

2020 Write Outside Your Door Writing Contest

Go Outside. Be Inspired. Be Creative. Write. Submit.

Write Outside Your Door is a free writing competition co-sponsored by the Missouri Botanical Garden and Gateway Writing Project that authentically integrates creative writing with science and nature. Write Outside Your Door invites students from grades K - 12 and adults to write about their experiences outside, with nature, and as stewards of the environment. Winners receive a membership to the Missouri Botanical Garden and a creative writing prize pack from Gateway Writing Project.

Writers may submit stories, essays, or poems that creatively address the theme of being outside and connecting with nature. Writers are invited to submit a piece that explores:

- a special place in nature and why it is meaningful
- Describes an author's specific experience in nature
- a piece that reflects conservation, stewardship, or sustainability principles

Winning submissions are selected for each category including: K-2, 3-5, 6-8, High school, and adult. Entries are judged on merits of composition (grammar and organization), content (how well the theme has been addressed), and voice (word choice and style).

Write Outside Your Doors is an annual contest accepting submissions from March-May. For more information visit: umsl.edu/services/gwp



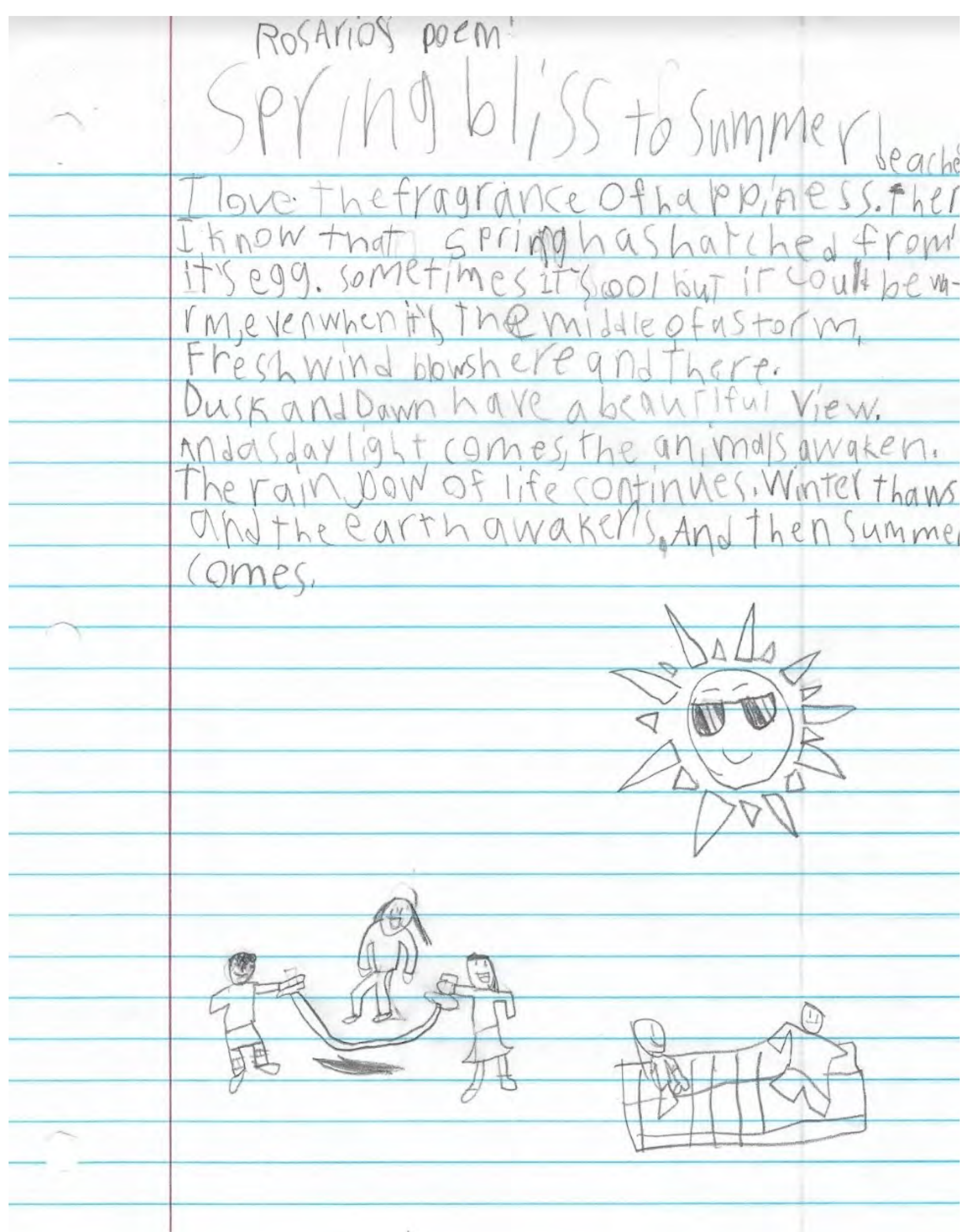
2020 Write Outside Your Door Writing Contest Winner

Category: Grades K–2

Spring Bliss to Summer Beaches

Rosario Kelley, 8

From Kennard Classical Junior Academy (St. Louis Public Schools)



I love the fragrance of happiness.
Then I know that spring has hatched from it's
egg. Sometimes it's cool but it could be warm,
even when it's the middle of a storm.
Fresh wind blows here and there.
Dusk and dawn have a beautiful view.
And as daylight comes, the animals awaken.
The rainbow of life continues.
Winter thaws and the Earth awakens.
And then summer comes.

2020 Write Outside Your Door Writing Contest Winner

Category: Grades 3–5

My Gardens

Ben Kettleson, 11

Fairway Elementary (Rockwood School District)

My backyard is a special place to me because every spring my parents and I plant vegetables and flowers. I have always liked gardening. The best thing about it is that it is a fun hobby and I think it's neat that you get to eat all of the vegetables and fruit that you grow. Also, you can make your front and back yard look nice with a little bit of work.

Just yesterday my parents and I went outside and planted elephant ears, lilies, hostas, and petunias. We had lava rocks in our flower bed, and we wanted mulch instead, so first we put on gloves, then, using our hands, we raked the rocks out until it was just dirt. It was really hard to get the lava rocks out; it took us about 6 hours. Next we planted the flowers. Elephant ears and lilies are bulbs with a root on the bottom; for the elephant ears we had to dig a six-inch hole and for the lilies we had to dig a two-inch hole. The hostas and the petunias were not seedlings, they were plants. It took a lot of work, but I think it was fun.

This year we planted lots of vegetable seeds, like habaneros, black krim tomatoes, yellow pear tomatoes, cherry tomatoes, and red and yellow bell peppers. We planted the seeds in February because it takes a long time to start plants from seed. You have to start the seeds early so that when spring comes the vegetables will be big enough to plant outside. They were not looking very good because it was really cloudy this winter and early spring, but over the last few weeks it has been sunny and now they are green and growing. They will be transplanted outside soon, and they will take root and grow quickly.

When I grow up I hope to continue these gardening traditions with my family.



2020 Write Outside Your Door Writing Contest Winner

Category: Grades 6–8

A Day in St. Louis

Samantha Horn, 14

Wentzville South Middle School (Wentzville School District)

I examine the peach colored sky
Clouds wifting in the air, pinks, purples and oranges painting the sky
The day starts, bright and early
It's luminous beauty resplendent like a diamond
Gorgeous flowers surrounding my feet
Roses, Daisies, even dazzling chrysanthemums
The steel arch reaching over me
Like a warm hug

On the branch next to me
I notice a Cardinal arrive
Uninvited, but welcome
It's grace and beauty sparkling in the sunlight
It's red wings stretching out like rubies
And it flies away, swept away by the wind

The day rapidly goes by
The sky, painted with blues and pinks
Smiles back at me
Skyscrapers twinkling in the darkness
As night falls, the sky dims darker
I look into the Mississippi river
And see the beauty of St. Louis
Full of artistry and delicacy



2020 Write Outside Your Door Writing Contest Winner

Category: Grades 6–8

It Is Everything

Maria Adamitis, 18

Villa Duchesne High School (Independent)

What gave me the power, were those right next to me:
Their smiles, their jokes, their laughter.
Through the struggles, the hard times, the nights of no sleep,
They gave me the hope to keep going.

Now, I see their face only through a screen.
I hear their voice only through my best imitation
Of their voices through a typed message.
The love is still there, but the power is not.
It is hard, it is discouraging.
It is something.
But at the same time, it is nothing.

I sit in the same room, for the same hours,
With the same computer, doing the same things.
It is tiring, it is dark; I am dull, I am sad.

What I failed to realize, was the source of light:
The harsh ray flowing in from my bedside window.
This discovery required a journey,
A trip beyond my bedroom door:

A step, I feel the warm touch of the air and a ray of sun-light strike my shoulder.
A step, I smell the spring air of freshly bloomed flowers from my neighbor's garden.
A step, I hear the sharp song of the birds breaking like glass through the afternoon silence.
A step, I taste the leftover dew of this morning's rain still lingering in the air.
A step, I see the contrast of the ever so pale pink flowers immersed in the rich, dark soil.

The outside is not my childhood friends, my high school graduation, my senior year traditions.
But outside is something, because outside is not inside.
It is something.
But at the same time, it is everything.



2020 Write Outside Your Door Writing Contest Winner

Category: Adult

Its Gonna be O.K. - Nature and Humankind on the Brink of a Pandemic Stephanie Pisani, 40

As the calendar pages continue to turn, May has finally arrived. An indication that we are inching that much closer into a warmer season of more sun, cool rains, budding trees, blooming flowers and all that comes along with Spring is here. However, this year, the climate we are adjusting to is rather different. Not in the literal sense. The temps are still warming, the birds are nesting and nature all around us is thriving. Yet, the world we live in is creating a significant data marker on the historical timeline as we navigate uncharted waters.

In a time of uncertainty and constant change, we can find peace and continuity in nature. Simple aspects of nature - the ease at which the trees sway, the flowers withstanding an unexpected frost, a bird's nest enduring a strong afternoon thunderstorm - reminds us that we too, can sustain these current conditions. We must carry on even in the most trying times by simply looking to the seeds of our earth.

While we may not be able to travel afar to explore, we are finding tranquility in what surrounds us right here at home. Years of tending to gardens allows a vibrant color palette to flourish through the seasons and shed light in otherwise darker times. Our children excitedly plant, yearning for that day when they can harvest their first tomato, pepper or bowl of lettuce. Wooden swings built years ago still provide hours of fun, windswept hair and laughter filling the air. Sidewalk chalk shares messages of hope and courage along our walkways. A campfire, tent, and s'mores alludes to an evening of backyard camping together. And even inside, we carefully tend to our plants, propagating new from old.

We must remind ourselves that:

This day is simply a moment in time,
A bump in the rode,
A wave in the ocean,
A valley in the field.

That we will see our way over,
Stand strong against,
And rise up from more determined than we were before.

It's gonna be ok. It may be difficult. It may be different. Yet, we don't have to stray too far from right where we are to find peace in what naturally surrounds our very being each and every day.

