

My Nature Hike

When I hike trails my mind will begin
To reach and stretch and take things in.
The tall tall trees and the flowing brook
Even the log where a rest I took.

I walk and watch and listen well
To the story that the forest will tell.
Chirping birds in the trees above
The rustling of the mourning dove.

Turning rocks to see below
The insects that need time to grow.
Lichen, moss, and an epiphyte
Growing all over with determined might.

Burrows of creatures unknown to me
Sit and wait and watch and see.
A tortoise walking very slow
Wanders by as if to say hello.

What's that chattering in the tree?
Squirrels chasing do I see?
A game of tag or fearful scatter?
A snake is spied amongst the clatter.

Friend and foe lurk amongst the trees
And some beneath the fallen leaves.
Nests of birds and holes for owls.
And sometimes even coyote howls.

As I walk I hope to see
A bobcat in a distant tree.
Not today but someday soon
My walk's at an end for it is noon.

Time for lunch and watching deer
As I sit and rest they appear.
It's time to go now I won't be sad
A wonderful hike has been had.

Skye Burgos
Duval
2nd Place Intermediate

Come, come walk with me
Under the forest canopy

Rustle, rustle shake the leaves
In the gentle summer breeze

Tweet, tweet calls the bird
Making sure that he is heard

Buzz, buzz hums the bee
Building its home in the oak tree

Ripple, ripple in the creek
As the fish swims up to peek

Shhh, Shhh, don't make a sound
As our feet touch the ground

Amazing sights you may see
If you tread carefully

Carolyn Wolking
Alachua
3rd Place Intermediate

Tropical Hammock Sonnet

A speck upon the archipelago
Forests diminishing, dwindling slow
Habitat destruction began long ago
Gumbo limbo, pigeon plum cannot grow

Endemic species, Florida tree snail
Found upon hammock's incredible trail
We have tried to save them, to no avail
Fragile ecosystems unite, prevail!

Cutting trees to build houses in a row
Hardwood hammocks, pyrophytes no go
In a canopy lives black-whiskered vireo
This ecosystem is precious, you know

Florida panther, Key Largo woodrat
Leave us alone developers, take that!

Gunnar Shrum
Pinellas
Honorable Mention Intermediate

Among the Mangroves

As I walk among the mangroves,
I spot something out of the corner of my eye.
Long, slender and swimming,
Bright red scales in the mangroves,
Watching with a cautious eye.

In the oyster beds, I see a small head poking out.
We study each other for a moment,
I feel excitement coming over me.
But just as fast as he appeared,
He is gone, never to be seen again.
But he's always watching, with a careful eye.

The marsh snake watches.
He watches from afar,
Never revealing his presence.
He watches over his mangrove kingdom.
Never too close, but never too far.

Lyric G. Moore
Highlands
Honorable Mention Intermediate

Pygmy Fringe Triolet (tree-o-lay)

Great phoenix of ecology
Rise from the ashes
Endangered pygmy fringe tree
Great phoenix of ecology
We hear your call of, "Save me!"
Sprouts depend on fire's blazes
Great phoenix of ecology
Rise from the ashes