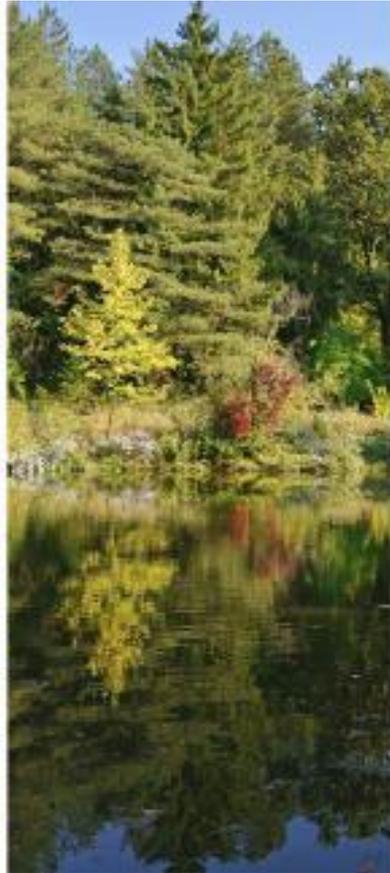


The Write Challenge Anthology

2024

SEASON



Lakota★LEADS

Lakota's Enrichment and Academic
Development of Students

THE 2024 WRITE CHALLENGE ANTHOLOGY

Season

1. one of the four periods of the year (spring, summer, autumn, and winter) into which the year is divided.
2. a period of the year marked by certain conditions, activities, etc. (i.e. - sports season)
3. a period of the year immediately before and after a special holiday or occasion
4. a period of the year when something is best or available (i.e. - strawberry season)
5. a suitable, proper, fitting, or right time (i.e. - season of change) Verb
6. to heighten or improve the flavor of (food) by adding condiments, spices, herbs, or the like.
7. to dry or otherwise treat (lumber) so as to harden.

Thank you to all of this year's entrants. Here are the top three students in every category and their wonderful literary works...all interpreting this year's theme of SEASON!

Hosted by:



Lakota★LEADS
Lakota's Enrichment and Academic
Development of Students

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Essay – Grades K-2: 1st Place

My Holiday Season

By: Mila Premdas

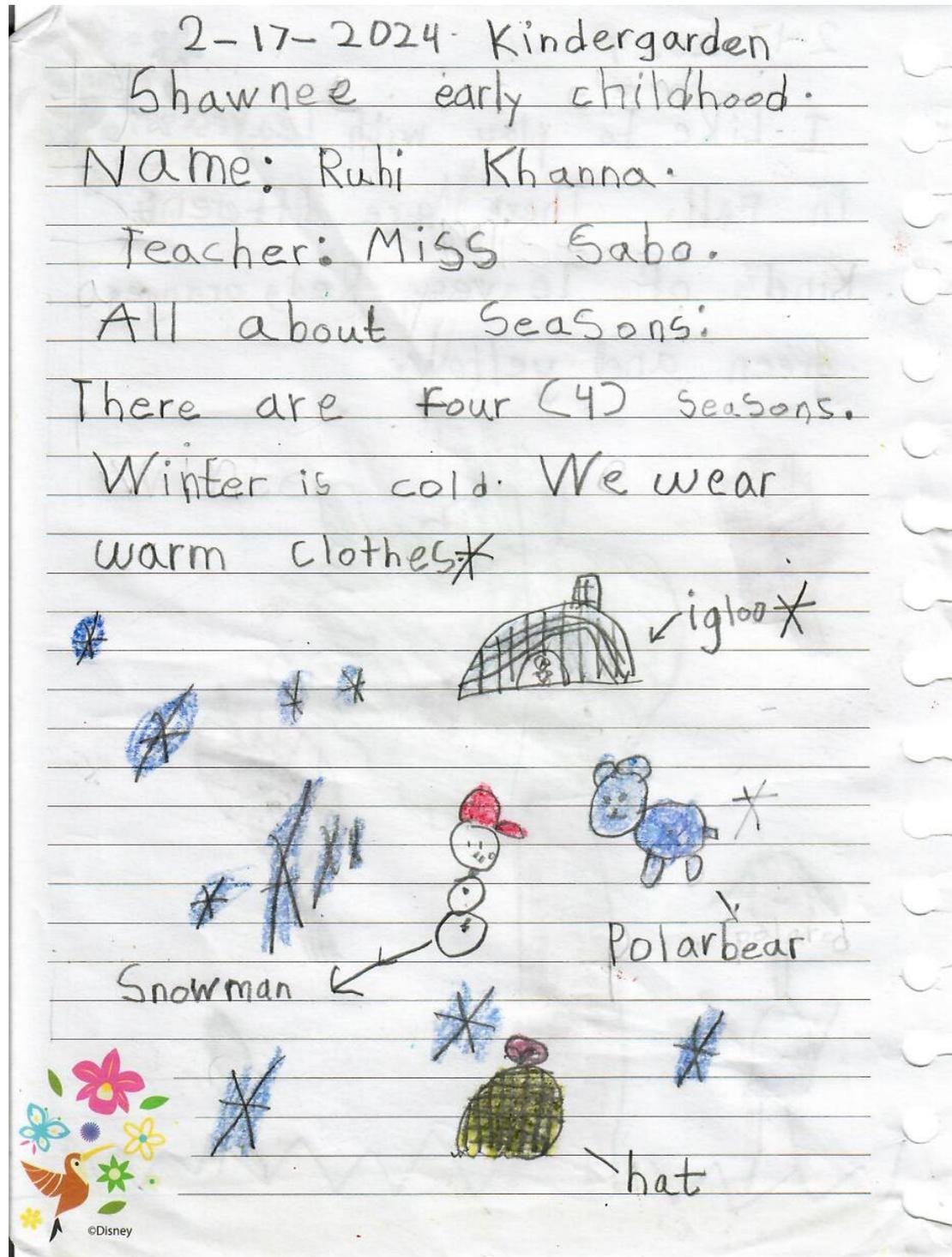


My favorite holiday season is Christmas. I open a lot of presents. We go to Coney Island. I will not go this year. It's closing. I'm sad. We get the Christmas tree ready. My mom and dad get the Christmas tree up. Me and my sister hang the ornaments on the Christmas tree. We go to one of the neighbor's houses for a party. Sometimes we go to King's Island to take photos with Santa. At school we make ornaments. We also have a Christmas party, and we play games, and we have snacks. We also have crafts. This is why Christmas is my favorite holiday season.

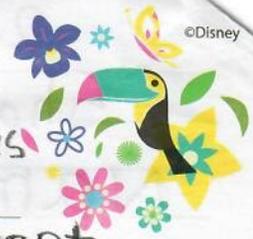
Essay – Grades K-2: 2nd Place

All About Seasons

By: Ruhi Khanna



2-17-2024



I Like to play with Leaves
in Fall. There are different
Kinds of Leaves. Red, orange,
green and yellow.

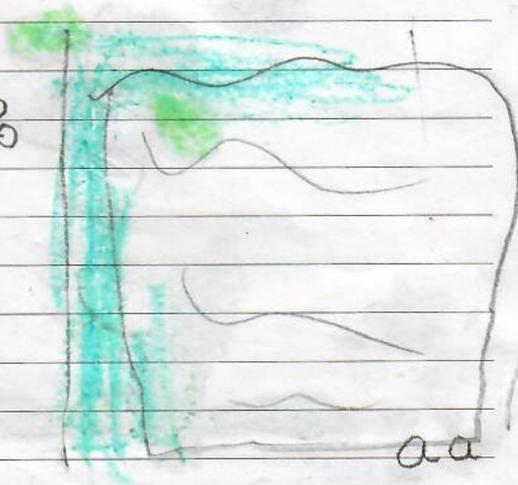
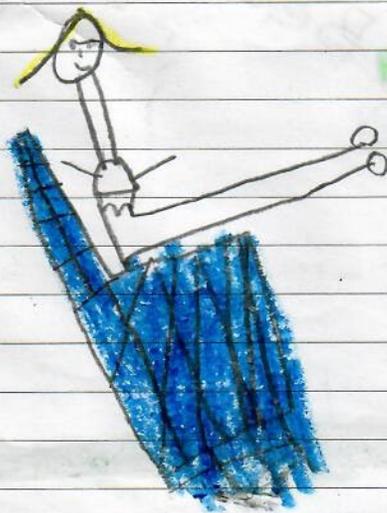


Summer Season.



I play in the
pool. We go
to the beach.

We will go to
the water park.

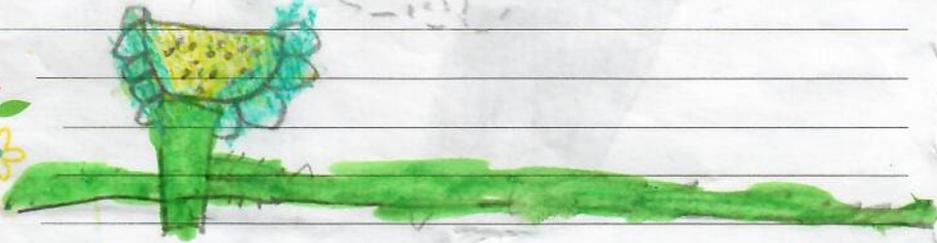


Spring Season

In Spring, flowers
bloom and birds
chirp.



Beer



Poetry – Grades K-2: 1st Place

Mother Robin

By: Reagan Becker

Spring is the season Mother Robin collects grass for her nest.
She keeps working hard and then takes a rest.
Once her nest is complete she lays eggs.
Mother Robin protects them by sitting on them.

Babies grow inside the eggs then
CRACK!
their little heads peek out.

They can't see their mother
but they know she is there.
They hear her chirp and
feel her love.

She feeds them and cares for them.
Soon they are ready to fly.
They have grown, learned how to fly,
and moved out of their nest.

Now they can fend for themselves
and find food.
Next spring they will have babies of their own.



Essay – Grades 3-4: 1st Place

Goodbye Cast

By: Adalyn Costello

Have you ever had a time in your life that made you think about the many things we should be grateful for? Well this recently happened to me after I broke my leg.

In early December my brother and I were jumping on the trampoline. He was about to fall so he pushed me and like a ragdoll I fell out. I felt like the whole world had crashed down upon me. My parents heard me yell and ran like cheetahs to find me on the ground. I was as pale as a ghost screaming while pain shot through my body. My parents quickly rushed me to the nearest hospital.

X-rays showed I had a tibial spine fracture and soon we would find out I needed surgery. I felt as if I had a rock in my throat then tears fell from my eyes like a waterfall. That night it was hard to sleep because all I could think about was the upcoming surgery.

The next day I woke up at 4:30am and headed to the hospital. Sweat was dripping like tiny raindrops off my face. I was both nervous and worried, however before I knew it the surgery was over.

"Do you want a popsicle?" my nurse exclaimed as I struggled to open my eyes. I looked under my blanket and saw my pink cast looking up at me from my foot to my hip. This cast and I were going to be friends for the next 8 weeks I thought to myself.

The next 8 weeks were very difficult both physically and mentally. It was hard to sleep, walk, and do just about anything. I couldn't move or do simple things for myself because my leg had to be kept straight. It was so hard being around others who were able to do things by themselves, while I had to rely on others. I was jealous and envious.

I was happy to be back to school, but I was still a little depressed. I had to use a wheelchair and walker to get from class to class. Friends had to make sure I wasn't alone; they had to carry my supplies, push my wheelchair, and help me to the bathroom. I even had to stay in the classroom for lunch and recess because it was so hard to keep my leg protected. I tried to convey happiness, but inside I felt like a grasshopper unable to hop.

Finally it was the day I had been waiting for, I would finally be free from my cast! My first physical therapy session went great. I was on top of the world when my PT told me I could now start using crutches. Soon it was one then zero! I was walking freely! I worked so hard for this moment.

The recovery process has been a long journey and all I can say is I am excited for this season of my life to come to an end.

Essay – Grades 3-4: 2nd Place

By: Josephine Kozlowski

Have you ever grown a garden? Do you know the seasons and how they go together? If not, you are in the right hands because that is what I am going to tell you.

First, when you are planting a garden, it is always a good idea to start planning in winter. For example, say you are rearranging your kitchen, you plan how everything will look before you do it. Winter is a very cold season so almost no plants can stay alive in winter. That is why it is smart to plan at that time. Some things that you should start to plan for is the food that you will be growing, the cost, and the space that your garden will take up. Some good plants to grow for beginners are cucumber, tomatoes, strawberries and potatoes. For the cost, the maximum you want to spend is about \$700. If you are growing cucumbers and strawberries with a few other plants, you will probably need a garden that is 5 feet long and 3 feet wide.

When it is about the end of March make sure your plans are already and set, because April is the perfect time to start making your garden. When April does start to come, go get the stuff you need. April is in spring, and spring is when plants start to grow. Spring is a season where lots of baby animals are born and where plants start to grow back. Spring has Easter in it as well. After you make the base of the garden, fill it with soil, and if you want, you can add worms. When you start to plant your garden you will need the plants, a shovel and a hose. If you are using seeds, you will start to dig about two inches down in the soil. Then, bury the seeds in the soil. If you are using already grown, little plants, you will start by getting them out of the container. You will do that by carefully lifting the plant upside down while holding the stem. Carefully squeeze the bottom of the plant until it comes out. Then, set it in a hole and fill in the empty spaces with soil. After you place everything where you want it, do a little sprinkle of water.

In summer, make sure you are watering your plants everyday. Summer is a very hot season. In summer, lots of people are playing in pools or playing outside. If you seed has not sprouted within 12 weeks of when you planted it, you might have buried the seed to deep. If you would like to check, carefully scoop off the top of the soil where you buried it. Once lots of things are starting to grow, pick them. If your plants are starting to die, either water them more or less.

When summer starts to end, fall will come. Fall is a chilly season. In fall, leaves start to change color and lots of animals are getting ready for hibernation or traveling south for the winter. Since fall is chilly, the longest your plants will live is until the middle of November. Then your plants will start to fall and die.

I hope you learned how to make a garden. Do you know anybody who owns a big garden?

Essay – Grades 3-4: 3rd Place

Great Grandpa Duby

By: Emma Hoening

The day my Great Grandpa died was a season in my life I never want to repeat.

It was a few days before Christmas and my mom was on the phone with my Grandma. My Grandma and Grandpa were at the hospital with my Great Grandpa because he was very sick.

When my mom hung up, she told my sister and me that my Grandma and Grandpa might not make it to our house by Christmas because they needed to stay with my Great Grandpa in Columbus. My eyes started to tear up, I couldn't imagine not celebrating Christmas without them.

The next day we received the call we were hoping not to get from my Grandma telling us that my Great Grandpa had died. I felt a thump in my throat and my heart ached. I went to my room and thought about what life would be like without my Great Grandpa Duby.

I knew I would always remember how much he loved desserts. Playing Five Crowns and Uno with him was something I'll never forget. The games were always close and exciting. I enjoyed the time I had with him.

These are the memories that are unforgettable, I will remember and love my Great Grandpa Duby always. Going through this season of my life taught me that when people I love die I will still remember them forever.

Narrative – Grades 3-4: 1st Place

Winter in Show

By: Charlotte Lee

One late fall day, Winter, the little black bear, was picking berries. “Rustle,” a little squirrel came out of nowhere! Winter asked the squirrel why she was going in a hurry. The squirrel said that she was picking acorns because there wasn't enough food during the winter, and off the squirrel went.

The next morning, Winter curiously asked his mother what bears do in the winter. Mom said that bears sleep for most of the whole winter. She told him that it was called hibernation and mammals do this because they need to keep energy low. “Hiberwhat?” Winter was very surprised!

Soon the first snowflake touched the ground. Afterward, the brothers and sisters came fluttering down and covering up all the fields. Winter gazed at the snow and asked “Mom, have you seen anything beautiful like this”. Winter’s mom said, “I had seen the snow many times, but I was amazed like you at first”. But Mom warned, “Don’t go outside by yourself, you may get lost,”.

They got ready to hibernate but after a while Winter opened his eyes, he just couldn't go to sleep! He was very curious about the white thing from the sky. All these questions were flying inside him like fireflies! He tried to ignore them, but he couldn't anymore. He wanted to find out. So, he tiptoed out of the den. The first touch on the snow felt good. He wondered how it could be this cold. Winter wanted to go farther, but he hesitated for a moment. But soon his leg walked farther without even realizing it! He suddenly noticed he was walking far and stopped. He was lost. He thought it was fine if he followed the way he came. “Plump,” he sat down in regret and sobbed because the snow hid his footsteps.

“Crunch crunch,” a strange animal scurried next to Winter. Winter asked who it was. She said her name was Penny and a Vole. She had come to see what was sobbing. Winter wondered why she wasn't hibernating. Penny explained that Voles don't hibernate, instead, they collect tree bark and seeds during the fall to eat in the winter. She asked why Winter was crying. Winter regretted that he got in trouble because of his curiosity. Penny calmed him down saying that she knew the forest like the back of her paw. Winter was delighted to hear that! He told her his den was the cave near the stream. While walking through the forest, Winter heard a familiar voice calling his name. Winter knew it was his mother and ran toward her voice. Winter rushed to hug her. Mom said, “You can't sneak off like that” with a sigh.

Winter felt sorry for her. Mom asked who Penny was, and he explained his adventure in the snow and how Penny helped him to find home. His mom thanked Penny. Soon Penny left and Winter slept with his mother but couldn't wait for the next time he'd have another adventure!

The End



Narrative – Grades 3-4: 2nd Place

Lilac

By: Cristian Garcia

Lilac loved the spring. It made her feel like she was a flower blooming. There was one thing Lilac hated about the spring, and it was all the rain. One very rainy day, Lilac desperately wanted to go outside.

“Mom, can I go outside?” Lilac asked.

“No, I told you can’t go outside right now.” Mom said.

“Dad, can I please go outside?” Lilac asked.

“Listen to your mother,” Dad replied.

Lilac sighed and watched the raindrops race down the window. She sighed and went to her room. No one even said happy birthday to her. She decided just to take a nap to start the day again. Lilac heard the thunder rumbling, she hates thunderstorms. Lilac’s dog also hated thunderstorms, sometimes her dog even hid under her bed, but Lilac was always there to comfort her, even when she was scared.

She did not know that Mom and Dad were in the kitchen preparing her surprise party. Mom and Dad felt so bad for treating her wrong, but it was all part of the plan. The party guests were arriving at Lilac’s home, everything was almost ready, they just needed to wait for Lilac to come out of her room.

Not long after, Lilac decided spring couldn’t wait for her. She walked out of her room.

Everybody screamed “Happy Birthday!!!”

Lilac broke down in tears of happiness, she never felt this happy in her life! It was going to be the best day ever. Right then, the rain stopped and the sun’s bright smile came through the window. Everyone was silent.

Then, she woke up. What a wonderful dream. Lilac just couldn’t wait for her birthday!

Narrative – Grades 3-4: 3rd Place

By: Hattie Oliveira

Dear reader,

This is spring here. I'm here to tell you why I am the BEST season. First of all, no one else can grow lettuce, peas, and carrots better than me. Also, turtles, groundhogs, and snakes come out of hibernation when I am around. Next, dogs lose their thick fur from winter. Lastly, it rains a lot so trees and flowers grow. Now you know why I am the BEST season.

Your friend,
Spring

Dear reader,

This is summer here and spring is not the best just so you know. I'm here to tell you about the BEST season here is. First kids and teachers get the whole summer off. Also I grow raspberries, watermelons, and cherries. Next, people love sports like track, swim team, and baseball. Lastly, you go to the beach and eat popsicles. That is I am the BEST.

Love,
Summer

Dear reader,

Uhhhhhh this is fall here and I am the BEST season. First, people like to have bonfires. Also kids and teachers go back to school. Next, people buy pumpkins and apple cider. Lastly, dogs grow thick winter fur. So like me MORE.

Sincerely,
Fall

Dear reader,

It's winter here. I just wanted to tell you that I am the WORST season. First, all the trees are leafless, then they look sad. Next, kids have to get bundled up to go outside and it takes soooooo long. Lastly, the days get so short in winter. One more thing to prove that I am the worst is that all the animals go into hibernation. That is why I am the WORST.

Bye-Bye
From Winter

Poetry – Grades 3-4: 1st Place

The Battle to Season

By: Benjamin Todd

In the kitchen there is a battle,
Of seasoning jars as they rattle.

Will it be cumin to season our tacos,
Or will it be garlic that follows?

Salt and pepper clash upon my plate,
As bland food is sure to aggravate.

Battle decisions are made each night,
As my mom does the seasoning fight.

Reading over combat plans from recipe books,
As she adds herbs and spices, then chops and cooks.

Each seasoning, a soldier in the taste brigade,
Battling in the pot, a savory crusade.

Will it be a teaspoon of spicy or tablespoon of sweet,
Will she season with something savory or even something that adds heat?

In the cooking world, takes place a battlefield so grand,
Seasoning heroes all take a flavorful stand.

But there will be no winner in the battle to season,
As my little sister refuses her plate, her actions border on treason.



Poetry – Grades 3-4: 2nd Place

Fall Feelings

By: Reagan Skidmore

I love to watch leaves fall from trees

As they are all different colors.

Red or orange, green or brown.

Raking the leaves up one by one.

Laughter filled with joy as kids jump into leaf piles.

Picking pumpkins that are large or small,

White or orange,

Bumpy or smooth.

Grown-ups drink pumpkin spice coffee

While kids are drinking apple cider around the fire.

Wearing warm flannel jackets

And huddling under blankets.

Being outside with the fall breeze.

All things to think about.

This is the real meaning of fall.

Poetry – Grades 3-4: 3rd Place

Seasons

By: Ella Marie Capone

Winter and spring,
Summer and fall,
These are the seasons,
Loved by all.

Winter is a magical season,
For the very best reason.
I love sledding with my friends,
'Till the winter day ends.

Spring, spring, oh marvelous spring,
Spring is quite inspiring.
The birds will sing, and the bees will sting,
While the spring sun is shining.

Summers, summers, I love summers,
Hummingbirds are quite the wonders.
Children will dash, water will splash,
And the flowers have so many colors.

Fall is amazingly wonderful,
The leaves are all so colorful.
While the school bell rings, children will sing,
Crisp autumn breezes are plentiful.

Winter and spring,
Summer and fall
Now you know,
Why are they loved by all.

Essay – Grades 5-6: 1st Place

The Beauty of the Seasons

By: Maya Forney

Seasons happen all around us. Each season is unique in its own way. All the seasons spread happiness and joy around the world. The seasons each have their own way of making people happy. The seasons are what make the world great. Fall angrily changes into winter, winter slowly transfers into spring, spring happily transforms into summer.

As fall takes over the world turning every bright green leaf in its sight to yellow, red and orange, it looks like a prettier season than ever. The different colors of the leaves put a smile on anyone's face who looks at them. The beautiful trees create a rolling wave of color. The crunch of the leaves fills the chilly air. Pretty soon fall is losing the battle over the cold evil winter season. Fall is forced to leave the world and all its beauty behind.

Winter moves into the world with its evil snow piling up like a big ball of feathers. The clouds bury the sun for a long winter season nap. The frigid wind howls through the bare trees. A happy snowman is built from head to toe with joy making winter a little less boring. Kids bundle up to go outside to the icy cold season. The fun does not last long because soon winter is losing the battle with the lovely spring.

Spring soars in peacefully. Roses come up from the ground all over the world and start blooming in all different colors. Some roses are as yellow as the bright golden sun. Some roses are as red as rosey cheeks on a hot summer day. The birds come back from migration singing their happy songs. The air is chilly with a little warmth to it. The cool air blows through the trees as the green leaves start to appear again on the happy trees and summer takes spring's spot in the world.

Summer runs in smoothly. The warm thick air fills the sky with burning temperatures around the world. The rays of the sun seem to touch across the land brightening every corner in their sight. The trees are full of dark green leaves generously giving shade from the fiery sun. As schools let kids out for a long summer break, the kids are so excited to hit the waves for vacation. Before long summer season is over and fall is welcomed back into the world.

The seasons are a very important part of the world. Without seasons, the world would be very dull and plain. The seasons bring happiness and change. The seasons control the world by telling it how to behave. Thanks to the seasons, the world has many different personalities.

Essay – Grades 5-6: 2nd Place

My Seasonal Experience

By: Beaux Duran

I have been a fan of seasons since I saw my first summer. Seasons are just so calming, fun, and free. You can't go wrong with seasons. My family always has these specific things we do during every season, but to me, seasons are very important. It makes my world a lot better, and I get to have fun!

Summer is my absolute favorite season. Maybe for the break, but mainly because it's so peaceful, calming, fun, and makes you feel like you are in a fantasy world. You get up every morning feeling like a king or queen, and chill, meditate, or relax for the rest of the day. For me, I always go on trips, play all day, and even travel to have fun and exercise. I remember being born and seeing my first summer. I miss those moments so much. I look back on every single summer to cherish the memories we got. Every summer is a dream.

Fall is when all of the relaxation goes away. You are now back in school. I remember the fall where I had to go to school for the first time, and how I absolutely hated it. During fall, you can still make memories, but only for a certain time period. Fall is like the climax of a Disney movie. You have an absolutely wonderful time in summer like you are in the happy ending, but fall is when I realize it was all fake...I have locked myself up in misery, agony, and despair until spring...

I already hated fall enough for its cold temperatures, school resuming, and sunlight fading. As if that wasn't enough, there is Winter. Winter is when all fun goes away, school feels long, and the temperatures plummet. Winter is the plot twist in an adventure. I wake up daily just wanting to go back to sleep. I now have to wear coats and layers that make the heat unbearable, and I feel that I can't beat the inevitable fact that nothing fun will happen...

Spring is the time where a Disney movie rises up. The sun comes out more, there are fewer school days, and you do more fun things. When I wake up on the first day of spring, I am always happy to have escaped the agony and misery of the cold seasons. I have had fun on every day of spring. The grass is fresh, flowers bloom from their winter pain, trees can photosynthesize again, and I get more time to enjoy my life. Goodbye cold, hello calm!

Seasons make all of my life better. Even though I absolutely despise winter and fall, without them, this world would be boring. Seasons mean the entire world to me, and I believe that each and every one of the seasons are unique in their own way. All of them have a spark in them! We need to take time to remember the seasons and cherish every part.

Essay – Grades 5-6: 3rd Place

Christmas Season

By: Kamyille White

I usually love the Christmas season. The baking cookies, the opening presents, the singing along to Christmas songs with my family and friends, but this year just doesn't feel right.

When we were putting up the Christmas lights I could hear his barking, his whimpering. It was like I could see him right in front of me. Waiting for me to throw his favorite blue tennis ball. When I saw that I just couldn't stand being out there anymore. So I ran back inside to my room. All of his favorite toys were in there, scattered around my room, the ripped rope we used to always play tug of war with. His yellow frisbee I always threw to him after school. Finally I decided I needed to stop reminiscing about him. My dog, Charlie, was dead and he wasn't going to come back alive. But I still missed him so much. He used to love Christmas. He was always trying to eat the cookies that we left on the table for Santa Clause to get. I still remember when he came up to my room with cookie crumbs all over his face. But I have to get over him. I have to enjoy this Christmas without him.

So I went downstairs and started wrapping presents with my mom for my little sister and brother, while they were outside helping my dad put up the Christmas lights outside. Then something caught my eye. One of my little brother's presents was a chew toy. Then I saw that one of my little sister's presents was a dog bone. I looked to the left and saw my mom putting holes in a box, then I realized what it was for. I was so happy! But I didn't want to remember all of the sorrow and the confusion and the denial that I felt when Charlie died. Although I'm happy that I'm getting a new dog, this new dog will never compare to how Charlie made me feel. I will never forget Charlie but it's time that I moved on.

When my little siblings woke me up on Christmas morning, I was so excited. Today was the day where I was going to get my new dog! So when we ran downstairs to see all of the presents, that's when I saw him. He was a little Australian shepherd and my siblings had already started running toward him. My parents had told me that I could name him. I decided to name him after a city in Chile, where my grandparents had been from. Santiago that was his name. Santiago loved us. But Charlie will always be on my mind during the Christmas season.



Narrative – Grades 5-6: 1st Place

The Dry Season

By: Leo Wingert

It is the longest dry season the village has yet seen. My mouth is parched from lack of water. The ground, once soft, rich soil, is now as hard as rock, as far as the eye can see.

I walk through the village on my way to school. Everywhere I look, all I see is people, their faces gloomy, always without a smile. It is as if a dark shadow has fallen upon us all, when in fact it is quite the opposite. For over nine months now, we have been without the familiar darkness of a rain cloud. For over nine months now, our village has had no rain.

The nights are no place for comfort. Across the newly formed desert, strange noises float into my ears, which are already constantly red and burning with heat. The air is hot and stiff, and mosquitoes swarm on us, their bites only worsening the condition of our dried and itchy skin.

Worst of all, most of the animals nearby have died. Their food, the plants, have grown wilted and black, without one of the key ingredients(water) in photosynthesis. Our hunts used to be abundant, but now, we would be lucky to catch a fly. The older boys, including my brother, have been released from school just so that maybe a hundred extra people could help find another morsel. Even this is only based on pure hope and luck. The only way we have survived is by trading for precious water with nearby towns. But now, the drought has spread to there as well, and we have been having to live completely on rations.

From a distance, I can see the school-house, and I can tell, something's up. I watch as my friends stare and point towards the sky.

"What is it?" I ask. They just point towards the blank, pale yellow figure of the sun, retreating behind the darkened clouds.

The clouds.

I think my heart leaps out of my chest as I finally realize what is going on. It is starting to rain!

It is as if all of a sudden, as I come to this wonderful realization, the sky bursts, and the immense amount of water hidden away in the clouds pounds down onto the thirsty ground. All around town, people begin grabbing hats, coats, cups, even shoes, and whatever else they can find to capture as much water as they possibly can. I can hear myself shouting with happiness as I rush home to do the same. Everywhere the sky's fingers touch, the soil moistens, and with this, comes life.

But some are not so lucky. Our town miraculously survived, but, as climate change causes the dry seasons to lengthen, many more people perish from lack of water each year. And, even as I watch the joyous cascades of water tumble down on our beloved Earth, I can't help but think to myself, about this terrible global warming, that "this has to be stopped."

Narrative – Grades 5-6: 2nd Place

Strawberry Season

By: Adriana Anderson

The smell of strawberries fills the air. The not ready to pick buds reminds me of home. It is spring but not yet strawberry season, the most wonderful time of year. It is almost time as the days go by 1 more day till strawberry season. Till finally today is the day strawberry season is here. I walk to the open field and the aroma of strawberry fills the air.

I grab two baskets. I fill the baskets until they spill out onto the ground, as laughter fills the air. I take a walk around all the strawberries as I soak in the fresh delightful scent. And then I remember I am all alone. I try to take the scent back in and forget about it, but I can't, because the feeling of sorrow is carved inside of me. My dad isn't going to come back. The rest of the strawberry picking I can't do without him so my mom and I walk home. My home feels empty without him, so I walk back to the strawberry field and lay in the sun soaking in the fresh scent of strawberry and I forget all about my dad. Although my dad's gone I will always remember his warm smile, his laughter that filled the air. I remembered his love for strawberries and how he would always count down until it was strawberry season.

When I pick strawberries I always remember what it was like when he was here. He would always laugh when the strawberries would fall out of our baskets. The hot warm air reminded me of his warm soft smile, I was always going to remember him. And I knew he would always watch over me.



Narrative – Grades 5-6: 3rd Place

The Strawberry Thief

By: Bradley Montoya

You probably know groundhogs are shy small rodents. But did you know they love strawberries so much they plant strawberry seeds throughout the year so there is always a harvest coming. After a long winter hibernation, groundhogs celebrate winter is over by eating juicy spring strawberries, and begin the planting cycle again.

One year the groundhogs woke up from hibernation, expecting to celebrate with juicy strawberries, but they only found bare ground.

Missing Strawberries

“Someone stole the strawberries!” yelled a groundhog.

“But why would someone steal our precious strawberries?” yelled another.

“Quiet down. We’re calling Philly Holmes to help us sort this out.” said the mayor, a short, skinny groundhog with spectacles so big they magnified his eyes. “Someone has indeed stolen our precious strawberries but with the help of Philly Holmes, we can find the thief and our missing strawberries,” said the mayor.

“Out of the way folk’s, groundhog coming through. Hi Mayor Scrooge, I’m Philly Holmes, the greatest detective in the world.”

“This is Philly Holmes and he will find us the strawberries thief,” announced Scrooge.

Garden Clues

“So the strawberries were planted right here?” asked Philly.

“Yes, last fall we planted the strawberry seeds, and asked the moles to watch over the strawberries. When we woke up from hibernation the moles and the strawberries were gone.”

“Interesting, where do the moles live?”

“They live by the forest. I bet you’ll find them there.”

The Moles

“Us moles agreed to watch the strawberries, but the day before the groundhogs woke from hibernation, we found a silver plate with cookies on the ground. We love cookies, and there was a perfect amount for each of us. When we took a bite, we immediately fell asleep. When we woke up the strawberries were gone. We thought you might blame us for the missing strawberries and decided to run away,” said the president mole.

“Did you see anyone or anything odd before you went to sleep?” asked Philly.

“I didn’t see anyone, but there was a symbol on the cookie plate. It was a dollar on a strawberry.”

Thief

Mayor Scrooge got out of bed, dressed and ate breakfast, and headed down to his vault where he kept his money and the stolen strawberries.

“Hands in the air. You are under arrest for stealing the strawberries of groundhog ville,” said Philly.

“You think you can stop me? Even if you get my strawberries you won’t get me.” And with a poof of smoke he was gone.

Epilogue

Philly returned the stolen strawberries to the grateful Groundhog Ville. They celebrated the disappearance of the corrupt Mayor Scrooge. They even appointed Philly as the new mayor of groundhog ville.

The next year, when the bears on the other side of the hill woke up from hibernation and found their blueberries missing, they called Philly Holmes.

Poetry – Grades 5-6: 1st Place

Seasons

By: Leo Wingert

Lonely gusts of wind from the north
Chill the autumn air
The trees, which were were once
A deep peaceful green
Miraculously transform into
A powerful, raging inferno
Which spreads 'til it covers all the world
In its burning iron grasp
And all the trees are no longer adorned
With more than bare branches
Plainer than a snail's empty hidden back
Soon, the fire too dies down
To a simple layer of brown
Which crunches beneath my feet
And as the former beauty wears away
I await the coming of Winter
After the season of Autumn
The season of change

The moon shines brightly
Over the calm peaceful night
Far, far away, I see the silent, waiting mountains
Sleeping, like the rest of the world
Amongst the soft pitter-patter of the snowflakes
Tip-toeing across the sky
As if trying not
To awake the rest of the world
And as they fall
The Earth becomes
Shrouded in a layer of white
Softer than a pillow
Muffling my steps
As ice decorates the trees
Now shimmering in the moonlight
Like a baby's mobile overhead
It is as if the world
Is cradling me to sleep
And sleep I do
Awaiting the coming of Spring
After the season of Winter
The season of peace

Clouds darken above my head
The heavens burst
Water pounds the Earth
There is no sign of life
Lightning flashes across the broken sky

I shield my face, tormented by the rain
As I splash blindly through puddles
Suddenly, the rain dies down
To a steady drumming against
The softened ground
The clouds plow away
To make room for the shining sun
The grass shimmers brightly
Bejeweled with golden dewdrops
Mirrors of the sun's glory
A rainbow, tall and bright
Awaits me

Flowers suddenly sprout from the ground
And it is to their fragrant smell,
that I await the coming of Summer
After the season of Spring
The season of awakening

Rays from the golden sun
Warm my outstretched hands
Above my head
Is a small canopy of green leaves
The only shelter in sight
From the unforgiving sun
The air is hot and stiff
In the distance, I spot a pool of water
Shimmering in the sunlight
Which is beating down upon
The eternal plains
Nearby, tall dry grasses
Yellowed from the lack of water
Sway in the gentle breeze
The valley below
Is dotted with vibrant flowers
Crowded amongst the rich soil
Of the shimmering creek bed
Slowed to a crawl
But no less beautiful
Than a vein of pure silver
Which waits to be cooled by the coming of Autumn
After the season of Summer
The season of joy

Poetry – Grades 5-6: 2nd Place

Seasons

By: Gavin Buckingham

a new seed blooms
spring has begun
animals crawl out of their burrows onto the warm, soft grass
birds' songs wash over the flowering meadows
the seed grows into a small, green plant
summer has begun
the temperature begins to ascend as the sun beats down on the meadow
animals frolic in the hot grass as birds soar above in the clear, blue sky
the plant's leaves turn red like fire and fall off, one by one
fall has begun
fiery leaves twirl through the crisp air over the meadow
animals gather food to take back to their burrows
the plant turns thin and brown
winter has begun
icy snow cakes the meadow like icing
animals rest in their burrows underneath the cold, frosty ground
the temperature begins to ascend and the snow begins to thaw
a new seed blooms
spring has begun

Poetry – Grades 5-6: 3rd Place

Seasons

A Poem of Haikus by: Ethan Stubenrauch

starting a new year
very cold and snowy days
it is winter here

most trees have no leaves
people inside their homes
are safe from the cold

warmer weather now
birds come back north from the south
springtime is coming

flowers are blooming
trees bud with fruit and flowers
the gorgeous outside

days getting longer
the sun stays out for a while
summer is coming

days are super hot
most children play games outside
school is closed for now

the pools are open
people are on vacation
a nice time of year

summer starts to end
the weather becomes colder
fall is on its way

leaves fall from the trees
wind is blowing everywhere
birds are flying south

children wear jackets
raking and playing in leaves
colorful outside

now snow starts to fall
most trees now have lost their leaves
winter has come here

cool temperatures
it's too cold to be outside
icy streets and roads

The days are still cold
The world always feels frozen
Winter is at its work

The year is ending
This cycle will start over
Again and again



Essay – Grades 7-8: 1st Place

Seize the Moment!

By: Nathan Lee

Time is one of the greatest resources that we as humans have been able to obtain. Every one of us is given this valuable finite resource, and we use it to create a unique path by making certain choices with it to build a story. But in that set amount of time, there are spurts of events where you may have an opportunity to develop your story by further expressing and accomplishing what you desire. These spurts of moments are what I would refer to as seasons, which are the moments in life that are ripe for the cause of change.

The season to do something comes and goes based on not when you please, but when life hands it to you. Whether it may be an intense soccer match or a complicated math test, you're given that brief little moment to have the chance to create some type of transformation in your life or even your surroundings. But overall, what you do in that little moment may affect something in the future. Let's go back to that soccer game mentioned earlier. In the given 90-minute game time, there are numerous actions that you can perform to contribute to the game. For instance, you could score a goal or make a great defensive play to block a shot for your team to win. This effort may play an influential role in how your team may advance to the next round or maybe something as simple as expanding your popularity. However, no matter what opportunity you're given, they all share a commonality which is that change will occur after it receives a response. But that response depends on your willingness to seize the opportunity.

It's very common for people to miss or even intentionally reject the opportunity that they're offered in their lives. One of the main driving factors of these neglections of the chance to create change is notably one of the most notoriously known for affecting work productivity: laziness. The season to do something at the right time to make the right execution is often missed due to the aversion to performing any such work. This procrastinating characteristic is the one key component that creates a chasm between those who undertake the hard work that the seasons may bring and those who avoid them. These people, who endure hardship in exchange for accomplishment are what has allowed them to develop an interesting story and help their communities to prosper.

All in all, with these concepts in mind, one can consider the conclusion that the seasons to do something are the opportunities that life offers to each person's life. Whether it's big or small, one should take notice of it and seize the chance to make a difference in their situation. Though it may be tough to overcome the laziness of accomplishing the chores opportunities may have, one should always have in mind the influence their achievements bring into their lives and how it improves their stories even better.

Poetry – Grades 7-8: 1st Place

Seasons of Life

By: Keira Burmeister

I am Spring
A sapling rising from the dirt
Fed by the sun
And raised by the earth

Thirst is quenched by rainfall
Sunlight grants me height
Growing taller day by day
I provide shade in the light

I've grown to be my best self
My fruit to you I lend
I've lived this season well
But my youth is coming to an end.

I am Summer
An adult with roots growing deep
You read in my shade
And at my trunk you sleep

Picnics are held underneath me
On the beautiful patchwork quilt
Memories are made in my presence
Your families are being built

I'm nearing the end of my youthful life
And my saplings are starting to grow
I know I am growing older
The rings in my trunk will show

I am Fall
An elder who is hanging on to life
There is so much to do
In so little time

My beauty floats to the ground
And is raked into piles

In this season of my life
I have lost all my style

My youth has ended
I am growing old
My time is running out
So I treasure it like gold

I am Winter
An old, gray tree trying to hold on
My branches are bare
And I see no sun

Your children's children climb my branches
And it's becoming harder to hold them up
I've lived through generations
And given lots of love

A blanket of snow covers the ground
And welcomes me to my death bed
As I fall peacefully to the earth
I remember the memories planted in my head

I am Life
A season that comes and goes
I started in Spring
And ended in snow

Poetry – Grades 7-8: 2nd Place

Seasons of Life

By: Nathan Lee

I spring into life,
With energy so bright,
The world around me,
Is my first sight,

My cries will be the April showers,
I'll laugh like the bright morning sun,
I crawl and start to walk,
My life has just begun,

As the days get warmer,
And I'm a little taller,
I have become more mature,
Like the rays of our sun.

I count along the long hot days,
As school goes out for the summer days,
My body is nearing adulthood,
And I'm letting go of my childhood.

Then the winds become chilly,
My oldness creeps in,
I make a new family,
And I've found my new kin.

I work long days,
All day and night,
Missing my childhood,
Missing the delight.

Winter sets in,
With carpets of white snow,
I'm older than ever,
And that's all I need to know.

I lie down in my warm bed,
As I recollect my memories,
Then with a smile of glee,
I sleep in peace for the next centuries.

Poetry – Grades 7-8: 3rd Place

The Journey of a Bird

By: Shabdha Pyari Cheekatla

Four simple words
Can sum up a year
But the journey of a bird
Will leave you with a tear

A beautiful bird
Landed on a tree
The beautiful bird
That was full of glee

The tree was light green
With pink flowers
One the bird has never seen
So it stared for hours

Everyday the bird came back
Everyday the bird would track
The days after seeing the tree
Would always be filled with glory

A day was filled with heat
A day the bird defeat
Scorching heat surrounds the air
Yet the bird never left the despair

Another day, something hit
The top of the bird's head
It found out that something was a leaf
The bird thought it was pretty and neat

Later, the leaves stopped falling
All the trees left bare
The bird stared longingly
Cause it was left unaware

Winter came
The bird perished
But all the time spent with the tree
Is the only thing it would cherish



Essay – Grades 9-12: 1st Place

Season

By: Ethan Keller

“Change is the only constant in life, and the seasons have their own unique way of reminding us of that.” (Anonymous). Ever since I can remember, spring has always meant baseball season, crisp morning games, the smell of fresh cut grass and the crack of the bat as it smacks the ball. Now for the first time in ten years baseball is not my spring.

I had every intention of enjoying the same type of spring as I had the last 10 years. After school practices, games going on till dusk when you can no longer see the ball out of the pitcher's hand, and weekend tournaments waking up at the crack of dawn. But two weeks ago, I received the unfortunate and quite honestly shocking news that I had not made the high school baseball team. After the news sunk in, I realized that my spring season was going to look a lot different than I had expected.

After a week of moping around feeling bad for myself, I decided to embrace this change, and create a new spring season. I had planned for this year to be my last baseball season. But I still wanted to enjoy one last spring season at the baseball field before fully committing to golf. My mom said that this may be a “blessing in disguise”. Not that she is wrong, it’s just hard to see that right now as a group of my friends head off for the baseball field with their gear everyday after school. I have already started filling up my afterschool days with golf weight training and my weekends are filling up with tournaments. Both of those things I wouldn’t have been able to do if baseball was still on my schedule. I guess this will open up a whole new opportunity for me as I will be able to really grow my golf game. I should go into the fall season in the top three on the golf team which will give me so many opportunities I might not have gotten if I were on the baseball team.

My spring season will still consist of waking up early on weekends to the smell of fresh cut grass. I will still wear cleats and hit a ball, it just won’t be with a bat, but rather a club, and instead of stitches, the ball will have dimples. The smell of fresh cut grass will not come from a recently cut outfield, but instead a freshly rolled fairway glistening with drops of morning dew.

Essay – Grades 9-12: 2nd Place

By: Claire Rutherford

Even though it's summer and the sun shines all day, your suffering comes like a hailstorm and takes the natural joy of the season away. Even though it's winter and the weather's always gloomy, your blossoming relationships bring you warmth inside. There are many seasons besides the typical four. People go through seasons of suffering, contentment, and joy that can significantly affect their daily lives.

One type of season people endure is suffering. Seasons of suffering and hardship can come from a variety of sources, such as physical pain, depression, or the loss of a loved one. Physical pain exacerbates your life, leaving you feeling hopeless. Depression feasts on your doubts and insecurities, leaving you feeling insignificant. From a pet to a family member, losing a loved one feels like losing a part of yourself, leaving you unmotivated and unproductive in your daily life. When I had to put down my old dog after she got sick, I was devastated for weeks. Thoughts and memories of her constantly played in my mind, only to bring tears streaming down my face once more. Once I got two puppies, I was able to keep the happy memories of my dog in my heart and move on. Seasons of suffering feel endless, but they always come to an end. Life is full of peaks and valleys, so you can't let one hard season steal your hope for the happy ones.

There are also seasons of contentment, where things just seem normal. You might feel like your life is a textbook with no action or suspense. This usually happens during the school year when nothing especially good or bad is happening in my life, and my regular schedule remains unchanged. You'll likely feel bored, but in these seasons, it's best to be thankful for what you have and remember that seasons are only temporary.

One last type of season is seasons of joy. These are times of celebration and pride that come from things such as achievements or thriving relationships. When you attain something like graduating high school or making an all-state band, you feel proud of yourself. That pride alters your perspective, and little things don't bother you as much. Relationships improve your daily life because you feel accepted and loved by others and can confide in them. In elementary school, I had a close friend whom I trusted and connected with well. Being with her made me happier every day and made every situation better because that's what seasons of joy do.

You can see that people go through different seasons in their lives, whether they're ones of suffering, contentment, or joy. Life needs periods of happiness and suffering, like how the Earth needs sunny and rainy days. Plants can't thrive without rain, like how we can't appreciate the joyful seasons without the hard ones. We can endure every season with the comfort of knowing that life's peaks only exist because of the valleys.

Essay – Grades 9-12: 3rd Place

By: Ruthvik Kotagiri

Throughout the life of each and every human, experiences come and go. We are constantly overwhelmed with the introduction of changes to our lives in ways we dislike, but also in ways that enlighten us. Nature has widely been known to humanity as a mysterious force, and in many ways, it reflects human beings too. Seasons in nature represent the changes and events that we are presented with to fully experience the quality of life.

A few years ago, I began to write my first ever novel. I let my ideas flow out of my mind and I allowed my imagination to extend into my writing. However, it was difficult to motivate myself to continue to write. Occasionally, there were periods of time where it was the most difficult. This could be compared to the change in between seasons, when there was the most struggle for not only humans, but to other organisms that were forced to adapt. Toward the beginning of spring, allergies would be a constant distraction and annoyance, but I could only get it over with by taking action to manage it. If I had left my nose alone, it would not be as healthy as it is now. Similarly, I had to commit myself to resume my long expedition of completing my book. I had to realize that it was the season to write. It always was. And as long as I realized that, I knew I could achieve whatever I dreamed of.

About a year after the first words of my book were typed, my book was presented on Amazon. I had advertised it throughout the school and soon, my friends were purchasing it, teachers were talking about it, and I had even appeared on the district news! I had finally seen how a year of progress led to results. Perhaps this can be compared to how after a year of new experiences and efforts, humans celebrated New Year's Day. After I had completed the first book, I decided that I could not let that be the end. I resumed the trilogy with two more books, which I almost instantly began working on. Quickly after the year-long process had been completed, I had only started again. Now that I think about it, weren't the seasons the same? After completing a one-year cycle, they instantly began again. There was no in-between time, as it was a restless cycle of efforts and experiences.

With the changes that I was forced to encounter, I had also learned from past experiences. I learned to upgrade my writing and creativity, just like how a chef can learn how to properly season a menu item after making and tasting it several times. After I had experienced what everything was like, I could analyze what I had seen and think about how I could make things better. In multiple ways, seasons represent how all people are pushed through the same events, but also are made to experience them in different ways.

Narrative – Grades 9-12: 1st Place

By: Delaney Finch

April 2, 1999

When I took my Caroline to her appointment, I realized I had no idea how long we would have together. How long the blood would pump through her veins, a result of the great heart I know rests behind her ribcage. The heart I fell in love with. I had no idea how long the air would fill her lungs, giving her the power to speak the words “I love you, George.” What terrified me most was the idea that I might lose her and have no idea when.

I swear, if my Caroline makes it to the summer, I'll take her to the beach. I'll carry her frail body down to the water and lay her down gently on her pink towel. And though she'll hate how the chemo made her body look in her swimsuit, I'll look at her with the same adoration in my eyes as the night we first met forty years ago. She'll feel the warm sand. She'll feel the sun's gentle rays as it sets in the distance. She'll be content.

I promise, if she makes it to the autumn, I'll take her to the park. We'll sit on a bench and share a pumpkin spice latte. Her favorite. Her bare head will feel cold in the autumn breeze, but I would have planned for this. I'll pull out her silk scarf with a kind smile and wrap it around her head and shoulders. We'll snuggle under the pale yellow blanket we knit the previous winter. The air will be crisp. She'll be content.

I vow, that if Caroline makes it to the winter, I'll take her to a snowy mountaintop. I'll push her in her wheelchair to the top. We'll look out at the world below us, all covered in powdery, white snow. Her eyes and skin will sting, but I'll offer my body as a shield from the biting winds. I'll hold onto her as if I am holding on to dear life. She'll feel serene. She'll be content.

And, I pledge, if she makes it to the spring, I'll take her to the restaurant where we first met. She'll feel nostalgic, so I'll walk to the dusty jukebox in the corner and play our song, 'At Last' by Etta James. I'll hand her a napkin to dry her teary eyes as we hobble around, attempting to dance, perhaps for the last time, to the song we fell in love to. And, maybe for the last time, I'll embrace her. All of her. Her weary eyes. Her peach-fuzz head. Her brittle bones. Her heart. Her breath. I'll love her. She'll feel endless. She'll be content.

June 6, 1999

If only my Caroline had made it to this summer. To autumn. Winter. Spring. Now, I am writing from the beach. The park. The snowy mountaintop. The restaurant. Only, my Caroline is no longer by my side. But, she'll always be in my heart and my memories.

Forever Yours,

George Kennedy

Narrative – Grades 9-12: 2nd Place

The Little Fox

By: Owen Luehrman

As the crisp air of new-fallen snow appeared at the threshold of the warm den, Little Fox stood in expectancy as a small flake added to the white legion covering the hard ground. Startled by a sharp gust, Little Fox moved further into the den and nestled with Mother Fox.

“Little Fox, what has scurried you to me in this manner?” questioned Mother Fox.

Little Fox cried “The wind...it hurt my face as it ran by...I wish to never face it again!”

“Oh, I see” Mother Fox claimed. “But, don’t you see that tree out there? Don’t you see how it stands alone against Mother Nature’s cold winds? It may sway but do you see it tremble in fear, or existing in concentration of a grand tomorrow?”

With the inquisition from Mother Fox, Little Fox watched the same tree. As time went by, he came witness to that grand future. The white began fading, and armies of green appeared everywhere covering the once desolate land. In this time, the tree began to sprout life, and with a trickle of life, soon the tree was covered in green. For many times around, Little Fox and Mother Fox watched the land turn. First came the white legions, then the green armies, followed by the infectious red which then is consumed again by the white legions.

As the clocks of change continued to tick away, Mother Fox became sickened with death. She troubled to stand, the brightness of her eyes was now a muted haze, and worse of all, she was unable to hunt. Mother Fox called out, “Little Fox, you must try and catch food for us. Only that will keep me alive. Maybe a cluster of berries or a fish from the lake.”

“Yes, Mother Fox, I will go out and find food for us, I will keep you safe...” proclaimed Little Fox.

So on Little Fox went scurrying out of the den as he realized something: this was the first time he had ventured into the white alone. Little Fox tried to forget about his boyish experiences in the white. He came across a mulberry bush, picked a cluster, and turned back for the den. As he came back, something seemed wrong about the den, a smell, maybe just a scent. Through investigation, he went in and found the difference: Mother Fox’s lifeless body...

Little Fox existed in weightlessness, he didn’t know how to feel or even what to think. Mother Fox who nurtured him, protected him, taught him, now laid down in her final, lifeless form.

After a time of sitting with her, Little Fox looked out and saw the tree that his mother had shown him. He could almost hear Mother Fox saying her saying of “exist in fear, or concentration of a grand tomorrow” as he watched the tree sway with the cold wind. He understood the message. One must be ready for change, don’t let it scare you. One must be ready for each new season...

Narrative – Grades 9-12: 3rd Place

The Leaf That Never Left

By: Izabella Derickson

The days are getting longer. My tree's roots are deep in the ground below me on the corner of Elm Street and Birch Avenue. Now in the ides of March, I can feel my tight winter coat beginning to crack. As a new leaf, I'm learning so much about the things around me. The home, whose yard I shade, is home to three people. I don't know their names yet but there's a man, a young girl, and a teenager. It seems to me that the young girl is a lot like me. She doesn't know much yet, but she's always happy when she's outside. The man was outside with her yesterday as the sun crept behind my branches. The man stood behind her as she wobbled forward across the yard. It was the first time I've seen her walk like the man. She's not very good at it. Later that night, when the moon soared high in the sky and the yard was lit-up only by the light of the streetlamp next to me, the man came back outside. He tied a thick piece of wood to my branch with some rope and looped it around a ton of times. Whatever it is he built, I hope the people like it.

It finally happened! Today all the other buds and I finally burst out from our shells and the family can see us now! Bright, shiny green, and ready to harvest the sun's power, the leaves and I can finally help our tree produce the sweet sap the family calls "syrup". As I've waited to explode from the branch, I have discovered so much about the family. The man is called Dad, the young girl is called Marley, and the teenager is called Mady. Mady told Marley that the thing Dad built was a "swing". Marley is getting better at walking, but she's not nearly as good as everyone else. Dad and Mady are always trying to push Marley on the swing, but she looks scared every time. I understand that. Sometimes the wind blows, and water dumps out of the clouds, and it feels like it might pull me right from my branch, too.

As the hot, long days continue, Marley gets more and more comfortable with the world all around her. She's getting so good at walking! Earlier this week I saw her running around the yard with Dad and she was giggling so much. She even asked Dad to push her on the swing. Just as she is not scared anymore, I know that the wind won't take me anywhere if I hold on tight and stay with the leaves around me. The people confuse me though, I thought that because Marley was happy, all the others would be happy, too, but something is wrong. I heard Mady crying to Dad about how nervous she was about having to go to "high school" soon. I don't know what "high school" is, but I have a feeling that Mady will be okay. The other leaves have been telling me that as fall gets closer, I'll have to change too. At first, I was scared, because I knew that meant I would fall from my branch and onto the cold, wet ground. The leaves told me, though, that I would become a beautiful color. Maybe even a bright orange or red! I wish I could tell Mady how beautiful she's becoming, too.

The sun rose from above the house on a brisk fall morning. Suddenly, everything around me was a bright, beautiful color! The other leaves told me that we would change, but I had no idea that all the other trees would change, too. Gorgeous reds, oranges, and yellows surrounded me, but I can see that some of the leaves on the smaller saplings are beginning to fall off. Marley loves fall, though. Some days, when it's cold, her dad won't let her come outside, but when the sun is hot, she runs out of her front door and throws the fallen leaves high up into the air. Sometimes, Dad brings out a rake and pulls all of the leaves into a big pile and Marley backs up and sprints towards the pile before throwing

herself into the air and coming down into the leaves, she loves to swing with Dad, too. She's started to go really high into the air, I don't even think she's scared anymore. It scares me a little though, every time she gets up high, my \ branch creaks and shakes. Sometimes, I worry that she'll bring my whole branch down to the ground, or at the very least, I will lose my grip and fall but I tell myself that just means I will get to be a part of that pile of leaves Marley rolls around in, and then I'm not so scared. Mady sometimes rolls around in the leaves with Marley. She isn't so scared of high school anymore, and she can seem even older than Dad sometimes, so it's fun to see that she's not so big that she can't do the same things that little kids do. She made so many friends, they even come over to the house and sleep here sometimes. I'm so glad it wasn't as scary as she thought it would be. She, like the leaves around me, are becoming prettier by the day. I'm scared. I know I shouldn't be, but I don't want to leave the family now.

It's getting colder every week and there's very few leaves left on the trees. It's lonely up here, Marley rarely comes out anymore, and even when she does, she has so many layers on she can't even swing. Last week, lots of snow fell and covered everything in a thick, white blanket. That day, Marley and Dad came outside and slid on plastic sleds down the steep hills across the street and threw balls of snow at one and another for hours on end. They didn't want to swing though. I miss when Marley came and swung every day. I haven't seen Mady outside in weeks. She gets in the car and goes to high school, and by the time she gets home she stays inside until she leaves the next day. Even though I don't see her much, I know she's sad. Every time Dad goes out with Marley, I hear them beg for Mady to join them outside and every time, she says she's too tired to go out. I know she's lying because I can see her cry through the window. She doesn't hang out with her friends anymore either. I hope things get better for her soon, she's such a good friend. She's an even better sister.

The days are getting longer again. I heard someone walking past me say that it's so sad that there's nothing left on my branches. I wish I could tell her to look closer. All winter long, new buds have been hiding from the outside air. I understand why they would think my tree was dead. On the outside I look hopeless, but if they got closer to me, they would be able to see all the potential the new buds hold as they start to poke through the coat that protected them in the harsh weather. Already, they've been through so much and they haven't even broken through their shell yet.

Every day this past week, Marley and Dad have come out to play, and every day Mady has joined them. For the first time, Mady swung through the air and laughed the loudest I've heard all year. I know that when the new buds turn to leaves, I'll get thrown straight to the ground, but I'm not scared anymore. My family is finally happy. For the first time, Marley ran out of the door and jumped headfirst onto the swing. She was laughing so hard and the smile on her face was so big and as she pushed herself higher and higher into the sky, I could feel her excitement vibrating all the way through my branch. As she clung to the branch, she swung harder and harder until, midair, she jumped from the swing and fell to the ground smiling and laughing. For the first time, face to face with me.



Poetry – Grades 9-12: 1st Place

Echoes of Four Seasons: A Traverse City Tribute

By: Akyedzi Acheampong

Traverse City winters.
Walking through the woods,
Glistening snow all around.

Snow day,
Snowmen,
Snow forts,
Snow cities.

Playing outside
To pass the time.
The unforgettable cold
Fixed by a cup of hot chocolate.

Traverse City springs.
Snow melts
And color returns.

Red cherries,
Orange birds,
Yellow bumblebees,
Green grass,
Blue skies,
Purple lavender.

Refreshing rain
And gentle sunlight.

Traverse City summers.

Swimming in the bay,
Kayaking and stargazing,
Track meets,
Climbing up the sand dunes,
Eating ice cream.

Family trips.
New places,
New people,
New opportunities.

I wish I could just

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Everything down
And enjoy the sun with friends.

Traverse City falls.
The wonderful leaves of fall.
Changing colors,
Crisp cool air.

Pumpkin pie.
Yum!

Harvest season.
Jams in jars,
Raking leaves,
And jumping back into the pile.

Year ends with winter returning.
The holiday season.

Friends
And Family.

Presents
And peppermint.

Christmas
And cookies.

Movies
And merriness.

Love
And laughter.

Days of the Michigan lifestyle gone
But still,

I remember...
The wonderful years.

I remember...
The wonderful people.

I remember...
The wonderful experiences.

I will never forget
And I will
ALWAYS
Carry these memories in my heart.

Poetry – Grades 9-12: 2nd Place

Stand by Me

By: Talah Hantush

As seasons change, time runs on
Hours stretch and days go long
I'll follow you and I'll set you free
When I do, please stand by me

Earth comes anew and white roses bloom
Vestiges that are left behind stay to loom
I'll look into the eyes and hope it's you
Stand by me, even if it's untrue

Fields of gold become priceless
Treasures found in moments that are timeless
Untouched paths we go and explore
Stand by me and follow the singing birds that soar

Through every twist and bend untold
My heart will remain ablaze even as it grows cold
If you're lost, I'll run when you call
Stand by me when everything begins to fall

White roses wither and light wanes
Gold has become too much to sustain
The birds are gone and there is no song
Stand by me, even if it's not for long

As seasons change, time runs on
It's time to kiss the shadows goodbye, the ones that chased us along
Those who are lost are always found
Stand by me, even if you are no longer around

Poetry – Grades 9-12: 3rd Place

Seasons

By: Evie Swillinger

Winter to spring,
summer to fall,
through the years
we experience them all

These may be the names
we have always said
but to me,
it's more than one-word read.

There is a season of laughter,
a season of joy,
a season of presents,
and one with toys.

A season of trees and leaves galore,
but there's also one
to collect seashells and go offshore.

Not only is it about the weather
but also the out-measurable pleasure.
A season of friendship,
and the bond we tighten.
A season without end
but my family brightens.

Together we all fulfill
The job of a very important skill.
The skill of one's presence
And the smell of their essence
it brings glory to the rest
But also to connect, the very best.

People are what matter
Not the clouds above
Even when it's raining
You can share love

Whether it is snowing or pouring
Or the sun is being boring
Just keep in mind
That people are adoring

There is someone there
Even in the darkest of day
Keep a bright smile
And they will come your way

Be a bright soul
And have compassion
Show love towards another
Nothing in violent fashion

Winter to spring, summer to fall
Despite the change
You can have it all...

Thank you...

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- LEADS Board
- Lakota Students and Parents
- Lakota Classroom Teachers
- Lakota's School Board and Administrators
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About LEADS

Lakota's Enrichment and Academic Development of Students (LEADS) is primarily aimed at the parents of children identified as gifted, but welcome ALL families in the Lakota School District.

LEADS mission is to identify, provide and/or sponsor enriching academic and social opportunities for students of the District. www.lakotaleads.org



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Development of Students