



Outside /
Inside
New Poems
for Children

Paddler Press Volume 10

Paddler Press

Volume 10 - *Outside/Inside*

New Poems for Children



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Paddler Press

Peterborough/Nogojiwanong, Ontario

paddler@canoeideas.ca paddlerpress.ca @paddlerpress

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Cover Art: Crazy Gingerbread Canoekies
by Deryck N. Robertson

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Foreword

Recently, I picked up a copy of A.A. Milne's *Now We Are Six* at a lovely vintage book shop housed in an old train station in Lakefield, Ontario (you really must visit it). The idea for this issue you are holding began that day as I sat on my couch reading Milne's almost 100 year old poems and reflected on how much I still enjoy Dennis Lee's *Alligator Pie* and *Bubblegum Delicious*; poems written for the child that still (hopefully) lives in us. I even learned a new word that day, one that I try to use when the opportunity arises. I won't tell you what that word is now, but you can find it yourself when you read it.

The poems in this collection include two co-written with young writers. Not only should we as adults be writing for children, we need to encourage children to write for themselves and for each other. In that spirit, pass this book along to a young poet and have them use page 34 to become a fellow Paddler. Share their work with us on Twitt...er, X.

Thank you to our contributors and readers for your continued support and trust in Paddler Press. It was a lot of fun putting this issue together and I know that it will bring joy to all who read it.

Happy Paddling,

Deryck N. Robertson
EIC, Paddler Press

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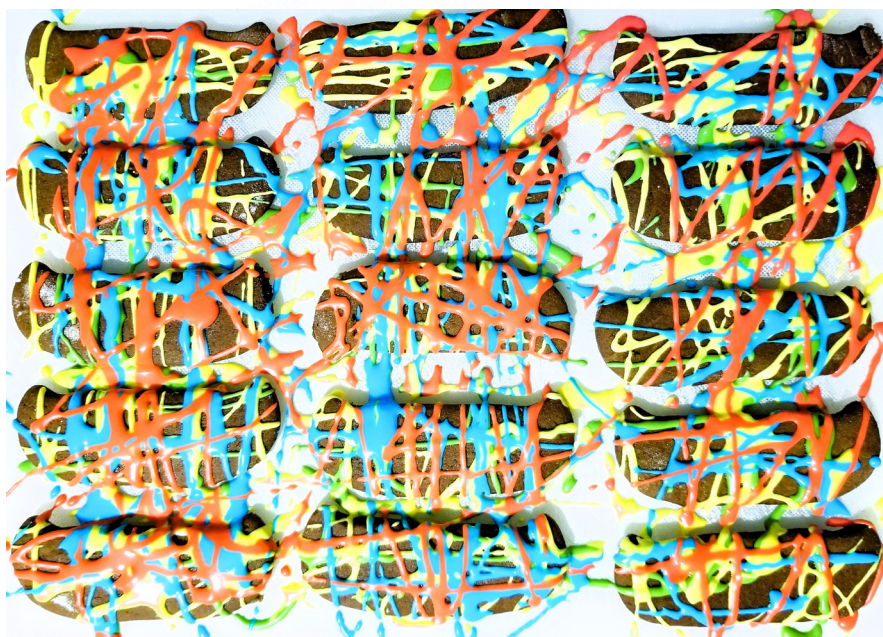
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Cover Photo: Crazy Gingerbread Canoekies
by Deryck N. Robertson

morning sweeps across my window

Bruce Jay Baker

morning sweeps across my window
sun and airy laughing
mocking sleep and sleepyhead slumber
birds sing worms crawl petals sprawl
and taunt the scrambling stars to show their noses

tomorrow a leaf will fall

Bruce Jay Baker

tomorrow a leaf will fall
(severing all worldly ties)
and draw her stalk unto her breast
and curl her fingers folded skin
and bow her head to gently spin
 and sweep
 and swirl
 and sway
 and glide
 to softly kiss the earth
and hasten lives



Bruce Jay Baker recently retired from a long career practicing law and is now pursuing his lifelong passion for creative writing. He is enjoying his second act and looking forward to a few good years of contemplating his time in time while writing.

I Met a Jade Sage

John S. Green

I met an insect—a jade sage,
crawling along my book,
not giving me a look.
She gauged the edge of every page,
as if a recital stage.

She introduced herself, “I’m Joyce,
not Joy, Dot, or Dee.”
“Would you please read aloud to me?”
she asked in a vibrant voice,
as if I had a choice.

I said, “Indeed, I will with glee.”
We shared a lemonade—
ate orange marmalade,
reciting lovely poetry,
as if all could see.

John S Green, author of *Whimsy Park: Children’s Poems for the Whole Family*, is widely published in all styles of poetry—especially haiku. John lived in Europe before moving to the United States at age thirteen. His daughter cooks with spice, and his wife still laughs at his jokes.

The Night is Singing

Melinda Szymanik

The night is singing, not of sleep
no gentle lull to slumber deep
instead we hear the insects chime
a pulsing, spell-like, cadenced rhyme
hush, the whisper of the trees
dancing on the midnight breeze,
the traffic hum with frequent horn,
and siren songs that calls us on -
come join them in their midnight raucous,
with this most symphonic chorus
playing through the darkest hours
that
 won't
 be done
 till dawn.

Melinda Szymanik is a New Zealand based award-winning writer of picture books, short stories and novels for children and young adults. She has been writing for over twenty years and also writes poetry for adults and children. Her most recent titles include the picture books, *My Elephant is Blue* (Penguin, 2021), *BatKiwi* (Scholastic, 2021) and *Lucy and the Dark* (Penguin, 2023).

Twigs and Sticks and Bits of Trees

Chris James

Twigs and sticks and bits of trees,
What can I make out of these?

A sword to fight a pirate crew,
A witch's spoon to stir her brew.
A wizard's wand to cast a spell,
The key to lock a secret cell.

Twigs and sticks and bits of trees,
What can I make out of these?

Leafy wings so I can fly,
A jet that glides up in the sky,
Bark and leaves make works of art,
Dirt and rain make my mud tart.

Twigs and sticks and bits of trees,
What can I make out of these?

Cover me with daisy jewels,
Dig great holes with homemade tools.
A tree trunk cave - go in with care,
Beware! Don't wake the grizzly bear!

Twigs and sticks and bits of trees,
What can I make out of these?

Feathers for my huge headdress,
A floral gown sure to impress.
Shells from sandy shores I found,
Make that whooshing seaside sound.

Twigs and sticks and bits of trees,
What can I make out of these?

Pebbles I collect like gems,
A branch and sand I don't need pens.
Trees to climb like Everest,
The big, old, lumpy ones are best!

String and cardboard boxes too,
How can I make use of you?

A homemade kite that flies just right,
A giant robot I can fight.
I'll star in my own T.V. show,
A rock shaped football I can throw.

Twigs and sticks and bits of trees,
What will you make out of these?

Chris James is a 37-year-old father of 3, failed musician, who runs a medical training company in the UK, with a children's author inside him desperate to burst out! After 15 years of songwriting, Chris has realised his passion for writing lyrical children's books & poems. Chris is yet to have any work officially published but is very proud of the flash story that was used in an advent calendar in a Scottish primary school last year (which definitely counts!).

Ready to Go

Cindy Greene

I'm going on an epic trip,
My things are packed – I'm set!
I've got a tent, my sleeping bag,
A huge mosquito net,
A bathing suit, umbrella, extra glasses,
And three hats,
A ton of nuts plus garlic cloves
(to scare off vampire bats),
A flashlight, fishing tackle, flares, a compass,
And a map,
Some Band-Aids, crampons, icepicks, flip-flops, rope,
And plastic wrap.

I'm sure I've thought of everything,
I'm ready. Wait, oh no!
There's one key thing that I forgot –
It's where I want to go.

As a child, Cindy Greene wanted to be Shel Silverstein, an art teacher, or president of the World Bank. While not on track for those, she loves to write poetry and picture books and make things. Cindy helps non-profits, works on issues of racial justice, and spends time with her fun family. She laughs a lot of the day. Cindy's poetry can be found in several anthologies and stamped in a concrete sidewalk in her town.



Butterfly on Coneflower by Sharon Korzelius

Sharon is a writer who dislikes coffee, a teacher who loves engaging her students, and a photographer who enjoys capturing the serenity of nature in her camera. Her latest publications include Poetry as Promised, and Trash To Treasure Lit, and Little Old Lady Comedy.

Bee Boxes

Candace Pearson

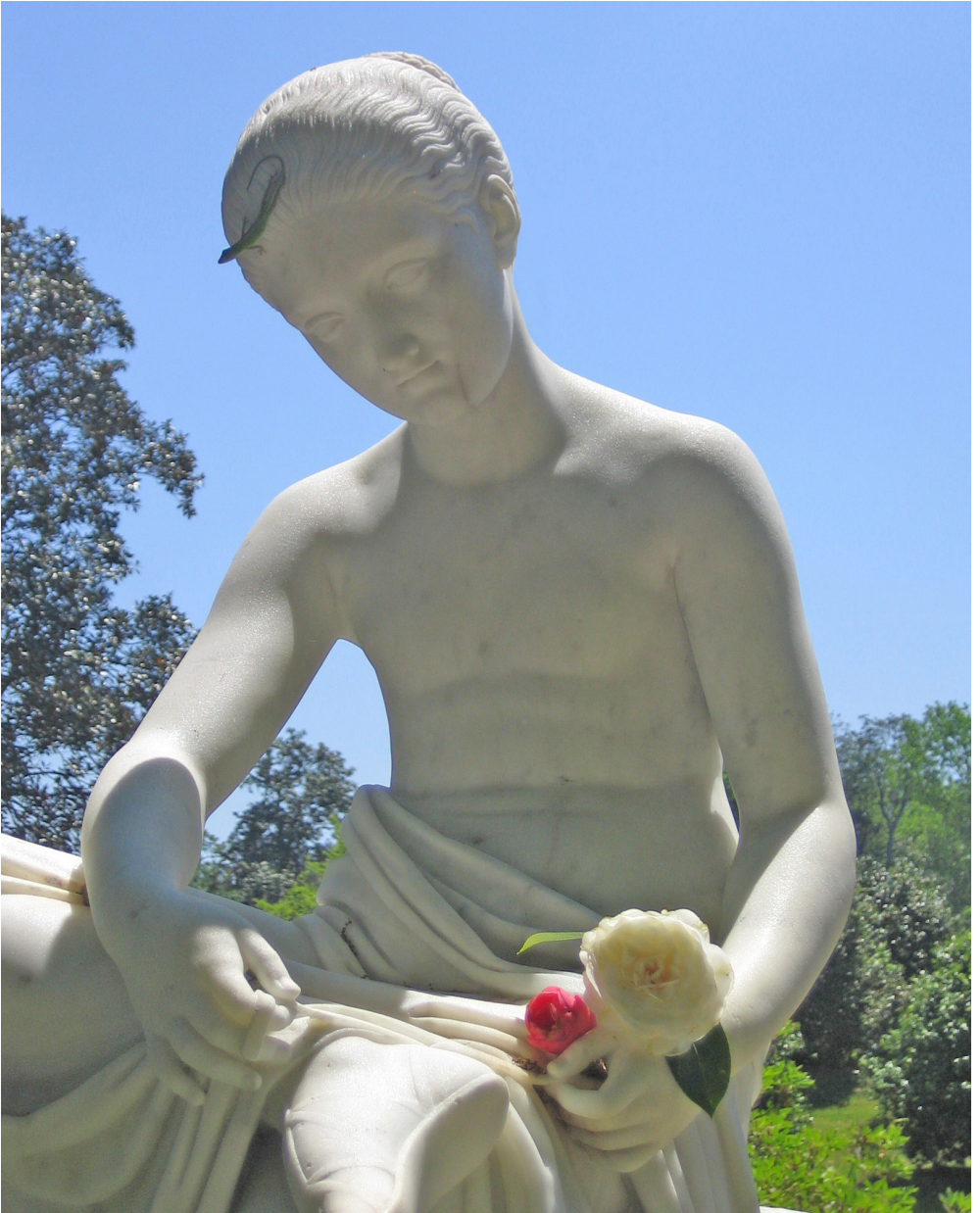
Bee boxes are buzzing,
bustling, bumping
against the still air
at the edge of the field,

each shingled house stacked
on top of one another,
white wood weathering,
doors just big enough for bees

who leave at sunrise
full of industry, then return
from their blossoming,
feet tipped in gold dust

to welcome a visitor who calls
in white veil and gloves—
the beekeeper,
accepting sweet honeyed gifts.

Candace Pearson's poems for children have been published in Cricket Magazine, along with *Sharing the Seasons: A Book of Poems*, edited by Lee Bennett Hopkins. Her full-length manuscript for adults, *Hour of Unfolding*, won the Liam Rector First Book Prize for Poetry from Longwood University. She lives in a small California mountain community.



Statue With Lizard and Flowers by Jill Kalter

A Request to the Robin Waiting Outside My Door

Claire Taylor

perched above my doorway
the robin's nest
rests, a tangle of sticks
and straw
and one piece of yellow yarn
I cannot see inside
for it sits too high above my eye
but I know blue eggs lay
waiting to hatch
because every time I step outside
a robin swoops and dives
calls to me a warning
to leave her babies alone

I want to tell her not to worry
I am a protector of birds

look, robin
at all the trees I've planted
so your babies will have fruit
and at my growing garden
full of tasty worms

Earth is ours to share, dear robin
and I am doing my best to care
for the ground

and the sky
the flowing rivers and wide oceans
all the animals and insects
and for the birds
like you and your babies
but you must understand, my robin friend
that to help the world

I sometimes need to leave my house



Hello, Hummingbird

Claire Taylor

A flash
A glint
A spark of color
What luck!--you caught my eye

You zip
You swish
You're here, then gone
"Oh, look!"--away you fly



Claire Taylor writes for both adult and youth audiences. She is the author of a children's literature collection, Little Thoughts, and her debut picture book, Benjamin's Sad Day, is forthcoming from Golden Fleece Press. Claire is the founding editor of Little Thoughts Press, a print magazine for kids. She lives in Baltimore, Maryland, and can be found online at clairemtaylor.com.

Recess Race

Stephanie Henson

Racing through the field at recess.
Arms out wide, flying an imaginary plane of freedom.
Dandelions tickling my ankles as I prance through the grass,
wispy feather fluffs puff throughout the air,
leaving a trail of cotton like confetti in my wake.
Jetting across the lush landscape,
blooming buds peek up from the ground.
Different hues
Different views
As my feet continue to power me forward,
a run to remember ---
in the direction of the finish line.

Stephanie lives with her family in West Chester, Pennsylvania, but is originally from Central, New Jersey, where she has a degree in Communications and a Publishing and Professional Writing Certificate from Rider University. Writing and storytelling have been her passion for a long time. She has a Children's Poetry book released with Experiments in Fiction which reached Number One New Release in Children's Poetry on Amazon (e-book). She has an SEL Short Story Collection through Buzgaga Books and her second Middle-Grade Poetry Collection through Alien Buddha Press. Stephanie enjoys reading, theatre, mindless web searching, Netflix binges, sunflowers, sports, and anything related to coffee!

Kites – Three Haiku

D.C. Nobes

Clouds billowing high –
colourful kites fill the sky
sailing on the wind.

Red, yellow, and blue –
kite tails shining in the sun
streaming on the wind.

Many coloured kites
snagged by the kite-eating tree
in our neighbourhood.

D.C. Nobes is a physicist, a poet, and a photographer who, aside from 2 years on Vancouver Island, spent his first 39 years in or near Toronto, Canada, then 23 years based in Christchurch, New Zealand, 4 years in China, and has retired to Bali. He used to enjoy winter but admits that he doesn't miss the snow or the cold. He thinks almost all poetry is meant to be read aloud. His poems and photographs have been widely published, including The Hooghly Review, miniMAG, and Swim Press.



Colourful Hobbyhorse Baisha Village, Yunnan, China
by D.C. Nobes

Our Family Walk

Helen Kemp Zax

My brother zooms on his scooter.
My daddy zips on his bike.
Grammy races ahead on her motor-cart,
while Sis pedals hard on her trike.

Mommy jogs and pushes the stroller,
so fast she can hardly talk.
The *whir* of the wheels rocks our baby to sleep.
So why do we call it a walk?

Moonwalk

Helen Kemp Zax

Wave goodbye, then shut the rocket door.
Apollo countdown: “six . . . five . . . four . . .”
Lift off with a jolting, juddering rush.
Kick back from the force of max Q crush.

Outer space becomes your vast cocoon.
Next you steer the module to the moon.

Marvel at the Earth, so blue and small.
Off to gather moonrocks for your haul.
Or scatter moondust into sunlight beams.
Now head home to share your cosmic dreams.

Helen Kemp Zax loves to write poetry, especially rhyming poems. She is co-winner of the 2021 YorkMix International Children’s Poetry Prize, 2018 MG Katherine Paterson Prize winner, and 2019 Finalist. Her poetry appears in many anthologies and magazines including chasing clouds, What is a Friend?, Cricket, and High Five. Helen lives in Washington, DC with her husband and Aussiedoodle Huckleberry Finn. Find her at www.helenzax.com, on X: @HelenZax, and on Instagram: @helenkempzax.

Seaweed Tea

Leigh Therriault

If I was a mermaid
I could travel the sea,
Twirling with dolphins
And sip seaweed tea.

If I was a mermaid
I would glisten with glee,
Dancing with starfish
In an ocean so free.

When I am a mermaid
I will gladly foresee
The dazzling wonders
These waves hold for me.

Leigh Therriault is a writer from Ottawa, Ontario. She lives near an enchanted duck pond and enjoys watching the geese land at dusk. Leigh writes poetry, short stories, and children's books. She is an active member of the Society of Children's Book Writers & Illustrators (SCBWI) and the Canadian Authors Association. Her stories and poems for young readers have appeared in *The Caterpillar*, *The Dirigible Balloon*, and *The Toy*. Find her at LeighTherriault.com and [@LeighTherriault](https://www.instagram.com/LeighTherriault) on social media.



10"x14" Watercolor by Richard Hanus

Richard Hanus had four kids but now just three. Zen and Love.

Bird Talk

Hilary Elder

Everyone says
you go for a walk
for some peace and quiet
so I do
but outside it's a riot.

There are chirping birds
and cheeping birds
whooping birds
and weeping birds
squawking birds
and squeaking birds
twittering birds
and tweeting birds.

There are long, happy, chill songs
and boo! scared you! thrill songs,
and guess-what-he-did-then calls
and watch-for-those-big-men calls
and have-you-seen-my-friend? calls
and what's-around-that-bend? calls

and I sit down on a bench
and it's like grandad says,
I can't hear myself think.

And then, suddenly, I can.
And what I think is
that I can hear all this brilliant birdsong
but I can only make up what it means
and I wish I could speak bird.
I really wish I could speak bird.
And I think
I am going to learn to speak bird.

I close my eyes and listen some more
and think about how
I am going to learn to speak bird.

The Squatter

Hilary Elder

Lurking in the deep, dark, green, brown wood
at the back of our estate, where joggers jog
the muddy path and people walk the dog
is the den that Sam and me made. It's so good

that we can sit there while it rains all day
and go home dry. And we can listen to
the walkers telling things that – if they knew
we heard them they would never say!

But now Sam's standing on my doorstep, says
that there's a squatter living in the den
I'm fuming – *No way! Come on, Sam!* And then
I drag him out, run to our special place

where a curled-up hedgehog sleeps away the day.
Sam smiles and I think *Maybe that's OK.*

Hilary was born, raised and lives in the Far North of England – though she has been to other places. She loves writing stories, poetry, articles, blog posts and postcards. She also loves reading, music (she plays viola and trombone, but not at the same time), being outdoors, food, knitting (mostly socks) and her family and friends. She writes for children and grownups; she's not always sure which of these she is. Find her on X @Hilary-Elder and at www.hilaryelder.com Insta: [hilaryelderwrites](https://www.instagram.com/hilaryelderwrites)



Secret Garden by Jill Kalter

The Tortoise's Journey

Stefan Karlsson

The tortoise's journey of 1000 miles
starts with the first—well,
he's gone into his shell.
Ahem, as I was saying, the tortoise's journey...
He's not coming out, is he?
Doesn't he know we're busy?
I had a great story about patience planned
but now we just have to stand here
and wait. This tortoise is so boring!
I have 1000 things to do
and he doesn't even care! Are you ignoring
me? Helloooooo in there! Maybe
he's teaching me some kind of moral
about slowness. Well? Spit it out, tortoise,
I'm not immortal! Make it snappy.
This shell of silence, this immovable fortress!
The tortoise's journey of 1000 miles
starts with him napping.

Can of Worms

Stefan Karlsson

I've got a problem. The difficulty is I'm not sure if I have a dilemma or a predicament. I'm puzzled.

Am I in a pickle or in a quandary? The problem is there are too many words to describe my problem.

A humongous, gigantic, gargantuan dinosaur, the *Thesaurus*, has got me in its grips, and it's ready to gobble me, swallow me, gulp me down whole unless I can name the trouble I'm in. Its jaws gape. That is, they open wide.

So I toss a hornet's nest, a can of worms, and just for good measure, a hard nut to crack into the dinosaur's menacing mouth, and its belly gets so stuffed that all its words spill out. Success! That's it! My problem is a *mess*.

Stroll in the Park

Stefan Karlsson

I walked by a man with a hat.
Hello, I said.

Then I walked by a man with a tuba on his head.
Odd, I thought.

Then I walked by another man with a tuba on his head.
Very odd, I thought.

Then I walked by ten men with tuba heads.
Kind of normal? I thought.

Then I put a tuba on my head.

A man in a hat walked by and said, Hello?
Odd, I thought. Where'd everybody go?

Stefan Karlsson is a poet and artist based in Portland, OR. He received his MFA in Poetry from the University of California-Irvine. His poems (for children) have appeared in *The Dirigible Balloon* and his poems (for adults) have appeared in *Fourteen Hills*, *Sugar House Review*, and *Spillway*. His paper marbling artwork can be found on Instagram @nautiluspaper, and his poetry for kids can be found on Twitter @stefkidlit.



Focused - Ice Cream in Xi'an, China
by D.C. Nobes

**This page intentionally left blank
for you to write your own poem.**

Summer Sings

Linda Middleton

Summer sings
fling windows wide,
follow the tide,
barefoot on sand,
sunshine in hand.

Summer whispers
soft ocean songs,
let float the wrongs,
fly like a kite,
be part of this light.

Summer swings me
through topaz skies.
Summer sings...
catch-you-next-year goodbyes!

Linda lives in a leafy corner of England and is passionate about inspiring others with her poetry for children. She is delighted that some of her poems have found beautiful homes in magazines and blogs, including *The Caterpillar* and *The Dirigible Balloon*. In her spare time when she is not writing, she can be found wood wandering, wildlife watching, beach strolling and ice cream tasting.

Sing a Song of Camping

Jennifer Thomas

Sing a song of trail hikes
A pocket full of rocks
Bits of bark and pretty twigs
Pebbles in my socks

Sing of song of campsites
Tent poles, pegs and rope
Dump our gear and pitch our tent
It won't take long, I hope

Sing a song of spiders
Beetles, crickets, slugs
Centipedes and inchworms
Tons of friendly bugs

Sing a song of heroes
Searching in the woods
Finding dens and building forts
I'd live here, if I could

Sing a song of campfires
Sparks are drifting up
Grab a stick and make a s'more
Hot cocoa in a cup

Sing a song of bedtime
Stars strung high and bright
Zip the tent and snuggle in
Time to say goodnight



The New Day

Jennifer Thomas

spider
greet the new day
on a dew-jewelled cobweb
she offers morning a sip of
diamonds



Jennifer Thomas is a medical editor and children's poet in Ottawa, Canada. Some of her favourite memories involve escaping to Ontario's provincial parks to paddle their deep blue lakes, camp under the stars, and swat bugs.

Sand Story

Sarah Meade

The beach is flat and blank,
Like a piece of paper.
That gives the girl an idea.
Once upon a time
She scrawls with a stick.
“A story!” her brother squeals.
“Our story,” she says.
“Go on. Draw your part.”
He scribbles and sketches.
She writes and writes.
When the sand is full of sketches and scribbles and
words and worlds,
They stand back to read their story.

Sarah Meade’s work has been published in Hop to It: Poems to Get You Moving, Babybug, Ladybug, Highlights Hello, High Five, and several other magazines. She’s a PAL member of SCBWI and co-host of #KidLitZombieWeek. When not writing or reading piles of picture books, Sarah can be found chasing her children around their local playgrounds in North Carolina.

The Concert in the Park

Lisa Timpf

Have you heard the music starting
Just as dusk fades into dark
When the wild things get together
For a concert in the park?

Oh, how the crickets fiddle
As the salamander sings
While the rabbit's foot's a-drumming
And the owl claps his wings.

The flying squirrel floats and glides
Among the tallest trees
And the antics of the dancing mink
Make deer fall, laughing, to their knees.

On a balmy summer evening
They can play the whole night through
Before the dawn, though, they'll be gone
Save for footprints in the dew.

Though you may not hear the wild things
You will see they've left their mark
If you check the morning after
Their concert in the park.

On Our Backyard Rink

Lisa Timpf

on our backyard rink
there are no referees
and no penalty box
just a wooden bench to sit on
when you need a break

on our backyard rink
there are no whistles or buzzers
just birds chirping
and rasp of skates on ice

on our backyard rink
no fans come to watch us play
and our dog Sparky hangs out
and tries to steal the puck
whenever he gets a chance

though it's nothing special,
I don't think
that our backyard rink
is missing anything
important
at all

Lisa Timpf is a retired HR and communications professional who lives in Simcoe, Ontario. Her speculative poetry has appeared in *New Myths*, *Star*Line*, *Triangulation: Seven-Day Weekend*, *Polar Borealis*, and other venues. Her collection of speculative haibun poetry, *In Days to Come*, is available from Hiraeth Publishing. You can find out more about Lisa's writing projects at <http://lisatimpf.blogspot.com/>.

Maestro Mae

Ryann Jones

Brushing off the flakes of frost
From winter's deepest doze,
Mae the fairy flutters off-
There's music to compose!

Now that springtime has arrived,
Mae must awake musicians.
Casting spells both near and far,
Fulfilling all positions.

Thunder rumbles through the sky
While crashing clouds combine.
Electric bolts zap-tap the ground,
With raindrops keeping time.

Rhythmic roars of waterfalls
Send echoes on repeat,
While sapling trees sway to and fro;
The breeze provides a beat.

Melodic bird songs fill the air,
Along with buzzing bees.

Tempo slows,
The world is still,
And rainbows
Whisper
"Peace."

Mae rests. Her spell evaporates.
And movement one is done.
Although there are more parts to write,
She's glad to see the sun!

Mae soaks up all the wonder
While she waves her wand around.
The harmony of springtime is
A symphony of sound!

Ryann Jones is a member of SCBWI, multiple critique groups, and a co-host of Storytime Sprint. She is represented by Bethany Jett at the C.Y.L.E. agency. When she is not moonlighting as a picture book writer, she's a stay-at-home mom. She enjoys writing stories with fresh perspectives, humor, and heart in both rhyme and prose.

I'd like to be

for my Lik^waíá language teachers

Janis La Cuvée

I'd like to be a tree **λʔos**
stretch my branches to the sky **íki**
a shelter for birds **cíçəsq^wana** to build their nest **qəlǎçi**
and feed their young
push my roots deep into the earth
where worms **qíq^álawē** wiggle

I'd like to be an eagle **k^wik^w**
soar on the wind, climb high on the updraft
survey the world far below
feast on fish captured in my talons

I'd like to be a seagull **čík^ʔwi**
squawk at the boat ramp
steal scraps of fish
drop clams hard to break them open
tasty morsels to devour

I'd like to be a bear **ǎaʔi**
patrol the river **wa** in the fall
for spawning salmon **kutəla**
munch on ripe, dark blackberries **dusdək^wa**

I'd like to be a rock **tisəm**
hard and grey, immovable
grizzly **gəla** turned to stone

I'd like to be the wind **yola**
blow fierce in storms
gentle in the spring
surround people with a warm breeze

* the words in bold typeface are written in Lik^wala the Indigenous language of the Liǵ^wiɫdaǵ^w people of the east coast of Vancouver Island.

The “grizzly turned to stone” is the legend of the Big Rock, an erratic on the shores of Campbell River

Janis La Couvée (she/her) is a writer and poet with a love of wild green spaces. She resides in Campbell River, Vancouver Island, British Columbia on the territory of the Wei Wai Kum, We Wai Kai and Kwiakah First Nations and is dedicated to conservation efforts and exploring the great outdoors. Her work is published by Dreamers Magazine, Book of Matches, New Feathers Anthology, among others. Find her at: janisla-couvee.com Facebook: [JanisLaCouveeOnline](https://www.facebook.com/JanisLaCouveeOnline)

Big Like You

Carol Coven Grannick

I want to be big like you
do the things big people do

brush *your* teeth and comb *your* hair
carry you from here to there

cuddle you when you are sad
make you smile when you are mad

but for now I guess I'll be
the one who lets *you* cuddle me!

Carol Coven Grannick is an award-winning poet and children's author whose adult and children's work appears/is forthcoming in a number of print and online literary magazines. Her novel in verse, *Reeni's Turn*, debuted from Regal House Publishing in 2020. She is the recipient of three Illinois Artist Grants for work-in-progress. Her poetry celebrates, holds close, and gives meaning to the days of her life.

Things

Moe Phillips

Things on wheels are important things.
Just as important as things on springs.
Let's then consider things on strings.
and all the kinds of fun that brings.
I don't like things that come with stings.
I am always game for a thing that sings.
I do like things with chimes and rings.
Like doorbells that have dongs and dings.
But best of all is anything that swings.

Poet/writer/content film maker Moe Phillips is a native New Yorker. Over forty of her poems for children and adults have been published in anthologies and magazines in the US and abroad. Moe was the first poet to be featured on The Dirigible Balloon's website for children's poetry. Fourteen of Moe's stories have been featured in Bella Grace Magazine. Moe's latest endeavor is a children's audio poetry site she pens and produces- The Feisty Beast The elements and elementals are her inspiration.

The Red Eyed Witch*

Tim Tobin

Don't, don't, don't you dare
Look under there
Underwear? No, silly, under there.

For if you dare, dare, dare
To look under there
Underwear? Knock it off
You may find an itch of a witch

She sleeps, not as you, with two arms, two legs and a head
But rather as dust bunnies under your bed

Under there
Underwear? Ok, that's enough of that
Waiting, waiting, waiting
For you to dare

How do I know these things, and more
Because I dared to look under there
Underwear? Holy smoke, stop already!

And found
The Red Eyed Witch
Who with her magic spell
Turned this man into a mouse
Squeak! Squeak!

*Best to be read aloud!

Mr. Tobin holds a degree in mathematics and retired. Eighty-eight of his stories/poems appear in print and online. Most recently, a collection of his childhood poems appeared in the Poet Magazine and two
48 of his drabbles are on Dark Moments and Black Ink Fiction.



Marionettes by Jill Kalter

After spending 30 years in the hustle-bustle of Los Angeles, Jill Kalter escaped to the Applegate Valley in Southern Oregon. She now lives on a small “hobby farm” with her husband/photography collaborator, two border collies, one black cat, and six sheep.



Neighbour Doors Delft, Netherlands
by D.C. Nobes

Googly Eyes!

Sarah Meade

Grandma brought a big surprise--
Silly, giggly googly eyes!
She showed me how to stick them on...
Now those eyes are almost gone!
Eyes on dolls and eyes on balls,
Eyes on doors, and eyes on walls,
Eyes on blocks and eyes on clocks,
Eyes on Grandma's favorite socks!
Eyes on pears and eyes on bears,
Eyes on Grandma's rocking chairs!
Eyes all over, you can see.
Googly eyes are watching me!

Change Day

Hazel Knox

Clean sheets on my bed
cocoon me
in scents of summer meadow
and remind me
I am loved.

Birthday Candles

Hazel Knox

Blow! they shout
so I blow,
and six tiny candle flames
turn into smoky curls,
disappearing
to start work on my wish,
while I lean in to smell
my favourite moment of the year.

Busy

Hazel Knox

Dad wants me to put my socks on,
and my shoes,
find my water bottle,
that I left at football,
because we really have to go,
but I'm busy.
There's a ladybird on my window sill
and she needs me more.

Hazel Knox is a children's writer and occupational therapist based in Edinburgh. She was a Scottish Book Trust New Writers Awardee in 2021 and her long listings include The Guppy Open Submission and Write Mentor Children's Novel Award. Her poetry is published online at dirigibleballoon.org. You can find her on Twitter [@hazel_knox](https://twitter.com/hazel_knox)

First Day of School

Stacie Eirich & Sadie Eirich, age 12

Beep-beep! A loud alarm startles me from sleep
Splish-splash! A fresh shower washes me awake
Swish-swish! A soft towel dries me off
Tug-tug! A clean shirt goes over my head

Crunch-crunch! A crispy cereal swirls in my bowl
Thump-Thud! A backpack filled with heavy textbooks
Swip-slap! A new pair of shoes race through wet grass
Bump-bump! A yellow bus rumbles down the road

Ring-Ring! A school bell chimes when class begins
Clickity-Clack! A keyboard taps while students read
Scratch-Scratch! A pencil takes notes as teachers speak
Tick-tock! A clock announces it's time for lunch

Ha-Ha! A group giggles across the playground
Fweet-Fweet! A teacher whistles us back to class
Ring-Ring! A school bell chimes when class ends
Clang-Clatter! A mad rush to gather our things

Bump-bump! A yellow bus rumbles down the road
Swip-Swap! A new pair of shoes race through wet grass
Thump-Thud! A backpack filled with heavy textbooks
Crunch-Crunch! A salty-sweet snack in my hands

Ding-Dong! A new friend greets me at the door
Whoop-Whee! A ball sails through the windy sky
Zing-Zee! A swing flies high in afternoon sunshine
Ahh-ha! A first day of school finished with smiles

Sarsaparilla's Soda

Stacie Eirich & Dylan Eirich, age 10

My name is Cordelia Sarsaparilla
I own Sarsaparilla's Soda Shop
there are delights in my villa
that you've never seen flop
too delectable to refuse
why not give yourself a treat
try any sweets that you choose:

Chocolate Melon Mascarpone
Tangerine Pineapple Pepperoni
Cowberry Cabbage Stew
Turkey Truffle Barbecue
Plummy-Lemon Jambalaya Jelly
Huckleberry Hotdog Pulled Pork Belly
Crawfish Collard Caramel Cantaloupe
Hawaiian Honey Hogsfoot Antelope
Pistachio Banana Bacon Broiled Ham
Apple Almond Asparagus Spumoni Spam
Strawberry Zucchini Squash Sassafras
Broccoli Butterbean Blackberry Blast
Orange Octopus Onion Oggie
Licorice Lemon-Lime Zombie
Cookies & Cats Dipped Cheesecurds
Cream Cheese Critter & Turtle Turds
Blueberry Basil Butter Rum

Pumpkin Pecan Peanut Plum
Dragonfruit Dinosaur DooDoo
Raspberry Radish Raisin Roux
Apricot Avocado Nutella Nut
Watermelon Walnut Monkey Butt
Gooseberry Gumbo Guava Goo
Stinky Shoe Kiwi Kangaroo
Cauliflower Cactus Cocoa Cooties
Cucumber Chicken Tutti-Frutti
Tigers Blood Taco Tomato
Shark Attack Artichoke Potato

My name is Cordelia Sarsaparilla
I own Sarsaparilla's Soda Shop
savor a treat from my villa
you will surely smile nonstop!

Stardust Dreams

Stacie Eirich

Hold tight, my darling, to stardust dreams,
find light in imaginary spaces, filling dark places with
gleams!

Reach for what dazzles you, my darling, with boundless
joy and wonder,
put your heart-work into breaths of hope, dancing
‘midst storms of raucous thunder!

Spin with verses of fairies & fancy, my darling, that
sparkle with mischief begun,
turn tales from slippery shadows, sew them into
memories of endless fun!

Keep them still beside you, my darling, as heedless time
unravels like sand,
Fly fast, my darling, fly fast to the magical isle of
Neverland!

Feel the starry wind at your fingers, my darling, the dust
of dreams at your toes,
Cherish always your heart, nourished with stories &
songs, shimmering bright in their glow!

Childhood Days

Stacie Eirich

Oh how joyful the autumn of childhood days,
running, jumping, laughing in piles of burnished bronze,
ruby, gold!

Sunlit rainbows of fall color dancing in fall breezes,
inviting us to play in sunlight spilling, rain pouring,
swirling delight under silvery moon shining.

Oh how careless we frolicked, mindless of hours,
leaping, bounding, skipping, heedless of cold and damp!

Crashing through castles of foliage, keen with magic
wonder bursting sharp, full, bright
vivid and shining as our kaleidoscopic eyes.

Oh how quick and merciless the passage of time,
ticking, chugging, rushing - a roaring steam train!

Autumn turning to winter in a flurry of fallen snow,
each delicate flake glistens a memory faded,
youth's distant shadow of simplicity, astonishing love.

Stacie Eirich is a mother of two, poet & singer who makes her home in Louisiana. Her poems have recently appeared or are forthcoming in Synkroniciti Magazine, Pile Press Journal, The Healing Muse, Kaleidoscope Magazine and The Basilisk Tree, among others. During 2023, she lived in Tennessee while caring for her child through cancer treatments at St. Jude Children's Research Hospital. www.stacieeirich.com



Outside-Up and Inside-Down

Robinwyn Lewis

When I do summersaults in bed,
and I am standing on my head,
then inside-out and upside-down,
the room is turning all around,
and Daddy's smile looks like a frown
from outside-up and inside-down.

When I am turning like a top
and finally come to a stop,
then outside-down and upside-in,
my top's continuing to spin.
While upside-out and outside-down,
my bottom's sitting on the ground.

When I am jumping up so high
my head is almost to the sky,
then downside-up and inside-down,
I can see the whole world round,
While outside-in and inside-out,
My body is just one great shout!



Outside-Up and Inside-Down by Robinwyn Lewis

Robinwyn Lewis is a retired lawyer, a painter, ESL teacher, a grandmother and a poet. She has had poems published in Yellow Arrow Publishing and Poetry Box. These children's poems evolved over a long period of time based on her observations of her young daughter and, more recently, her grandchildren. Becoming a grandmother has helped her rediscover her silly inner child.

The Moon Fairy's Lullaby

Kelly Zhang

Lull away, lull away,
To see the Moon Fairy
Dance upon a
Laurel tree.

What heavenly treats fill her
Star-speckled basket?
How soft is the fur on her
Snow white rabbit?

Her song flutters down
From the orchard in the sky,
Sweet like peaches, plums, dates,
And apricots ripe.

Lull away, lull away,
Here's a kiss from the Moon Fairy

Nezha the Dragon Slayer

Kelly Zhang

The village is in lockdown again,
Because of me.

I only wanted to make some friends.

Lugging a water dragon through the market streets,
I thought: this'd surely impress the other kids,
Maybe they'll even want to talk with me?

Instead,
They slam doors in my face and
Glare at me through
Window cracks,
As if I'm some dirty monster.

Only Mama sees me for who I am—
A lonely, miserable boy,
Shivering in the rain.

Pigsy is Hungry

Kelly Zhang

Sweating under
A wilting willow tree,
In the sizzling heat of summer,
Pigsy touches something
Round, smooth, cool.

A watermelon!

He cracks open the glistening green shell,
And chomps on the sweet, ripe flesh,
Letting pink juice spurt all over his
Fuzzy snout,
And drip down his plump chin.
Yum!
He licks it all up with glee.

“Hey Pigsy, found anything to eat?”
His friend calls from over the hill.

“Nope!”
Pigsy wipes his face and flings the
Empty watermelon shell far
far away...

Then over the hill he goes to find his friend,
Until he steps on something slippery and slimy.

Down the hillslope Pigsy
Tumbles and rolls.
Rubbing his sore bum,
He grumbles and groans:
“It’s that darn watermelon peel!”

Each poem in this collection is inspired by a famous character of Chinese mythology--from Chang'e the Moon Fairy who lives in exile on the planet moon, to the dragon-slaying rebel-god Nezha, to the gluttonous Pigsy who is best friends with and foil for the Monkey King.

Kelly Zhang is a Canadian children’s book author, poet, and literary translator (Chinese/English). Her writing and translations have appeared in the New York Times for Kids, Words Without Borders, Sine Theta Magazine, and the WorldKidLit Blog. When she is not juggling her day job and multiple writing projects, she brokers peace between a spirited child and a mercurial beagle.

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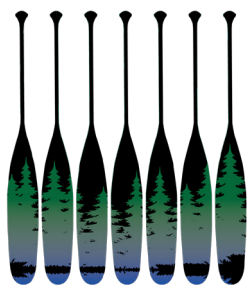


The members of the Paddler Press family are outdoors people and our website pages are named accordingly to canoe trip lingo. The *Put In* is where the trip begins. *The Trip Log* is a reminder of where we've been, the details of *The Journey*. *The Portage* is where we get out of our boats, stretch our legs, and carry our junk to the next put in. *The Campfire* is where we drink coffee, tell stories (for the umpteenth time), laugh, and many times, just sit and reflect.

We nominate for *The Pushcart Prize* and the work of Canadian poets is considered for *Best of Canadian Poetry* from *Biblioasis*.

*Tempo slows,
The world is still,
And rainbows
Whisper
"Peace."*

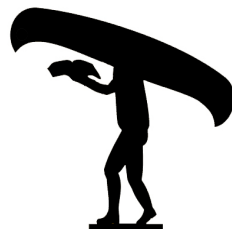
*from Maestro May
by Ryann Jones*



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