



2023 Rose Poetry Winners

For Children 3rd through 8th Grade

We're excited to announce a record turnout in our eighth year of hosting this contest.

It looks like we've recovered from the COVID doldrums. Way to go, Future Writers! Because we had so many contestants, we felt we needed to add a few honorable mentions, especially for those in 3rd and 4th grade, who responded in the greatest numbers.

As always, we think it's important to point out why each finalist deserved the award. Writers don't always see their own strengths.

Young writers, your judge is a professional poet. When I tell you you're gifted, you can believe it.

Special thanks to **Julia Spaeth, Children's Chairman, Kansas City Rose Society, for organizing the contest.*

Kansas City Rose Society

Please scroll down to see winning poems, judge comments, and honorable mentions.

3rd to 4th Grade Winner

Sadie Thedinger

4th Grade

Notre Dame de Sion, Kansas City, MO

Life Is Like a Rose

Life is like a rose

some days are thorns and some days are flowers

Thorns dig deep and make you feel like you are

the one tree with no leaves

a puzzle with a missing piece

the new kid who sits alone

rain at the beach when everyone wants sun

Flowers make you feel happy and safe like you are

dipping your toes in a lake on a sunny day

petting your cat's fur and feeling his body vibrate as he purrs

being held safe and sound in the sprawling branches of an oak tree

feeling the rise and fall of a swing

Life is like a rose

roses aren't perfect but they are beautiful

Why the judges awarded the prize to Sadie's poem:

It's beautiful, isn't it? Sadie is already a master of simile, a close cousin to metaphor except it makes the comparison in a less literal way. She writes "like you are a tree with no leaves" instead of "you are a tree with no leaves." We love her mature thought in feeling empathy for "the new kid who sits alone." She makes us feel both lonely and happy, invokes emotions as well as touch: dipping toes in a lake, feeling both a cat's purr and the rise and fall of a swing. We slip inside the poem.

Sadie's conclusion reassures us that life doesn't have to be perfect to be beautiful.

3rd to 4th Grade Honorable Mentions

Contestants from 3rd and 4th grades vastly outnumbered those of older children, so they received more honorable mentions.

Continued next page

Lenox Watson, 3rd grade, Notre Dame de Sion, for “A Fast Fox.” If this had been an art contest, Lenox, would have taken the prize for the charmingly cute illustration of a grinning blue fox. Beside him stand four rose friends, who look like they could be his backup singers.

Alex Coy, 3rd grade, Notre Dame de Sion, for “The Funeral Roses.” Most poets at this young age write light fantasy stories, but Alex shared a serious and touching moment from life experience, keeping a rose from a great-grandmother’s casket as a remembrance.

Julia Kaveney, 4th grade, Notre Dame de Sion, for “The Shore That Is No More,” a lovely, lyrical poem with a lot of repetition that makes us feel we’re on a beach with the surf shushing us. Julia may have a future writing song lyrics.

Arjun Singh, 4th grade, Pembroke Hill, for “The Lonely Rose,” which is a surprising blend of lyrical writing with “talking smack” and “cut nature some slack.” But it was Arjun’s byline that made the judge laugh with delight. --- By Arjun Singh who is in 4th Grade, “I hope that I win the contest and get paid!” -- Please enter again next year, Arjun.

Continue to page 4 to view 5th/6th grade winner

5th to 6th Grade Winner

Lelah Brenchley

FOURTH TIME WINNER!

6th grade
Home School, Belton, MO

I Am a Ladybug

I am a ladybug small and red,
I love my home the rose,
Its petals are my food and bed,
I can always find a place to rest my head.

I am a ladybug spotted and shy,
Without my rose I wouldn't be here,
My favorite place to be is in the sky,
With the breeze on my face, I love to fly.

I am a ladybug quiet and fast,
I climb down my rose to get some dew,
I love the taste of the fresh grass,
And the way the beautiful clouds soar past.

I am a ladybug happy and blessed,
The animals in nature have very nice homes,
The mouse has a hole, the bird has a nest,
And I on my rose am going to rest.

Why the judges awarded the prize to Lelah's poem:

Lelah did not win her prize because she had won three times before (2019, 2020 and 2022). She won because she continues to work on and improve her craft. Most adult authors wrote as children, felt that spark that kept them wanting to write more. The Kansas City Rose Society and The Writers Place are proud to see their plan of encouraging young writers is working.

Continued next page

Lelah's poem is light and breezy, fun to read, and the speaker is a ladybug. Very charming and original! If you think "light and breezy" means easy to write, think again. Lelah chose a challenging rhyme scheme of aaba. It's a lot more work to fit three words that rhyme in every stanza, much less to repeat that pattern four times. Sometimes writers struggle so hard to find the rhyme that they weigh the writing down. Lelah's choice of verbs and imagery keep us flying just like the tiny ladybug: "sky, breeze, fly, clouds soar past." Plus stanza four uses fast/grass (a near rhyme)/past.

Most of the words are single syllable, too, small enough not to crush ladybug or slow the pace.

7th to 8th Grade Winner

Gracie Goforth

8th Grade

Notre Dame de Sion, Kansas City, MO

Rosy Cheeks

The girl was born with rosy cheeks.

Every time she smiled, her face lit up with red and pink,

Her parents said she was beautiful but she never believed them.

She hated her rosy cheeks,

She scrubbed at her face with sandpaper and suds,

But as she scrubbed, her cheeks looked more and more like freshly bloomed buds.

Her cheeks always flushed at the unluckiest of times.

She wished her face was as devoid of color as a mime's.

When handed a rose, her face flooded with scarlet color like a battlefield,

And her hands would hover over it with shame.

Every day she fought her face and wrestled with her thoughts.

She smeared pasty white makeup over the shiny rubies of her face

To shield them from the world and all of its hate.

But at the end of the day, she realized that maybe she didn't hate her rosy cheeks,

Because anytime her life was in despair,

Or something wasn't fair,

They reminded her of who she was.

She looked into the mirror to find that familiar sight

Of beautiful red roses that could comfort her throughout her life.

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Why the judges awarded the prize to Gracie's poem:

Most children's poems look outward, trying to make sense of the world or to make up fantasies. Then eighth grade comes along, and girls especially begin to look inward, start to make sense of themselves, just as the girl in the poem. Isn't that what good YA books do? They give adolescents role models that reflect themselves and help them solve or accept their problems. It's inspirational when someone finds that aha moment.

The feelings in this poem are universal, but the imagery, "She wished her face was as devoid of color as a mime's," is excitingly fresh. Writing about rosy cheeks rather than roses in a garden was another original approach to the contest theme.

Honorable Mention

Iva Hoskins, 8th grade, Notre Dame de Sion, for her untitled poem that begins, "Like the soft petals, we fall sometimes." Iva's poem is a wonderful extended simile for how the parts of a rose correspond to human traits and actions. In eight years of judging, I don't recall any other poem that mentioned sepals: "Like the sepals, we guard."