climbing up Mount Everest.  
Two eagles circled Mount Rainier.  
Two walruses saw some penguins sliding down Mount Icicles.  
Two mice dug a hole in Mount Softside.  
Two pack rats carrying away junk from Mount Junk.  
Two ants crawling up Mount Anthill.  
Two fish swimming in Mount Jackcreek.

*Dena Sanford  
Longfellow Elementary  
Bozeman*

## HOW THINGS IN THE UNIVERSE GO TO SLEEP

How does a word go to sleep? A word  
shrivels up and disappears.

How does the wind go to sleep?  
He winds up a pole and swirls around all night.

How does a book go to sleep? Why it  
closes up like a clam.

*Susan A. Pfliger  
Cold Springs Elementary  
Missoula*

## TO TALK TO A DOG

1. Why do you eat out of a bowl? It's the only thing to eat out of.
2. How come you always bark? There isn't anything to talk about.
3. Where do you get such a long nose? I was born that way.
4. How come you never run after the stick when I tell you to?  
Because you never tell me to go get it.
5. Why are you so lovely? Because you think I am.

*Patty Grover  
Opheim Elementary*

## SEVEN DOORS

I open the first door and see a child  
growing. Only that child instead of  
starting from the ground & growing up,  
he lives in the air and grows til he  
can touch the ground.

I open the second door and see the sky  
with all the stars & clouds but the  
sun is out and the ground is the sky.

I open the third door and see a glass of  
red, clear, bubbling wine. The wine  
grows cloudy & I taste it, it is blood.

I open the fourth door and see rain falling  
like sparkling diamonds from the sky  
but the diamonds land and are tears of  
silver gold.

On the other side of the fifth door  
I sense love and look to see the earth  
embrace the loved ones she feeds only  
to fall back destroyed by their stupidity.

Behind the sixth door  
I see my mother waking me from a sleep  
that has been made wide eyed.

I open the seventh door  
and see a light that  
is nothing but the night.

*Cher*  
*Lodge Grass Elementary*

## THE FIREFLY

I am a firefly  
I love to fly  
Sometimes I wonder  
How come I have four wings  
That look like stretched raindrops  
And why I make a buzzing noise  
I just don't know do you?

*Shelly Francisco*  
*Roosevelt Elementary*  
*Missoula*

I went to the first  
door and saw a  
big clear sky full  
of stars of many colors.

I went to the second door  
and saw a sun set behind  
high mountains.

I went to the third door  
and saw nothing but  
trees, grass, and animals.

I liked what I saw in the  
third door so I didn't bother  
to open the other two doors.

*Plenty Coups High School*  
*Pryor*