

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

The Infamous Forest Trail

Today I'll tell you a tale
Of the infamous forest trail
A devious plot
A criminal caught
And sent forever to jail

It started one Friday night
The Pig went out for a bite
Come morning they found
All strewn on the ground
Bacon strips cooked just right

Officer Toad began the routine
The Hawk described what he'd seen
The Hound gave a sniff
To the Pig's crispy stiff
And the Vultures cleaned up the scene

After they'd had their feed
The search could now proceed
They found a few hints
But the Raccoon's prints
Became the number one lead

They followed the trail to the pest
The raccoon was alone and half-
dressed
They may have been rash
But the knife in the trash
Was enough to make an arrest

Off to prison he went
For his crimes he wouldn't repent
After a few days
They reopened the case
The Hound had picked up a scent

The police had to be brought
When it led to a surprising spot
The cops would surround
A hole in the ground
The Gopher Tortoise was caught

"The Pig hunted grubs in my lawn
The torment went on and on
At the end of my wits
I cut him to bits
I'll never admit I was wrong"

**Senior Second Place – Emerson R., Pinellas County*

The Forest is Out to Get Me

The forest seems like it's out to get me,
What can I learn, oh let me see.
These plants all look so appealing,
But oh, what tricks they are concealing.

Toxic plants with leaves of green,
Their beauty masks a deadly sheen.
Their petals allure, their scents entice
Don't touch them now, for it's a roll of the dice.

Beware of nightshade, deadly and sly,
Its berries a poison that can make one die.
That oleander can make me vomit
And makes my heart beat like a racing comet.

Stay away from poison ivy, it's not a game,
Its leaves of three will cause you pain.
The deadly water hemlock, so tall and grand,
A poison so potent, it can kill with just one hand.

The Brazilian pepper with its berries red,
Makes my skin itch with a rash of dread.
The rosary pea looks like yummy beads,
But death may come if I consume the seeds.

Oh buttercup with your cute yellow flower,
Your bitter poisons make my tummy sour.
Manchineel the meanest of all,
A simple touch can make me fall.

These toxic plants, with their deadly ways,
Are best admired from afar, on display.
For though they may be beautiful to see,
Their poison is real and can set you free.

**Senior Third Place – Skye B., Duval County*

Patience and Resilience

In Florida, all around
Patience and endurance are found

In the scrub, sand pines await
A crackling, crashing, burning fate
But the fire sets their seeds free
From ash reborn is every tree

Starting from a tiny spore
The moss can become so much more
Progress was slow, no mistake
But it is now a soft, green lake

Time, and time, and time again
Cut from a cat's height to a wren
Grass will always still return
If hurt by tooth or blade or burn

Locked inside a smooth, hard shell
He waits two weeks, bids it farewell
The king spreads his new wings wide
Now free to soar on the wind's tide

Sometimes in flat concrete gray
Rebellious green breaks through for day
Barren pavements in the past
For pennywort will everlast

Go outside now and explore
See the strength nature has in store