



**34th Annual
Poet's Seat Poetry
Awards
2025**

***Sponsored by
The Friends of the
Greenfield Public Library***

2025 Poet's Seat Youth and Adult Winners/Finalists				
POET	POEM	Rank	category	
Christian Drake	Necropsy of a Spirit Deer	1st	Adult	
Kevin Thomas	Foal	2nd	Adult	
Skyler Lambert	A Place of the Heart	3rd	Adult	
Becky Barnhart	There's a gray fox	finalist	Adult	
Avery Cassell	Burning	finalist	Adult	
Christian Drake	Lockdown Drill the Day After the Eclipse	finalist	Adult	
Ursula Humphrey	Longer to launch and other lies Ellen tells	finalist	Adult	
Zachary Jacob	GARDEN OF AMERICAN DELIGHTS	finalist	Adult	
Shay Swindlehurst	Extinction	finalist	Adult	
Jovonna Van Pelt	mated	finalist	Adult	



ALL FINALISTS IN BOTH ADULT & YOUTH CATEGORIES, 2025

POET	POEM	Rank	category
Alex Li	Ode to the Deep: A Discovery	Co-winner	Y 12-14
Saul Hirshberg	My mother has lots of freckles	Co-winner	Y 12-14
Calliope Pietrewicz	An Ode to Life's Changes	Finalist	Y 12-14
Rebecca Zhang	Life Problems	Finalist	Y 12-14
Saul Hirshberg	Observations	Finalist	Y 12-14
Henry Maxey	Windows in the Sacristy	Co-winner	Y 15-18
Luce Cordeiro	December 16, 1773	Co-winner	Y 15-18
Amelia Dickson	Life Cycles	Finalist	Y 15-18
Rex Kim	Dear Vermillion	Finalist	Y 15-18
Henry Maxey	A Snowshoe with Hegel	Finalist	Y 15-18



YOUTH WINNERS, 2025

Observations:

#1: It looks realistic, honest, and perhaps unattractive, but complex,
It flies away, unwanted.

It looks elegant, magnificent, but terribly simple.

It stays, wanted.

We perceive things superficially, and thus we must appeal
superficially.

It flew away with blotches and scars, flaws and wrongdoings,
uniqueness.

It was not respected, was a marvelous fruit with a terrible
appearance.

Was inaccessible, but honest.

We aspire to achieve accessibility, absence of blotches and scars,
simplicity.

We should not seek to disguise ourselves because

We

Are

Unique

Nothing congruent, nothing exponential, a function that obeys an
infinite
pattern.

But the limit does not exist,

Not because of discontinuity,

Or an undefined value,

But because

We

Are

Unbounded.

Observation #2:

#2: We are turkeys, gliding on ice, in a realm of infinite experimentation.

We have explored, and have yet to explore more,

But have explored redundantly,

We forget our discoveries,

Fixate on

One

Single

Thing

Establish meaning.

We cannot explore everything, nor should we aspire to.

We cannot establish meaning with too much information.

A polyrhythm

1:2:3:4:5:6:7:8:9:10 will not accomplish.

Ponder over a polyrhythm

2:3, it will accomplish.

A near absence of light,

Will accentuate the presence of light remaining.

Abundance can not prove beautiful,

Sparsity can.

Saul Hirshberg

Youth Finalist

12-14 year olds

My mother has lots of freckles

My mother has lots of freckles.

In the summer, they come out more, and they are a symbol of her enthusiasm.

Although, sometimes they blend in with her tranquility, her serenity, and also her considerateness.

The freckles are living organisms.

Each one with a distinct set of characteristics.

One happy, one sad, one timid, one boisterous.

But it goes deeper than that.

One is timid and boisterous simultaneously.

One says, "Hi!" when you wave to it.

The other says nothing.

They're like different music genres.

One uncensored, not afraid to speak their mind, like a dinosaur
relentlessly

roaring as the days go by.

Exerting its tearing vocal chords to the fullest.

One adventurous, experimental, and oblique.

But they all form into one person, a combination of all of these
things, like the

double helix that forms us.

But this time it's on the outside, not in.

But me, I don't have many freckles.

Just a bit on my nose.

But maybe those are more complex than my mom's.

'Cause maybe just one freckle on my body is affectionate, adorable,
agreeable, alert.

Maybe they all add up to the same number.

So in the end, it's just the freckles that make us who we are.

Saul Hirshberg
Youth Finalist
12-14 year olds

Ode to the Deep: A Discovery

The lake lies still, its surface wide,
A golden sheen where rays collide.
I step within; the water grips,
A fleeting chill on fingertips.
It wraps my skin, a soft embrace,
Its quiet pull, a measured pace.
I dive below; the silence grows,
The world dissolves where shadows dance.
My breath runs short, my chest constrains,
The depth conceals its vast remains.
I rise to air, the sky expands,
The water frees my open hands.
The ripples fade, the lake is chill,
Yet in my veins, it lingers still.
A quiet power, cool and pure,
Its pull remains, a lock secure.
I leave, but carry what I found —
A perfect peace, a life unbound.

The water spoke; its voice was clear:

To let go fully, have no fear.

Alex Li

Youth Finalist

12-14 year olds

An Ode to Life's Changes

It's winter now and the world is trying to breathe under the thick
frosting coating the world.

It's cold and frosty with sharp points dazzling like little knight's
swords.

The snowy owls ask who to the snow.

The crunching of my feet.

The sun going away leaves me tired and sitting on the snow.

The goddess of everything sweet licks my face warm with love.

I grab her leash and we head back up.

Back into the snow's war with determination.

She tightens her grip to my leg licking her frosty lips.

Then we see home.

I kick off my wet shoes and flop on my aunt's couch.

The warmth melts me like a snowman would if summer came early.

I smile at the dog as night slowly goes into soup covering the bowl in
nothingness.

I tuck her into her dog bed and kiss her head.

The door swings shut as the little warmth lights up my path.

It's almost winter now and the world will be trying to breathe under
the thick frosting coating the world like a tasty cake.

Sharp thorns of pine poke me.

I rip the leaf in my hand, throwing it like confetti.

It is fall like red and orange leaves, it dances across like a time
machine.

It is fall with its warriors crossing paths.

A bloody battlefield under foot, the blood leaves curl under my feet.

A dance floor of colors.

It's summer, a break from school, a blue wave over the world.

A sigh of relief being the warmth of the sun.

It's warm now, not chilled to touch.

Swimming and sleeping in.

Everything is a whisper or a yell.

Stargazing in the warmth with the stars above.

My arms are deep in the cold grass in the cool of night.

Perfect shine like the lights before you die.

Its spring green covering earth like a blanket of hope.

Death now wisping away in the wind like the news when it's terrible.

Could it be pain or health.

Pain in my heart for the warmth of the sun, hitting my chest with effort.

pain in the way earth lives but hope in the way that I could get free from my jail.

The spring warmth of hands holding yours and will take care of yourself.

Stars grabbing your sadness with its hands of death.

It's too warm and I want winter to grab me to keep me safe.

I want fall to grasp me and shake me upside down.

I want life to go back to winter and its way of war.

If only I could be safe back in winter.

But now it's not time to wish I will see the snow again.

I have only seen eleven winters.

Now the year has gone by and it's winter again

It's cold and stuck. Can't it be spring again?

Calliope Pietrewicz

Youth Finalist

12-14 year olds

Life Problems

Don't let the sharpness,
Of the crescent moon cut you.
For the blood that twinkles within,
Is the Milky Way.

People ask for the direction to paradise,
And the hope in their eyes shines iridescent.
But the silence that follows,
Drowning in darkness.
Training to the senses.

Stop calling her,
The static on the line wavers.
As the echoes bounce off the realms of reality,
Surpassing.

Broken glass,
Reflects a person the best.
The spaces in the cracks,
Exceeding infinity.
The poker table dripping with cards,
A mirror of the player.

The witching hour,
Disappears in the brightness,
Of the city.
Because it is the lights,
That so easily pulls humans.
Into the welcoming arms of illusion.

Rebecca Zhang
Youth Finalist
12-14 year olds

December 16, 1773

Dear bloody beautiful history.

The thing I have spent hours gawking over.

Ever since I discovered Hamilton (the musical of course).

This year I took my school's 10th grade American History class.

And it was one of the most depressing, but rewarding classes I have
ever taken.

Shout out to my teacher Mr. Elliot for that.

But seriously, I love American history. I eat the stuff up.

Particularly when it revolves around the American Revolutionary
War.

A fun fact about that war, tea back then wasn't just in the one-use
Bags that they are now.

They were in blocks, that would get broken off commonly with a
knife, and were a

blackish dark blue color. They kind of looked like fancy thick
chocolate bars, If I'm being honest.

The crates that stored this tea, they held a year's worth of it, or more,
normally.

It is widely agreed upon that the actual damage the Sons of Liberty
caused that fateful night—

When they destroyed 340 chests of tea, in today's money, would be

worth more than 1,700,000 dollars.

It's honestly crazy to think about.

Because, most people think, ohhh, they just threw some tea into the water and pissed off the British.

Which sure, if you're just looking on the surface, that's what they did.

But in the end, it just shows how creative humans can be when trying when trying to get what they want.

If it's an angry Pitchfork torch-wielding mob, beheading a ruthless tyrant for mistreatment of the people. . .

Or some King (King Henry of England, anyone?) mistreating six of his wives to the point where they made a musical about it.

how messed up do you have to be for a musical to be made about how much you devastated your wives?

But most of the time, I know history can seem just like a bunch of angry individuals, mainly men, grabbing at any piece of power they could grasp.

There's plenty of good too, I promise.

It just takes a little finessing of the page sometimes to find.

I know that probably sounds cheesy, and like you've heard it 100 times over.

Which is kind of true.

That stuff is thrown in our faces from when we are little.

Saying everything will be okay, and it can get old after a while if there's no actual change.

But I'll give you an example, to lift your metaphorical spirits up. Picture this for just a second.

There's a stage, and in the center, there's a woman, around mid-20s, in a wheelchair.

That person's name is Judy Human, a woman who made arguably the most progress for people with disabilities in American history.

She is surrounded by 150 other disabled people.

They are in the Hubert H. Humphrey Building located at the foot of Capitol Hill.

They have been there for weeks, with little food and water, and are running out of their various medications.

But they won't falter, until they get the 504 bill that they were promised by their government,

by a President who would rather sneak out the back door of his house than have to deal with the pain he has caused.

Eventually, a representative of the United States government is sent to them.

After several teeth-chattering hours, they are given the 504 bill that they deserved.

The bill that gives myself and so many other children rights that we would not have in school otherwise.

A bill that allowed us to go to school, actual School!

I know this victory doesn't reach most people's radars.

I mean—I'm disabled, and I didn't even know the history until this year.

But, it truly shows that there is good that can come out of history.

And that people can make a monumental difference.

No matter age, gender, nationality, or sexuality, all these things that we as humans like to bicker about.

In the end, wherever you fall on the spectrum of a living being, you can find your place amongst history.

Thank you, for giving me your time of day.

Luce Cordeiro
Youth Finalist
15-18 year olds

Life Cycles

Don't you see the resemblance?
It's all I think about,
with your warm amber eyes
and sturdy, freckled arms
that used to support me when I was little;
You, ever the reliable older sister.
Even your hair was similar,
before hers started falling out
in auburn clumps that stuck to the
shower tiles like wet leaves.

It's unnatural, being back at this house,
our old home.
It's like we never grew up here;
so different, and yet the same bones.
Don't you remember when you carved
our initials into the mighty birch,
leaving it with a scar we called beautiful?
She still has your old red bike, you know,
The one with the tinsel.
And our ice skates, hers too,

from when we used to skate together,
When it was merely two young girls
And their mom,
before all those treatments.

Don't you wish it were like that again,
so simple, so weightless?
And I just keep wishing,
though I know I should stop
because I don't think that there are any stars left,
and all the pennies in the town fountain
are frozen under glistening ice.

That's why I turn away sometimes
when talking to you.
You don't understand how
it hurts to look, to see her mirrored
in your kind, faithful eyes,
in the way you smile.
Because I know that she won't get better
anytime soon,
and you're exactly like she
Used to be,

except you still get to soak in
this newfound spring sunlight,
while she's stuck in that
pristine prison of a bed,
her only light being the artificial white
of the hospital.

Amelia Dickson
Youth Finalist
15-18 year olds

Dear Vermillion

For as long as I can remember
It was a given
the sun would rise and fall
and share its radiance with the moon
in order to brighten my world

As far back as I can remember
my sun donned a golden hue
a strong, uplifting yellow
shared with the moon.
still, in nature.

Even now, the sun and moon still shine.
except my world isn't bathed in its golden hue.
instead,
the sun breathes life into my world by
coloring it in a fierce vermillion.

The sun isn't proud of the color it flaunts.

"it's a strong color, a beautiful one"

I tell this to my sun, over and over.

the sun isn't proud of its color,

it doesn't see what I do.

My world, engulfed in this new light

my sun's beautiful, unchangeable color

a color it can't help but share with the moon.

enamored, by suns unsightly vermillion

the moon finds itself met with change.

For the very first time

the moon changed its still nature

and altered its memorable glow

for the very first time

I wanted to try too.

Rex Kim

Youth Finalist

15-18 year olds

A Snowshoe with Hegel

I had just come home from school
and the satin snow called to me.

I suited up with my dog
and clambered up the hill.

The delicious silence that
only comes with fallen snow
enveloped me in February's
cold domain.

Through the snow I went,
trudging all the while.

Off the dog did dance,
jumping in the snow.

I reached that little clearing
where stumps poke through.

I looked across the hills,
marred with slush-laden roads.

Salty wounds left by diesel
monsters.

I made my way back home
through the icy trees.

All the way I went,

battered by the wind.
Soon I reached my home
and let the dog inside.
I turned around
and there I stood
for just a little while,
staring at the snow.

Henry Maxey
Youth Finalist
15-18 year olds

Windows in the Sacristy

These windows are not plain
just like all the others
hidden far from view
behind the Sexton's lock
where only few will go
carrying wine in cup.

A matrix of intricate grisaille
milky white above the sink
a diamond set among the panes
red from gold, green from iron,
yellow from uranium, and white
from antimony and tin.

The ruby laid among the leaves
crowned with purple and green
as one might kings of old.

Here the windows sit,
concealed behind the organ,
the heart of the church.

Henry Maxey
Youth Finalist
15-18 year olds

There's a gray fox

There's a gray fox
somewhere close, somewhere close
enough to visit
more than once a day
sometimes
I walk near the mountain
the little Rocky Mountain
at dusk and I wonder
and I watch
and I turn up my hearing aid
a few notches
and listen
I hear my steps and a bird calling late
into the darkening sky
and I hope to see or hear
the gray fox
that I know runs
close by.

Becky Barnhart
Adult Finalist

Burning

I can hear LA burning
All the way from Massachusetts
The noise whipping through my porch
Slumping over drifts of snow
The crackle of a thousand fires
A thousand feet hitting the ground running
Oh, California! my broken heart.

Who is fiddling while the city burns?
Red spittle from his lips, bubbles
A bloody tantrum
Ketchup flying, splatter.

Strings breaking as the violin sighs
The whistle of flames turning the corner
California flexing, twisting
Curling at the edges
A red fortune fish in my damp palm
Our future, unsteady.

We're an orb of dirt and water
Stumbling tumbling
Fires and floods, blizzards and droughts
Bellowing flames
Scorching our future
With fuel from our past.

Avery Cassell
Adult Finalist

Lockdown Drill the Day After the Eclipse

How could we not laugh? When a sudden
night breached the horizon & caught us
in its baleen with a school of stars? A sunset,
every way we spun! Never so astonished
by a shadow since discovering our own, we
drove home yesterday from Lake Ontario
in love with the pardoned land. Almost
forgave our unread ancestors who wept
& offered up their blood to please the sky.

Today the tool crib door is a metal moon
locked imperfectly against the daylight.
Windowless, it's safer than the classroom.
We watch the corona for the boots of cops
play-hunting us. The students love this game,
hiccup with laughter & shove each other
in the dark. *Hush*, we teachers hiss with
the urgency of mothers, *this is when we practice
non-existence*

*so that the umbra in the hinges,
a hungry god sniffing around our desks, might
pause
& huff
& and pass us by to hunt the others.*

Christian Drake
Adult Finalist

Necropsy of a Spirit Deer

The hunter swore the legend's true. *Happened up in Colrain some twenty-odd years back:*
a pure white buck found dead in the oak duff,
antlers glowing like fungi under upturned logs.
Fish & Wildlife cut it open, found twelve foreign objects trapped in the flesh: bullets, arrowheads,
sticks where the stag impaled itself on the forest
fleeing an echo. No exit wounds. No recent
diseases. *The damn thing died of old age!*

Nothing does, of course. Only complications,
which, when they are not fatal, are the cause
of life. I imagine the amazed vet tech rifling
through the sheets of venison like a eulogist
tracking a love story through a box of letters.
Each bloody fact arranged on a surgical drape:
130-grain, 7mm. Sabot slug. Upper incisor,
coyote. All this shrapnel the body chews
as it walks. Every step anguished, defiant.
The barbed wire a life absorbs like a tree

devouring a long-forgotten boundary. How
incandescence makes one an easy target.
How the numinous attracts cruelty, and yet.

Christian Drake
Adult Finalist

Longer to launch and other lies Ellen tells

There was no single moment of revelation
but the ebb and flow of acceptance,
building momentum
like our first time out in Oliver's boat.

Sails down, paddle and outboard worked and reworked
to correct course. I can't remember how many times
we had to raise and lower the boom,
pushing off the lake shore,
until the sail was up and taut with wind.
Then Oliver offered up the main line
(Do you recall,
which of us took it?)
so that he could release the jib.

It was around there that I realized, we were
truly sailing.
How exhilarating, the awareness of success
in the sound of slicing water and wind,
and his confident directions.

A passenger
on my son's journey.
For years before that, with regularity,
I would hear the voice of Ellen, DMH worker assigned to your
daughter.
We were sitting across my kitchen table, just me
and her, when I asked the only question that matters.
Ellen had on a blue wool sweater.

Who knows what words I used, but
what I meant was, is she going to be
all right?
And Ellen, with her brown hair, and kind eyes and years of knowing
said in sure, fast words
kids like this
just take longer to launch.

Longer to launch.

And so I wove that into every hurt and worry.
When she raged at you, or me (more and more often at me),
I would breathe patience and hope, knowing

that she just needed longer.

When she would not come home at night,

I was shrouded

in the comfort of Ellen's words.

In the increasing ugliness of stolen money, stolen medication, a stolen gun,

I would soothe the discomfort knotting in my stomach
with Ellen's words.

Picking her pills off the floor, waiting for the call

that she was going to meet with crisis,

yet again,

I held tight to Ellen's words.

As she failed to catch hold of college,

Ellen's reassurance

became a little bit slippery.

Like the water rushing past the sides

of Oliver's boat,

our house, then her mom's,

from boyfriend's apartment to group home to shelter to car,

your daughter's movement through life

took on momentum.

How dizzying, the way jobs were lost first
in six months, then two, soon held for days
then merely hours.

And with this rush, Ellen's words
grew farther away.

Somewhere in between knowing
that she could not be around other children
and watching you, yet again,
go to the emergency room because she talked herself
into having Tourette's — or maybe
it was when she was sure
she had been cursed by voodoo?
I lost sight
of Ellen's words
altogether.

Now your daughter writes emails
and signs them Angel and Koy and Baylie,
her words a disjointed rush of anger
and apology and demands.

I want to thrust it all back in the direction
of Ellen, sitting across our kitchen table.

How is this launching, I would ask her.
I know what launching sounds like, I would explain
to Ellen.
It is the music of water
left behind in the wake of Oliver's boat.
Performances and crafts and lives launch.
Pieces of people torn apart in the storm
of mental illness
do not launch, Ellen.
They sink, taking fathers down with them.

I would be angry, then, maybe even yelling
at Ellen.
In my head, you sometimes walk
in the doorway
as I say the word 'fathers'.
And you, standing there shoulders rounded,
are making the face you made every time
the school would call, or the hospital,
or she would call at two A.M.
manic and panicked and drowning you both.

The kitchen would still, my voice would quiet, and I
would barely nod
towards you, and the space
where your daughter
should be.

This is not what launching looks like,

I would patiently
explain
to Ellen.

Ursula Humphrey
Adult Finalist

GARDEN OF AMERICAN DELIGHTS

Voting out of fear. Voting for division.

Succeeding at succession.

The 50 countries of America

Struggling to be free.

Slowing down for Interstate checkpoints.

But speeding up for profiteers.

But slowing down for progress.

But speeding up for progress.

But slowing down. But speeding up.

Engine screams under a blood moon,

America—o America—

Be better.

Your alleys howl with chaos,

Plastic buffalo figurines in gutters,

Oil rigs draining the black blood

From untouched old growth—

Who drew the borders now bristling?
Who named the red states, the blue?
Who rang the bells and blew the horns
For oligarchs with Holy pockets?
Do the satellites that watch us ever die?

Teary eyed, I grip the wheel
Only able to say prayers scripted by robots—
Servers serving platitudes.

But—but—but—
I swerve Kentucky's hills,
See them green again as Eden's spring.

Workers singing in fields—
Remember the workers?
Never a layoff, never hunger,
Just hands kneading bread in sunlight.

Mississippi swamps alive,
Dakotan plains alive,
Alaskan forests alive,

Iowa's corn sharing the land
And the soil so brown, it's black.
"Migrant" an ancient word—

No walls, no Wall Street, no cameras.
Only murals of a new golden age
And poets on rooftops chanting
The Gulf of Mexico!
The Gulf of Mexico!
The Gulf of Mexico!

o America, if only—if only—
I drift over this vast and faded dream—
I speak with wild wild wild hope,

May we contain multitudes.

Zachary Jacob
Adult Finalist

A Place of the Heart

When someone asks where I'm from,
my mind fumbles for winning words.
Do I say I came to hilly Western Mass
by way of a hilly West Virginia coal camp
where glistening moon perched
atop the ridgeline like a housecat?

Do I tell them how Mommy worked
afternoon shifts at the travel plaza
up Beckley and still taught me
(a southpaw) to write and how
she wrapped veiny hands around
tin-foiled cardboard cutout sword
and shield to match shining armor?

Do I explain the watering hole
where Daddy and I warshed up,
where we filled plastic milk jugs
when summer's dead-dog heat
dried up our trailer's cistern?

Or how Daddy used his Winterplace
employee discount so I could learn
to ski on lonely nights, evergreens
stretching shadows across trails?

I am from the softest place
lodged in throbbing corners
of my parents' hearts,
where moonlight shimmers
through pines and spruce
and every royal knight
needs a good warsh
and snow-caked mountains
sing me ancestors' lullabies.

Skyler Lambert
Adult Finalist

Extinction

A bumble bee lights upon the small white flowers
Of the catalpa, going about its patient work.
Patience is impossible these days.
Once the ground was alive with bees,
Purple beds of wild thyme humming,
A sting an ever-present boyhood threat.
Now the spring garden is almost still.
Parting the un-mowed grass reveals white clover,
Multicolor cups filled with pollen and rain.

A day may come when nothing comes of anything.
When September's apples no longer fall
So the deer no longer pass through.
We will tell ourselves stories easier than extinction.
Changes in migratory patterns, heat creep
Sending bees and deer north.
But to watch these clumsy bees is to know
Animals cannot adapt to the speed of our change.

They should hurry. They should collect more pollen
And faster. They should go home and tell the others
What is happening, what is at stake.
But they don't have the language.
No species to whom it has happened
Ever has, or has ever known they needed it.

We turn our garden beds, clip suckers, train vines
As though we will awake every day for a thousand years.
I scoop an exhausted bee from the wet concrete
And place it within the folds of a peony.
What else could I save?

Shay Swindlehurst
Adult Finalist

Foal

How you stand quivering and wet like the newborn foal,
Open to the draughts that sweep around you.
Your eyes are wide, soft, and blank.
Bending over you is the one who once engulfed you.
Her tongue is rough; she begins to lick you dry.

Somewhere within you is the stallion, haughty,
Indomitable, thundering upon the shore,
Your mane bouncing proudly upon your crest.

But you don't know that.
All you know is the dew on the grass you stand on,
The dance of the draught on your skin, the *just like this*,
Rhythm of the dam's rough tongue.

Your nostrils pulse.
Just by breathing, liquors of grass
Tendril their way through you for the first time,
Diving deep into your flanks.

Kevin Thomas
Adult Finalist

mated

we are
less monogamous than lobsters
or wolves
I do not pine for you
though I have taken no lovers in your place
my eyes find some other friend
in an audience where you are absent
my hand is free
from the shock and pressure of your touch
I allow myself to forget
the close heat that rises from your body in sleep
but on a day of rare beauty
I find myself in an autumn field
looking up
searching for the hawk
who flies straight to her mate
for rest.

Jovonna Van Pelt
Adult Finalist