

**Senior First Place – Miriam W., Pinellas County*

A Songbird's Lament

There once was a songbird named Joyce
Who was cursed with a horrible voice
What came from her beak
Was an unpleasant squeak
Her silence made others rejoice

She hoped lessons would end all the jeers
And cicadas had vocal careers
Her dreams were soon quelled
Because class would be held
Only once every seventeen years

The whales could make her less strange
So a meeting she tried to arrange
But she sang much too high
And stayed up in the sky
She was doubly out of their range

She had failed to find an instructor
So she settled for choir conductor
This launched a diatribe
Which was hushed by her bribe
And the choir was convinced to induct her

**Senior Second Place – Zachary A., Pinellas County*

Vulture Culture

Everyone has heard of the Vulture
But do you know of their culture?
Every day
They visit the roadside café
For example Darrien
Who especially liked carrion
Would feast on squished cats
And occasionally bats
And then there was Dale
Whose hunting was always a fail
And he had to settle
For the roadside cattle
Despite his desire
To perhaps acquire
A fresh meal all on his own

**Senior Third Place – Ryan C., Escambia County*

Our Ancient Friend

An ancient, threatened
Reptile lumbers
Through the pine sandhills.

They chomp grass,
Dead insects,
Sometimes even carrion.

With feet shaped like shovels,
They dig domed burrows,
Shelter for hundreds.

This keystone species,
Friend to many,
Needs your help.

Save the gentle giant,
Protect their home,
Gopher tortoises deserve more.

**Senior Honorable Mention – Hannah A., Palm Beach County*

Water

Radiant blue drops trickle downward.
Splash! Stillness, quietness, calmness,
Suddenly, movement, flowing softly.
Faster, wavier, rockier!
Water flying over the rocks!
Speed! Swiftiness!
Finally, falling straight down... down... down.

**Senior Honorable Mention – Benjamin S.*

Viridiation

Nothing grows where nothing sows.

Spring of flowers, birth and revival
Pollination allows life to spiral.

Water cycle, sun and more
Will bring the Viridiation of the world.

Hope for rain, it will come in vain.
Ask for a breeze, a tornado falls trees.
Cheer for sunrise, light will ostracize.

What is expected, wanted, nature won't
abide;
Mother Gaia is on her own side.

Taste the dirt, go down on your hands.
Feel the earth, let your lungs expand.

What's that smell, that beauties recalling
No matter what we do, nature will be
sprawling.

Despite the winter, the frigid blight.
Pollution will not falter her sight.

Fractures of pavement, viewed as abrasion,
When truly, it's nature rightful creation.

Scrounging creatures in cityscapes lurk.
This is their home now, nature at work.

The skyscrapers will come down to earth,
Kiss her hands, they know their worth.

Greenery spill over and blanket, building
entropic.
Silent are they, no longer anthropic.

Verdant groves to fill, mountains to climb.
Thickets, fescues, creeping vines.

The littered waters, new shores emerge;
She will adapt, never be purged.

All the smog, the poisoned clouds.
It will go with time.
She won't care, we've drifted away
From her sublime.

Not all which we sow, grows.
That which grow won't last forever.
Eroded, defaced, replaced.
Our world of spore and seed and crase.