

Balding eagle

Miriam
Pinellas County
1st Place Senior

There once was an eagle named Knox
Who was blessed with luxurious locks
Oblivious was he
Of his bald destiny
Which would strike like a large bag of rocks

One day he was soaring with Chief
Whose divulgence caused great disbelief
When the slip of the beak
Leaked a future that's bleak
Knox went through the five stages of grief

As he faced his inevitable balding
Knox questioned his father named Roaldwing
The answer of his
Was, "it is what it is"
This did not make his fate less appalling

As he roamed around feeling defective
He saw a vulture and gained some perspective
It could have been worse
With the carrion's curse
(Of his hygiene he was highly protective)

Leaves and Love

Tupelo
Alachua County
2nd Place Senior

I love the way sunlight shines through maple leaves
Seeping through the red, yellow, and green
Casting a swirling shadow upon the ground

How their veins trace the memories of the Earth
Remembering the feel of the wind
Remembering the touch of a child's hand
Remembering the hatchling as it walked its first steps

How the tiny, insignificant leaf
Is full of complex structures, layers, and incredible reactions
How it multiplies by the thousands
Filling the tree with vibrant greenery
Providing a shelter from the wind

These small, plentiful, life-giving leaves
Fill my heart with a love so simple
And yet so incredible beyond comprehension

This love is all we've ever known
There never was anything else

Note: the last line comes from the poem, "The Big Picture" by Ellen Bass, featured in the book *All We Can Save: Truth, Courage, and Solutions for the Climate Crisis*, edited by Ayana Elizabeth Johnson and Katherine K. Wilkinson. Copyright 2020, One World, Penguin Random House LLC New York .

Symphony of the South

Rachel
Pasco County
3rd Place Senior

The moon reflects on a lake
The croak of an alligator
Blends with the song of the cicadas
A symphony led by the night

Humanity meets nature
Where the river meets the sea
An estuary of the human desire
To be a part of everything

A four-leaf clover
Lies in a grassy field
Like a child in a bed of calming hope
and nearby
Just like always
The ocean calls us home

The sandhill crane
Squawks a good morning
Between a sunny day
And a promise of another

Florida spells out promises
In waves of blue
And with the rain
Another day of beauty
Will come again soon

My Morning Fishing Trip

Spencer
Duval County
Honorable Mention, Senior

The cool breeze blows on my face

Birds are chirping in their chase

The big oak towers above me

Lots of action is a guarantee

The murky water and noisy waves crashing

Mullet in the distance can be heard splashing

Warm sweat drips down my body

All the meantime, the bite isn't shoddy

I give surveillance to find a good place

The sun starts burning my face

I find a spot and make a cast

I hope I might catch one at last

My rod thumps down giving me a fright

I think a fish took a bite

I start to reel really quite rapid

But in the end, all I caught was salad.

Mosquito

Stephen
Leon County
Honorable Mention-Senior

Abandoned toys

Rain coming down

Sunny days

Wigglers hatching

Mosquitoes taking flight

Buzzing in my ear

Oh dear

Swatting and swishing

Needle prick

Itching and scratching

Red and swollen

Full of blood

New generations on the horizon

Mosquito