





**A State of Stress:**  
**Reflections on Life on Earth**  
**As Climate Change**  
**Unfolds**

**Poems by High School Students**  
**of Cincinnati and**  
**Northern Kentucky**

Poems in this collection were submitted to  
*Just Earth - Cincinnati*  
as part of its 2025 Poetry Competition

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Just Earth - Cincinnati is a nonprofit located in Cincinnati's  
Over the Rhine neighborhood. Our mission is to educate and  
facilitate action to address the intersecting crises of climate  
change, biodiversity loss and environmental justice.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We humans, as a species, are truly at a precipice. We can choose to embrace our status as one of many members of this living planet, or we can continue to delude ourselves that we are separate, superior and in control. The latter choice will have dire consequences.

The poetry that is offered here invites us to embrace the more-than-human world and to open our eyes to the dangers of remaining disconnected from Mother Earth and the rich variety of life that she engenders and supports.

We wish to offer our sincere thanks to all the student poets who gave of their time, energy and talents to awaken our minds and hearts. Likewise, a bushel of gratitude to the teachers that taught and mentored these budding poets and encouraged them to participate in this competition. We also want to affirm our deep appreciation of Sherry Cook Stanforth of *Originary Arts* who partnered with us, provided needed encouragement in our efforts, spread the word about our competition and located qualified judges. Finally, a huge thank you to our judges who worked together to select our winners and honorable mentions.

The staff of Just Earth - Cincinnati

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## **A Lovely Day On Earth**

What a lovely day it is.  
The sky is blue.  
The birds are chirping.  
The wind is blowing.  
The sun is shining bright.

What a lovely day it is.  
The flowers are blooming.  
The trees are swaying in the wind.  
The fluffy clouds in the sky are dreamy.  
The children are playing outside.

What a lovely day it is.  
The dogs are running around.  
The bees are dancing from flower to flower.  
The leaves are whooshing around.  
The crickets are chirping in the distance.

What a lovely day it is.  
The laughter of children fills the air.  
The gentle stream flows softly nearby.  
The butterflies flutter in the air.  
The world feels alive with joy and peace.

*Star'nesia Johnson*  
*Aiken New Tech High School*

## **An Ode to the Ticking Clock**

You whisper in tones of verdant upbringing,  
Hooves treading the mud-line that marks where the birds will sing,  
With antlers up, back and grounded, shed,  
And with the growth that proceeds in their stead.

For a citizen, father, lover, and friend,  
A recipient of the kernelled seeds that plants will never send,  
Time stands proud as aid, rather than foe-  
Now, until the fates come toe to toe,  
Winter blooms as springtime all the same,

In lush greens and bark browns and in flourishing stain.  
Air heady in smothered, flickering tongues,  
Mouths open, gaping, hungry, grazing,  
Razing a land nursed by naturely love,  
Self-interest, starvation, all-complaining,  
Here Time stands on edge, wringing its soul,  
Weak-willed, a coward, non-confrontational too,  
No world will freeze still when the ultimate goal...  
Of a fire exists to kill hope and wreak havoc anew.

A sheen, misty olive, tethered beacon of peace,  
And a gnashing, snarling, bombastic confidant-  
A dance at the edge, a toothy tease, a taint,  
Before all that's most prized swiftly becomes least.  
Acrid dust in the nose, a clashing disinterest of want,  
This brilliant canvas doused orange with blazing paint.

To breathe? Piercing beestings.  
To run? Joints like sap.  
Time watches with bluster,  
Hand outstretched, seconds spent.

Forsaken: a citizen, father, lover, and friend.

In memory of good things meeting untimely ends;

A hunger sated. A paradise dead. An un-blue sky, and fur tufts  
turned red.

*Ava Wildenmann*  
*Oak Hills High School*



## **Beauty**

The clouds in the sky,  
A breath of fresh air,  
The green in the trees,  
The leaves as the hair,  
But now the end is nigh.  
The cars ruin the sky,  
Deforestation destroying the air,  
The families kill the bees,  
And though it is rare,  
Plastic suffocates the hawkeye.

*Emma Perez  
Covington Latin School*

## **In my backyard**

In my backyard I see 7 deer  
I am full of awe to see them here  
They are eating their favorite corn  
Not one of them is forlorn  
We should try to be like the deer  
Who live their lives  
Happy and pure

*Weston Jeinoski  
Covington Latin School*

## **Beauty of Earth**

The earth has a lot of things to see  
Filled with trees, hills, and a sea  
The mountains stand really tall  
You will feel very small beside it  
The trees are tall  
Grass is green  
Some of the beautiful stuff I have ever seen  
Desert is dry  
The sand is hot  
There is not much water  
But plants can make it there  
The earth is big where you can find a lot of  
things  
Nature shows its one of a kind  
Everywhere you go  
There is much more to discover

*Franklin Matias-Pano  
Aiken New Tech High School*

## **Behind the Silence**

Do you hear that?  
That silence that isn't just silence.  
There's much more to that silence.  
There's a story behind that silence.  
The fresh air.  
The animals.  
The plants.  
The sounds of the trees..  
The beautiful silence.

Behind that silence is life.  
An environment.  
A sacred one that requires love and care.  
An environment that is full of life with  
beautiful things in it.  
Beautiful things that need patience, love,  
care.

We rely on these "things".  
So as a community we should work together.  
To give the environment love and care.  
Let's have a loving relationship with the  
environment.  
Let's speak up and help the earth.

*Elizabeth Viales*  
*Aiken New Tech High School*

## **Canary's Vision**

The future is tumbling  
Tumbling, accelerating down a big big hill  
Change is inevitable.  
An airsprung canary bird watches this change  
As The future tumbles down the hill  
a pit forms in the bird's small stomach  
The chick wanders in the chilled air  
Anticipating spring.

*Andrea Perez  
Covington Latin School*

## **Change is pain**

Rising tides, Melting snow  
A fragile balance as the future grows  
The earth cries out, in anguish and pain  
We Pollute Pollution Pollute  
But what do we gain?  
What's once cold, now burnt in flame.  
We say it's bad.  
But contribute the Same.  
So let's all stop.  
Ponder and think  
Or water will rise, and our people will sink.

*Malachi Singer  
Aiken New Tech High School*

## **Bring Back the Gold**

Nature used to be gold,  
Free of the human strong hold.  
Summer's scorching heat,  
And winter's numbing cold.  
The man-made burning,  
Leads to Mother Nature's fury.  
Where did we go wrong?

But for only so long can the mind start to wander,  
Back to days of youth that we all plundered.  
Nothing seems the same,  
I wonder what's to blame?  
Did I just get older,  
Or is it the eyes of the beholder?  
The nature I loved as a kid,  
Lacks the once luster dusted look of untouched beauty.

Apprehension is constant,  
We can't be omnipresent.  
What does the Earth need,  
To relieve it of its anguishing plea?  
As the world heats up,  
So do its people.  
There's pointing fingers and vexation,  
Is there any acclamation?  
Efforts have been made,  
Yet there is so much hate.



The Earth can not return to a state of bliss,  
But this does not mean that there has to be a split.  
Together is what matters,  
Before the world shatters.  
Bring back the gold,  
Because forever gone are the hours.

*Claire Neiger*  
*Loveland High School*

## Child's Book

AWARD  
WINNER

Many were born in hard-working lands in the land of customs and traditions, taking care of animals and plants for fun or survival

In times of need they decided to leave. They left behind what they knew to go to an unknown place. They came to the land of “opportunities” with many hopes and dreams, but it was a lie...everything was a lie because in this place everything is different.

They suffer and cry for what they miss  
They miss their families and memories  
They miss how different and unique that place was, tired of the pollution they decide to leave. They look for a place where their children can grow up without living in a place of indifference and loneliness.

In this world there are places,  
Beautiful and green places  
Where you can smell the plants and flowers on the ground, but there is so much beauty and it's being changed.

Human beings have decided to make things easy and change everything  
From green to grey and from happy places to sad and dull places  
In search of something “nice” everything fades away.

IF the plants don't match  
THEY DON'T WANT THEM  
IF the trees aren't perfect  
THEY DON'T WANT THEM  
IF the road isn't cemented and your shoes  
don't get dirty  
THEY DON'T WANT THEM  
Nowadays everything has to be perfect to be  
desired

Even so... Everything has a limit!  
We have to think about the future.  
A future where we can have kids and pets to  
walk around without worrying about their  
health. I want a world where I can see the  
plants next to the road.  
See fields full of crops when visiting the  
countryside, Seeing animals out in the wild  
Right now you might think that it doesn't  
matter but...  
Is that what you want?  
At this pace I imagine a future where  
everything is dark and smells like chemicals  
I do NOT want that. I want something  
different.  
I ask you to help, Help clean and care  
Caring for others and not to be selfish  
PLEASE help before it's too late...

Let's make our future be colorful like a kids  
book, and let's be happy like we were when  
we were young and innocent.

*Angela Chub Lopez*  
*Aiken New tech High School*

## **World Hunger**

World hunger is driving people mad.  
Many people across the world try to reduce the causes.  
Money is donated to charity, and food is sent from across to feed  
one another.  
World hunger is still a problem

People who can't even afford food are either homeless  
or in a shelter.

This is why people donate food to charity  
to help the cause of food hunger.  
We must work together to stop world hunger,  
the government must know.  
We must use all our resources to donate  
and help kids get food and get fed.

*Martavion Clark*  
*Aiken New Tech High School*

## El Quetzal

Climate change is happening. This does not sound good I think we should make it sound as good as possible. This is bad for a green and red feathered animal and its nation; this might even mean extinction. We can help and stop this by being an upstander by showing care by showing bravery and to be a leader. Yes I have hope , hope to stop climate change not just for us humans but to a pacific animal an animal that was none in my parents county and this animal represents freedom you can see this in a museum. This animal represents light if we fight against climate change. we will not be quiet with this white bright idea. Wealth is what this animal means and its health is what we should take care of. We should show goodness to this sweet bird.

I have never seen a Quetzal but that why its rare because of climate change is affecting it this is sad, sad when you lose the most important game of your life, you know who you should blame people that don't care about their home that home is earth in witch is beautiful and were it can be mutable, mutable means change it can be changed by us rearranged the stuff we do to our sweet home. Quetzal sweet home it lives in

Guatemala it's like a corolla it has lots of mountain where you can build a fountain that's how you can help the Quetzal because of how sometime there's no water or if it's too hot outside so you can't spot the amazing bird fly. Us as humans we can do something creatures can't. What is that? That is helping other creatures

Lonely bird o how can I help you only if you could speak to me I wonder what you would say I know what you will say can you fix my lovely home the home that keeps you safe at night when predators want to hurt you or attack you and when it's really really cold at night your like gold in a tree you are hard to find and every animal want you just like us human want gold thats what people want they don't want to help earth witch is your home earth gets attack by people that only care of them self but don't see where they are living in witch is suffering people also buffering the earth with there crazy device that will slice the home of this Quetzal what did he do to us people that don't think straight,

We can stop this and create great homes for these amazing birds that we will never see in our life. Life can be long, life can be short

but life needs somewhere to stay and that  
place is called earth and earth life is starting  
to be short but I can change that to It's all of  
our home's and even the people that don't  
like it and the Quetzal.

*Christian Gomez*  
*Aiken New Tech High School*

## **Good Morning! Good Night...**

From the crows,  
In the early morning,  
To the bright neon colors,  
Covering the sky,  
Shades of red oranges,  
Pink and purples,  
This color of palettes,  
The sky makes a fashion show,  
You'll want to see,  
The yellow yolk sun,  
Showing off it's bright smile,  
Each and every day,  
The smell of breakfast made by mother,  
And nothing beats the joy  
Of a new day.  
After playing,  
A nice cool drink of lemonade,  
Cures my dry throat,  
While dad does the chores, and feedings,  
And more,  
But before we notice,  
The day has come to an end,  
But don't worry,  
You'll still see more days,  
The sun won't retire  
But the moon must make it's approach,  
Now once again,



So tuck the little ones in their cozy beds.  
And give the sun a thumbs up,  
It's time for the famous ball of cheese,  
To wake up,  
So fall asleep  
Until the next time, we'll meet again

*Trinity Wish  
Aiken New Tech High School*

## FFA/AG

Trust in the farming process cause its not  
easy to control  
But if you put trust on it everything will be  
set,  
There is always a struggle in things we do,  
but more effort needed  
Putting leadership in your work makes it  
more beautiful.  
Our Aiken farm inspires so many in our  
community  
Farm is a place where we get our fresh  
products like( vegetables eggs e.t.c)  
Keep our farm safe so that what we care for,  
brings us good stuff.  
If you planted nothing, expect nothing to  
come,  
But if you planted and took good care of  
your plants,  
Plan to receive something from nothing to  
something  
There is always a chance to change things  
by having ideas  
Being able to be engaged and use all talent  
you have to achieve your goals.

## **Just Earth**

Beneath the sky, where rivers flow,  
Once fertile lands, where flowers grow,  
The whispers of the winds now moan,  
A tale of Earth, so soft, now sown.

The glaciers, ancient, slow to cry,  
Melt into oceans, where they die.  
The forests breathe their last, they sigh,  
As flames consume the trees that try.

The storms, once mild, now rage and roar,  
With winds that tear and oceans pour.  
The creatures seek the land once more,  
But find no place to rest, no shore.

A warmth that spreads from pole to pole,  
Shifting seasons, hearts grow cold.  
The soil once rich, now barren, old,  
A story of loss, so much untold.

Yet Earth, she still does gently turn,  
Hoping we will see, and learn,  
That in our hands, the choice will burn,  
To save her soul, and for her,  
yearn.

*Genesis Cornejo Alfaro  
Aiken New Tech High School*

## **Life on the Farm**

I see plants, flowers, animals.  
I smell the fresh air of the farm.  
I feel the sunshine making me feel warm.  
The calm and quiet of the farm makes me fall asleep.  
A farm is all about care,  
We care about our farm.  
When you see animals coming around,  
You get excited to feed them.  
When animals come to you,  
It means they trust you,  
They feel safe and comfortable with you.  
It's not easy to earn an animal's trust,  
Unless you're truly a person who cares.  
The fields stretch wide, so green and bright,  
A peaceful place, a lovely sight.  
The goats jump high, so full of cheer,  
Their happy sounds are fun to hear.  
The rabbits hop, so small and sweet,  
Soft and quiet, fast on their feet.  
The chickens peck and flap around,  
Scratching gently on the ground.  
Our one cow stands so calm and tall,  
Watching over one and all.  
The alpaca's trots with grace and pride,  
With curious eyes, so big and wide.  
Watering plants, feeding each friend,

A farm's true care will never end.  
A farm is life, a farm is love,  
A gift of earth, from up above.

*Chaime Bahour*  
*Aiken New tech High School*

## **Life The Good And Bad**

Rain gets us wet and sick.  
A lot of people hate the rain because it is  
annoying to them.  
It is annoying for some people but for plants  
it is life.  
Without rain millions of trees would die.  
Without trees we wouldn't be able to live.  
Without trees animals would lose their  
habitat.  
An annoyance to us is Life to other things.  
The sun burns us when it gets too hot.  
It hurts us but just like rain it is also Life.  
Without the sun plants don't grow.  
Without the sun we can see.  
Without the sun it would be cold forever.  
Without the sun all life would go extinct.  
Always look at the bigger picture.

*Willy Vasquez Gomez*  
*Aiken New Tech High School*

## **Nameless Flower**

Little seeds laid tender in ceramic.  
A flower like any Other.  
Impatience, apathy, beginning to prick,  
Must grow into beautiful form.

Little shoots emerge from my Home.  
Isn't the sudden care so nice?  
A False sun warms my fragile stem,  
What radiance would condemn,  
Those gentle hands become my Friend.

Little wonder is fading too quickly.  
Can't you see my steady growing?  
The Light now flickers–  
Ambrosia is sparse–  
There is no hand for safety.  
How can I keep running?

Little blooms arrive in such storm,  
Though my hide is protected from rain.  
They appear once again,  
Kind and a Friend!  
All my needs are given!  
When did this become such a pleasure?  
...will there be absence anew...?

Little I, lost and dying...  
Why won't anyone look?  
Was I not beautiful?  
Did you not love me so?  
Aren't I Original?  
Why don't you care anymore?  
But the answer is so clear—  
I, a Flower, am simply—  
  
My lifeless stem cut with a wretched click.  
Little seeds laid tender in ceramic.

*Sophia Yanis*  
*Covington Latin School*

**liz**

i look at my lizard,  
now so pale and weak,  
he used to be lively  
so alert, attention piqued  
but as summer and spring passed,  
fall and winter too,  
his eyes began to shut  
three eyes turned to one.  
sleeping half the day  
never quite active, unless food delay  
but as summer and winter passed,  
fall and spring too,  
he began to crack,  
down the sides and into two  
his bone began to jut  
fat pads sinking in  
food was no longer appealing  
one eye turned to none.

*Sophia Stock*

*Covington Latin School*



## **No longer green**

I see the sun,  
For its warmth.  
I see the rain,  
For its gain.  
Oh, what has she not given us?

The green is fading,  
The life is vague,  
The trees are falling, for our sake.  
Oh, the things she endorses,  
Yet, we want more.

Mother...,  
Yet, we treat her without remorse.  
The greens are falling, on our feets,  
For what we call greed?  
But humans..., why have you yet to see?....

For decades she's seen us grown,  
Hoping we could show her warmth.  
Yet..., we prove to be a bad-born...  
Things we create...,  
Are only helping her mourn.

The things we do,  
Does mother want to be in her own doom?  
The things under her branch,  
Do we want to break her roots?  
Do we want to unleash her anger at it full?

Changes, the growing heat,  
For not her,  
We were long beat.  
Changes the worse,  
Yet we stand by and watch.

Her protection, yet we, not satisfied,  
We want more so we broke her bones?  
If you wish to know who "Her" is,  
Just ask, I'd tell you more.  
Mother is few caring is more.

Mother, the one who gives,  
Mother, the one who feels,  
Mother, the one who falls,  
For us to grow tall.  
More is far, yes, yet her love is compared?

Yes, "her" is the earth,  
Mother earth.  
The caring who,  
For us, we only exploit.  
Riches the here for her; it's not fair.

The days go by,  
Her health is worse,  
For her old days..  
She doesn't have a nurse.  
Her sons, nowhere seen.

What are we without our mother?,  
Thus I ask, ask,  
For help, let's get to our sense.  
Sometimes it's not always us.  
So tell me, what are we without earth?

Changes are slow, yes  
The process is painful  
But the fruit that's baird...  
Is grown from your care.  
Sweet, came from fair.

*Hemant Kumar Pradham  
Aiken New Tech High School*

## **The Black-Footed Ferret**

The Black-Footed Ferret  
Once thought extinct, now roams in  
Yellowstone Park, alive.

*Jeremy Juelg  
Covington Latin School*

**HONORABLE  
MENTION**

### **Ode to Astraea**

The stars once brought us childish dreams  
Their clarity left a glimmer of love  
A small question of what there may be  
Awaiting us, awaiting them, a feeling free  
As we grew, we stopped checking the crystal sky  
And stopped fantasizing about the impossibility of flight  
We focused on the ground, laden with concrete  
Rough on the feet, unlike the grass we once graced  
Too slow, for legs, too fast-paced  
A fire, a hurricane, an avalanche  
All that left our modern lives abash  
As we lay flat on our slumped backs,  
We're made to face the stars once more  
These cloudy skies are not what we once knew,  
Nor quite the wholesome place the old winds blew

*Sadie Schulkens  
Covington Latin School*

## **Ode to Frankenstein**

To an old man  
with a metal pole stuck in his head  
Sometimes he rises out of his bed  
He likes to bash people in the head  
Until they all fall dead

To an old man with no friends  
Maybe someone will lend a helping hand  
Because there is always time to spend  
They will be with you in the end  
That is why you need a friend

To an old man with an ugly face  
I feel you still have good traits  
Even when your master thinks you a disgrace  
I feel you are a man full of grace  
Even when you kill his friends in the story

To the famous Frankenstein  
Whose heart is the same size as mine  
Please always be kind  
And find a partner who has a heart  
as big as mine

*Calen Kobman  
Covington Latin School*

## **Regretting Our Actions**

The feeling of regret?  
Regret can be difficult  
whether it's from the past  
or just last week.  
Regret is a feeling that is hard  
to get rid of  
It's something impossible to ignore  
It can take a hold of your life like walls  
surrounding you, Making you trapped in  
your own head  
So what do you do when this happens? Well,  
you break them. Take a hammer and get to  
bashing so you allow yourself your freedom  
back.  
To be you again even if it feels hard too.  
So how does this relate to nature?  
Well for starters you could bash those walls  
down so you can see all the trash around you  
in the grass.  
Start picking it up so we can put it in the  
dump  
or stop cutting trees since we need them to  
breathe  
stop using lighters around trees so they don't  
flame like us...  
when we feel the regret in our heart as we  
see we destroy nature's art.  
We see climate change

we change and help our world instead of  
staying in our OWN world.  
Do more than write on a paper and help our  
nature.

*Aaron Gray*  
*Aiken New Tech High School*

## **Pollution**

The greenest leaf, once bright with glee,  
Now withers under toxicity.  
A creak, once playful, now stands still,  
The evidence from cruel humanity.

The polar bear, the coral reef,  
Their cries melt in distrust  
The air we share, no longer pure,  
A legacy we must endure.

Listen close, the earth can heal,  
If hearts can unite, then souls can feel.  
From trees rising and plants dying,  
There will always be a lesson taught.

*Aminata Sarr*  
*Aiken New Tech High School*

## Poem to QUETZAL

Quetzal, beautiful and charming bird  
National symbol of our freedom Light of my  
country, with soft plumage You carry on  
your chest the motto of truth.

Quetzal Bird, emblem of my country Sign  
of loyal and resonant friendship For in the  
chest of man you die Expressing your deep  
brotherhood.

Quetzal Bird of cloudy forests Tropical  
jungles and high mountains That perches on  
the cliffs To hide your great deeds.

Quetzal Bird, our alma mater Wants to  
preserve you for posterity Although it  
should be everyone's duty Because you are a  
banner of struggle and kindness.

Quetzal Bird, your beauty makes you  
unique and Worthy of full respect and  
admiration. I write to you as a bard and pay  
tribute to you To highlight your greatness in  
the nation.

*Henry Arriaga Gutierrez*  
*Aiken Tech High School*



## Reveille

### ARISE

for the biggest war comes from the sky  
its fields span miles  
tread by nimbus troops of brutal ilk  
the roaring fires their battle cry  
the deluge strong  
their arrows bow slung from cloven cloud

### REPRISE

for the longest war comes from the sky  
its miles span ages  
lived by countless men who hide entrenched  
cowering there as brothers die  
by heat and storm  
reluctant to rally arms against the torrent

### MILITARIZE

for the fatal war comes from the sky  
its ages spawn death  
tombs reclaimed by earthen vine and dust  
are filled with legions that denied  
their earthly call  
to fight the faceless force that brought their world to fire

### ARISE

*Katherine Wells  
Dixie Heights High School*



## Ripples

Each of these poems is a ripple  
But joined as one they make a wave  
One person can't conserve the world  
But think together what we could save

Even the most impactful words  
Do nothing on their own  
like how a single tidal wave  
Won't wear away a stone

This problem is our stone  
This challenge is our chance  
To confine to the current  
Or unite and take a stance

We cannot change the entire world  
We may not even change one mind  
But our wave may spark a ripple  
And others close behind

One by one we band together  
Like a tide to draw them in  
With each strike the stone gets weaker  
And we'll keep fighting till we win

Be it heat or drought or storms  
If we act, if we unite  
We can erode the stone we face  
Day by day to win the fight

And these words are my weapon  
My ripple, not groundbreaking or brave  
Alone they may mean nothing  
But with others, they'll make a wave

*Leia Heinbaugh*  
*Home Schooled*

### **The snow**

The snow covers all the ground  
Winter has finally come  
Snow replaces the leaf mounds  
The chills of the temperature makes me numb  
It quiets the brain, helps me think  
Replaces the busy thoughts, it passes the time  
The beautiful landscape, now a blink  
Once here, now gone, back again, just sublime

*Joseph Purtell*  
*Covington Latin School*

## **Seeds We Grew**

Generations spent toiling away,  
Growing a single seed.  
Diverse hands picking through the weeds,  
Leaving behind to seek a brighter future.  
Now it's my turn to begin,  
To grow the next seed, to tend the soil again.  
What legacy will I leave when my time  
ends?  
The farm grows, but the work never bends.  
The seed grows fast, but challenges remain.  
Time slips by, and the sapling stands,  
Not perfect, but stronger than before.  
Fastly growing from a garden bed to farm,  
Gone are those who came to solve what was  
wrong.  
Now it's my turn to carry on.  
When I'm gone, I'll pass it to the next.  
Times moved and the sapling has grown still  
not perfect but being passed  
along.

*Keontae Baker  
Aiken New Tech High School*

## Serenity

I feel the cool and gentle breeze from my window.  
I hear the birds chirping and singing.  
I see the leaves changing colors and fall.  
I taste the crisp air of autumn.  
I know the peace of nature.

Leaf piles and pumpkin carving,  
Caramel apples and s'mores,  
Reading and learning new things,  
This is peace in my nature.

Laying on the solid earth,  
Feeling the seasons change,  
From summer to fall to the nearby winter,  
Nature is peaceful and is serene.

The world around me stops,  
If only for a moment.  
Everything is put on pause,  
A natural break.

The serenity I find in many things,  
The creek flowing,  
Colors changing,  
The cool mornings,  
The beautiful sunsets,  
Makes the world seem calm and quiet.  
Content.

*Rebekah Neal*  
*Covington Latin School*

## **Still Water**

By still water I lie down  
Those who know the truth  
Settle by the still water  
The noise of the world  
Is all drowned by still water  
The answer to all problems  
Is still water

*Nathaniel Shartzner  
Covington Latin School*

## **Storms and Wildfires**

There are lots of storms happening and wildfires.  
Also you should be careful because  
there's been a lot of fires and storms happening lately  
in the United States. Be careful what you cook  
and also watch your food so it doesn't burn.  
Hope for the future is that everyone should start  
watching their foods so nothing doesn't burn again.  
If nothing doesn't burn again there will be  
no more wildfires happening anymore  
and for storms people should start building safer houses  
for people that live somewhere else  
where lots of storms happen often  
for the future to be better where storms  
don't knock down houses or hurt any more people in the world.

*Paul Masumbuko  
Aiken New Tech High School*

## Take Me Back/When the Mourning Dove Sings

There was a flower

in the mulch on the right side of the front yard,  
It sat next to where the water runs from the roof to the ground  
to the plants to the air. It buds, snowdrop breaking winter's final snow.

Three white petals, one with a flipped around green heart. They lean back towards  
the thin snow, as if returning from where they came. The littlest brother of mine was born and I  
saw the littlest stars in an early and clear morning. Stars of a winged horse's leg stuck stretched  
to gallop, immortalized in the sky. I caught a glimpse of the clustered stars by the horse's hoof  
while he smushed his first cake, I saw twinkling Matar above his head which was under the  
window in the living room, I only see the brightest star, the snout of the horse, when we  
cheer as the sixth candle blows out. I woke up to chirping mornings and soft suns not  
so long ago in a soft bed on a calm day.

I woke to speck'd birds and

to floating leaves outside and

to cotton bugs and

to light rays glowing bright and  
to hazel eyes and

to maple in oatmeal and

to mourning and morning and  
to my childhood  
to now.

To when I no longer wake at song.

To Earth's great dark sky on warm summer nights become greyed,  
To planets visible only on their own nights, cluster of stars become spread out dandruff,  
I wake up to a complaining alarm and a shower whispering and begging me to sleep again,  
Cold air with only hot air blowing to my hair against it while I muse on the day ahead,  
A constant schedule to never fault on, uniform and set, expected,  
All unpredictability given to the weather and the rain and the parking lot road to school,

I take a winter jacket in the spring just in case,  
walking out of the school with it on my waist, sweat on my brow, packets of work  
in the bag that was against my side.

Summer noons and winter mornings.

I see an early grave these days.

I miss the mourning doves in the morning,

Like I miss the children I played with by the pond before.

minnows wiggle in the creek, skitters balancing on water tension

I drink the melted popsicle out of the plastic sleeve as I let the sun speckle my skin

I still see those little dots on my cheeks and arms and legs in the brightest days of the sunny  
summer season. I feel the joy and the sprinkling water and the laughter of kids I once knew.

I see those same kids in the eyes of my brother's friends. I see hope and the future and a tree  
growing for my grave and I remember that life doesn't end because if it did, the barren land after  
the death of the first creatures would not have revived itself from the very soil that once another  
older and now gone covered. But I see ferns bud from the dirt and saplings climb to the sky. I see



once more fauna and flora returning and filling the land. I see the planet among its brethren, by our great sun. I see the fiery light in the center become merely a speckle in the sky I looked to on my brother's birth. I see what the first life saw and I see what my children and their children shall see. I see a legacy pre-planted and ready to bud if so needed. I see life preserving. I see men and women and the rich and the poor and the happy and the down and the death and the life of the Earth. The mourning dove shall sing again

*Ava Sikorski  
Covington Latin School*



## **The earth is crawling with life**

The earth is crawling with life we often tread over.  
Moving slowly like cells of a  
giant organism.  
As unrecognized for their daily  
support  
as the organs in our own body.  
The tiny armored workforce  
does it all,  
Digesting the earth's food to give energy to its life,  
controlling the terrain so it remains healthy,  
spreading its plans so it can breathe.  
Yet we respond with stress and fear  
when we see them like when we see our own blood.  
Pivoting chitinous limbs hang as they unfold  
glistening wings from the sides of their bodies  
or from under armored backplates.  
With fantastic designs and patterns  
that show the ingenuity of their evolution,  
they live their homes while performing  
complex dances in the sky in order to maintain  
the fragile homeostasis of the globe.  
Before they can perform their duties and pass on  
their genes to continue keeping the earth alive,  
they are under the feet of ungrateful, cancerous cells  
who fear them despite ignoring their own destruction  
of the massive organism they are a part of.  
And thus, the cycle continues.

*Quinn Schulte  
Covington Latin School*

## **The Change**

Plants and trees are alive, like us  
Throughout the seasons of change  
The neutral temperatures change as well  
All the temperatures have changed like we  
These changes are caused by climate change  
This change can have a negative impact  
On plants, trees, animals, and people  
Even though some people may not think  
Of it as an issue nor a benefit  
We should still think about it  
Because it is happening to us  
And though we go through life everyday  
It's still important to ponder  
As people we naturally change  
You see the change in yourselves  
In the seasons, warm and chill  
In the animals that grow and live  
In the trees that blow in the wind  
Maybe it's chilly in the summer  
Maybe it's warm in the winter  
But change is happening all around us  
So we should all be aware  
Not saying we should avoid the face of facts  
It's necessary that we embrace it at last

*Hadassah Freeman  
Aiken New Tech High School*

**The farm in spring**

On the farm the day dawns,  
with the song of birds in melody.  
The sunflowers peek out in the sun,  
while the rabbits settle down in peace.

They jump happily through the meadow,  
with long ears, always at your side.  
Their fur is soft as cotton,  
They dance among the flowers with great  
emotion.

Ducks swim in the pond,  
with their bright feathers and cheap suits.  
They make circles in calm waters,  
while frogs sing their sorrows.

The alpacas graze calmly and tenderly,  
Their wool is a gift of pure sweetness.  
With curious eyes they observe the sky,  
In their peaceful world there is no mourning.

The hens peck away incessantly,  
looking for whatever grains they can find.  
With their golden feathers shining in the  
sun,  
They are the lanterns in their little kingdom.

The little birds sing from above,  
on green branches where they find their  
prey.  
Their trills fill the air with life,  
a song that is never forgotten.

Plants grow in daylight,  
Their green leaves are pure poetry.  
From tomatoes to fragrant herbs,  
Each one tells vibrant stories.

Tall trees whisper in the wind,  
with deep roots that feel the passage of time.  
Their branches give shade to those who seek  
rest,  
in their leafy embrace we find joy.

Sunflowers spin for warmth,  
their golden faces are pure love.  
Dancing softly with every breeze,  
they bear witness to the day that is never  
needed.

This is life on this beautiful farm,  
where every being lives without anxious  
haste.  
Nature sings its eternal song,  
and every corner holds a tender story.

Let's celebrate this simple life together,  
where every animal has its own shore.  
The farm is a home full of charm and peace;  
a refuge where we always want to be more.

*Carolina Juarez*  
*Aiken New Tech High School*

## **The Heart and the Hero**

I awake to hear a vicious hum  
From the heart of a vicious monster  
A steel behemoth, a vicious reminder  
Of the decay of a sacred forest

I awake to the sound of drums  
The beating grows only louder  
The steel devil crawls ever slower  
Each groaning step ever closer

In the steel colossus, a real heart  
The product of a thousand real men  
Yet now their work begets a real consequence  
They know not what they did  
And I know what I must do

At the center a pit of vascular vipers  
A great palisade built on pillars of greed  
Right there a man of great means  
He knows exactly what he did  
And I know what I must do

I hold the sharpened arm of a defiant oak  
Loaned to me by the maternal forest  
I hear the song of weeping willows  
And I heartily counter the encroaching titan

Through the steel barricades  
Past the legions of workers  
And above a million wooden corpses  
I angrily reach this epidemics epicenter  
The man made heart that started it all

And yet I can hear the cry of mother nature  
The weeping willows calling for peace  
They know it is chaos that begets chaos  
To create an unstoppable wildfire

And so the fire of revolution fades from my eyes  
And I use my stick not to kill, but to heal  
I lead workmen, the hidden backbone of the monster  
And I usurp the arrogant establishment of terror

So then I sit, the oak scepter in my hand  
Now leading the power of a thousand men  
I mightily observe the filthy, pitiful ants down below  
And the cycle continues

*Liam Rowland*  
*Covington Latin School*



AWARD  
WINNER

## The Little Engine of Climate Change

Human achievement is built by aching hands,  
Bent-over backs and resolute “I think I cans” -  
Broken boundaries and penniless pursuits,  
Ever changing definitions of “nice” and “new”.

In order to complete the transformations we desire,  
We march like toy soldiers into the bloody quagmire -  
Our ambitions the guns that we sling on our shoulders,  
And our dedication a bolster that makes us grow bolder.

“I think I can, I think I can, I think I can, I can!”,  
The mantra upon which we lift up our plans -  
A miracle balm to the struggles we encounter,  
A prescription bought cheap, over the counter.

As we ride into the future on the train of transformation,  
We never consider the significance of yet another station -  
For industrialization is the crown jewel of all our hard work,  
And a king never notices where hidden insurrection lurks.

“We think we can, we think we can, we can!” and so we do,  
The train chugging over vivacious vistas and vibrant views -  
Our smoke exalted with cheers rather than condemned,  
Mountains fading to molehills with no one to mourn them.

The train brings toys to children on the other side of the hill,  
Consumerism being fed like wheat crushed through a mill -  
And the waste that’s produced can be so easily excused,  
After all, what is earth for if not to be mastered and used?



"Just look at how determined that little train is!",  
Exclaimed with fervor that unites them as friends -  
"Look at what humans like us are able to achieve!",  
Whistles carried by the strong arms of the breeze.

"We thought we could, we thought we could," and so we did,  
Watching as our innocence shied away from us, ran, and hid -  
Child-like naivety bulldozed to make room for railroad tracks,  
The weight of responsibility a heavy load upon bowed backs.

Our strained conscience resents us for what we've done,  
For viewing the environment as obstacles to overcome -  
For manipulating and exploiting in pursuit of our goals,  
For chasing down convenience and auctioning our souls.

"I think I can, I thought I could," - our hard work has paid off,  
Never mind the senseless slaughter that got us to our stop.

*Haylee Alexander*  
*Dixie Heights High School*

## **Thawing**

The Arctic is turning gray in front of our eyes  
Polar bears unaware that their home dies  
That under their paws the ice thaws  
Just feeling their home get warmer  
And seeing their land is get smaller  
Flowers are blooming in the Arctic  
Which is just one sign of our undoing

*Emily Erhman  
Covington Latin School*

## **The Forest are green**

The forest are green  
The sky is blue  
The ocean is so too  
The earth is hurting  
The surface burning  
caused global warming  
Help the planet  
Help the sea  
Be the best  
That you can be.

*Dre'Mire White  
Aiken New Tech High School*

## **The Music of the trees**

The trees on this earth have a song it always  
has: it's the sound of calmness, freedom, and  
balmy. How I love to hear the leaves rustle  
in the wind. As the soft sun kissed my skin.  
And the birds chirp away.  
The stress is no longer here.  
There's a whisper in the overgrown trees.  
Only you can hear.  
The more attuned you are with this beauty of  
the earth.  
The more you understand.  
It is the little actions we take everyday.  
That causes our beautiful plant to decay.  
We created the problems.  
We can solve them too.  
Time to get to work.  
It's down to me and you.

*Princess Williams  
Aiken Tech High School*

## **The Way of Change**

Change is always happening  
Never coming to a stop  
Can we do anything about it  
Can we stop the consent storms  
Raging in  
Destroying everything in its path  
Can we stop the weather from changing  
Cold to hot  
Warm to chilly  
Snow to sunny  
Can we stop the ocean becoming warmer  
The glaciers melting  
The animals disappearing  
When thinking about these changes  
It make me think  
What we can do about it  
Could we stop the smoke from the factories  
The trash in the oceans  
We could change  
But were not making any changes  
To do something about it.

*Aryana Turner  
Aiken Tech High School*

## **Tips On How To Live Fully On A Dying Planet**

I grew up in a dense woody declivity,  
With the backwards charm of a clumsy lover.  
But eventually the novelty wore off  
And pale blue moonlight began to resemble  
gas station beverage coolers.  
Cold and industrial and leaking freon.

I'm not always so cynical,  
I've been taught to adapt.  
Count hurricanes on your fingers,  
Forest fires on your toes  
(you will run out of both).

Listen intently to the man on the news channel  
And shake your head somberly.  
Watch the high tide get a little higher.

You're only fighting for a couple extra lines on your forehead,  
Remember that.  
Remain sleepy, sprawl about.

So tonight I chose to lay in my hovel of a bed.  
Don't write, don't read, don't cry, don't fight,  
Lay, lay, lay, lay, lay.  
I think of grassy meadows, ivy, and this inherited criss  
The Thursday hum of suburban swallows.

*Sophia Choy*  
*Loveland High School*

## **What earth makes**

Nature, a place where whispers reside,  
Nature speaks softly, but no one listens.  
Mountains stand tall, rivers flow free,  
Yet people are still focused on industry.

Factories rise, bringing smoke to the skies,  
As the earth beneath them quietly dies.  
Steel and concrete are also slowly replacing  
the green earth.  
In the name of progress?, come on people.

The trees have spoken quietly,  
no one listens.  
Birds have lost their home,  
yet no one dares to speak of such.  
The air grows heavy with thick despair.  
Yet only some seem to notice and a few  
seem to care.

One evening, I was speaking to my friends  
about a green Job.  
A green job, they laughed.  
Who care for the planet they asked,  
They plan to chase majors that promised  
them Gold,  
Ignoring the treasurers nature holds.

Forgetting the forests, the oceans, the air,  
In chase for riches, they forget to be fair.  
The earth gives us life, a place to live  
Yet we take without a thought to show a  
little care.

The bees, the flowers, the sun and the rain,  
All the gifts from mother earth, yet we cause  
her pain.

We pave over the green grass, we poison the  
seas, All for the sake of our humans' needs.

Then I spoke loudly, "What is the cost of this  
industrial race?"

"A Planet in danger. A place for no human  
life.

History will judge us for sure.

Our children's children will be  
disappointed."

"Who will take the blame when earth  
become a mess?

The green jobs may pay less but what is the price,  
Of a world left in a mess?

They all stopped and started paying attention  
to me.

I then become more confident,

I stood up and said

"People care so much about what they make,  
but seem to forget what earth makes.

Earth makes mountains

Earth makes rain that falls so sweet

The ground beneath our feet

It makes the air we breathe each day

The sun that lights up our way

The earth makes the flowers bloom in spring

The birds and the songs they sing.

It makes the stars that shine at night

But earth also makes us see  
The damage done by you and me.  
It makes the storms, the climate change,  
A call for help. A desperate one for that  
matter.  
Its make the droughts, the fire that rage,  
A warning written on nature's page.  
Earth tries to make us realize our mistakes.  
It makes us pause, think, reflect and see  
The need to change, to set the earth free.  
So as you asked, "What does earth make ?"  
"It make us care,  
To act with love and to be aware.  
It makes us strive to heal,  
To cherish all that is real.  
That's what earth makes."

*Shema Asifiwe*  
*Aiken New Tech High School*



## **When I Look at Earth**

When I look at Earth  
I see the trees  
I see life giving birth  
Giving us more see  
But that's not all I see  
I see what we do  
Sometimes I no longer see trees  
Instead I see new factories ready to produce  
It really isn't necessary  
All this nature dying away  
Near a river, just last February  
I saw only dirt waiting for a factory to stay  
So let's just take a breather, and stop  
We already have enough factories  
We can still stop the swap  
From Life to Machinery

*Clayton Schulte  
Covington Latin School*

## **what is happening in earth ?**

As climate change further affects us  
We hardly notice it till it's too late.

People would choose to not realize  
What we do that harms the environment and  
the earth itself.

We don't tend to realize that cutting a tree  
hurts the earth and us.

Waste, transporting, manufacturing goods,  
and generating power  
play a huge role in creating climate change.

We can further prevent more climate change  
by  
Waste less, walk or use bikes, and save  
energy.

We can help by doing our part to help out  
the environment and the earth.

Everyone needs to find a way to make things  
fun, to help stop climate change.

As the heat rises, many people will be  
unable to go outside.

The sun gives us light and vitamin D, but  
there are some downsides to the sun.

If people could get skin cancer and hurt their  
eyes.

People don't like working under the hot sun.

Some people have a choice to work inside  
But other people don't do so due to their job.

When people are working, if there is no  
ozone layer under them, it could cause  
harmful things to someone's body.

As it gets colder, sometimes it would snow  
but other times it will not due to climate  
change.

Climate change can change which parts will  
get snow and some places where it will not  
snow.

Climate change takes the lives of animals  
like Polar bears, penguins, salmon, sea  
turtles, and bees.

Some of their habits are getting destroyed by  
the climate change.

People have a choice to help or not to help  
For now, some people are not helping us to  
get rid of climate change.

It's only a matter of time before all hope is  
lost due to us and our poor decisions.

That will be a big conquest due to our  
decisions.

*Christian Quix Chaman*  
*Aiken New Tech High School*

### **What it means to be your world**

I wanted to be the world to you  
I was willing to give you all I had  
You took advantage of that  
You were willing to use all my most valuable resources without any empathy for anyone else  
You took my joy, my hope, my will to strive  
You caused me to cry my last tears not letting me be sad about anything else  
But I guess that's what everyone does  
People destroy the Earth  
Take the earth's resources without any care  
They destroy the Earth not allowing it to rain  
I was your world but why would I want that if you can't even love the Earth

*Bridget Swaney  
Covington Latin School*

## **When I was a kid**

When I was a kid,  
There were always birds in the woods of my backyard.  
Year by year, they're slowly moving away.  
I don't exactly know where they're going,  
But they aren't staying here.  
I remember going outside and hearing a chorus of birds,  
Singing for all the world to hear;  
A symphony of chirps, trills, whistles, and warbles.  
My wakeup call in the morning, and slowing as the day goes on.  
But now, when I go outside I only hear a few lonely bird calls.  
Birds lamenting on their lonesomeness,  
Trying to find a partner to be with.  
It can't be noticed after one or two years,  
But each spring brings back less birds than the year before.  
The paradise of the woods that used to be thriving with life,  
With woodpeckers banging on my window each day of the summer,  
Now feels desolate.  
No woodpeckers at my window.  
No chorus of birds each morning.  
Now just a shell of what it once was

*Gabriel Weber*

*Covington Latin School*

## **Why Climate Change?**

Why is climate change a thing?  
A whisper from our earth, a sad ring.  
Fossil fuels burned with reckless haste,  
Nature's balance laid to waste.  
Our oceans rise and forests fall,  
Echoes of our planet's call.  
Glaciers melt in the warming sun,  
A race against time we've just begun.  
Species vanish, skies grow gray,  
Our hope flickers every new day.  
This cannot be the end  
We need to Heal the world  
Our common friend.  
So let us listen, let us act,  
Our planet can no longer glisten,  
So let us see the fact.  
With unity, compassion, and a pact.  
To cherish the earth, its gifts to bring,  
And answer why climate change is a thing.

*Anthoni Vivar  
Aiken New Tech High School*

## **Winter changes**

The clouds are moving away from the sun  
The grass is getting greener  
The mud is drying up  
The bald trees are getting their leaves back  
while the old ones decompose \_  
The weather is getting warmer  
Kids are back outside  
Why's that?  
Because it's spring time  
Spring is warm  
Spring is kind  
The UV is going back up time to wear  
sunscreen  
We waited many months just for this  
feeling\_  
Time for the birds to come back  
Time to wake up and cheer

*Ellie Schnitzler*  
*Aiken High School*

