

Edited by Hijinks, alliyah, Spearmint, creaturefeature, and the YWS poetry crew

The 'Best of YWS' Poetry Collection

2023 Edition

By authors of the Young Writers Society

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For more information about the **Young Writers Society** please visit us at **youngwriterssociety.com**.

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★ The star symbol indicates the work is an “Editor’s Pick” recipient.

somethingthatmatters

By envy

i press my fingers into peony petals,
feeling their density, cold, even in summer

you talk like you mean everything you say
you feel like the sun, you feel like warm water in kiddie pools
& grass on bare feet, messy,
muddy, just like the color of your eyes &

nostalgia tastes sweet
but its hard to wash off of your hands
summer is just around the corner &
i feel it like ive felt it every year since i was nine
i find it second nature like bike riding
until you fall for the first time

i allow myself to say that this is more than just a scrape
gravel in my palms
my mother kissed my bleeding hands
i think about how everything is so beautiful

i wake up every morning like ive just been reborn



summer whisperings and autumn wisdom

By starshipgirl

fall is coming. i see her
in the red, orange, and yellow that is slowly
overtaking the leaves,

hear her song through the wind, in the silent footsteps
behind me on the sidewalk as i pause to notice a fallen leaf.

fall is everywhere, so fast, but not soon enough. and i see
that summer is protesting in all of the wilting flowers, and hear

her crying when the last petals fall to the ground, in a way
that makes me wonder what she wants us to know. every time

i recognize her voice, it's already too late.

but fall is gently nudging me, telling me to forget-we learned
enough
from the sun, and now it is time to know the rain.



a drizzling mist after a pouring rain

By momonster

the sky still mists as i step outside, dampening my clothing.
it's dark and calm, and it feels like a dream
or a memory long-forgotten.
it's like time stopped,
and the world is taking a breath
before continuing its journey.
the tree leaves drip onto my head
as i veer to avoid a puddle,
and the streetlamps look like little clouds,
highlighting every minuscule droplet surrounding them.
this time is simple, with nothing complex
to try to understand.
so i walk, breathe,
and enjoy this little bit of life.

Crafting Chickens

by Liminality

The kids in the yard knew a chicken could be a paper plate, white, and perfectly circular. A single black dot for an eye, the cut-out wings waved hello and goodbye, attached by a spot of clear glue.

The boy in the grey shirt ran up to me, to show off the chicken in one hand, while he with the other, ate cheese and potato wedges without getting oil on the pearly paper edges. And the graphic on his shirt was a chicken, too.

Maybe the wire fences and short city trees had gotten to them, how they were pleased with featherless chickens, flightless poultry. Maybe this was the power of imagery: how chickens could be anything and still be chickens.

the slippery slope of memory

By niteowl

sometimes i swear you still see me
in the sand you sink into
at the beach, your sunburned skin
remembering spain,
remembering the rain
not falling mainly on the plain
but on slippery hill streets
just steps from the sea.
does the salt taste like me?

am i stubborn as a stain
of rioja wine you scrubbed and scrubbed
off your pamplona-white shirt but it stays
no matter what you say, you can't scare
me away and now you're afraid
you're going insane the way i did that spring
i was sick but i thought myself a sage?

do i stray into your bored seconds
the way you settle into mine, the nonsensical
speculation sprouting in your mind:
what if i had loved her
the way she claimed to love me?

it's strange to speak of it, but it doesn't have
to make sense to stick to you
and refuse to slip away.

Umbrella

By Orabella

I wait and wait under a pile of shoes
for someone who might notice
me.

Maybe a moment, just a glance
before they walk away.

I swear it's not
me.

But maybe it is. Did I ever say something wrong?
It's hard to tell from under here, when they never bring
me
out to play.

Maybe my colors are faded
from being in the sun so long.
Maybe I'm dull and gray.
I guess that's why I'm all alone
each and every day.

They took
me
out once or twice. That's all they ever did.
And they never talked. Not to
me.
Even when I had something to say.

Outside, it snows, but never rains.
I watch the bleak cold from inside
where it is warm.
I miss the colors of the flowers
and wish it was May.
A week later they pick
me
up.

Finally! After so long.
They rush
me
outside and I see
the sky!
So... dark?
I must have forgotten since
I could not see from where I used to lay.

It's drizzling, but I don't care.
I'm held above the crowd.
I feel as light as a bird
and before I know it
I'm drifting higher
into the clouds
as I fly away.

The wind caught my outstretched tips
and decided to take
me
far.
I cannot see where I was before
and I know
I'll never find my way.

Maybe it doesn't matter.
They never seemed to care.
They only ever held
me
high above their heads.
Warm and dry while I got
soaking wet.
And I get the feeling
they never wanted
me
to stay.

bluebells

By M.H. luxeterna

two hands i hold; His and his
like the stories of old
i trade nothing for this

one like the shade of bluebells
jingling in the rain
honey eyes shimmering
with a joy i can't explain

shall i fall under your enchantment?
like some magical fairies brew?
to be a love like bluebells
basking their pleasant hue

sprouting through the woodlands
nestled among the trees
is that my lovely bluebell
waving in the breeze?

oh my charming bluebell
once searching in despair
yet to your beauty nothing
no, nothing can compare

so let us cross horizons
growing where we stand
blossoming like bluebells
strolling hand in hand

Old Books

By Spearmint

you know that smell old books have?
the one that rises readily
out of the rich, worn pages as you
riffle through them.
slightly sweet, soft,
reminiscent of afternoons
curled up on an armchair, book on your lap,
sunlight slanting through the window,
dust motes swirling in the air as you immerse
yourself in otherworldly worlds.
(i have no armchairs in my home. but somehow,
this is still what i imagine.)

you may not know this, but according to
the all-knowing internet,
there are various chemicals responsible for this.
toluene and ethyl benzene for sweetness,
vanillin for a hint of vanilla.
2-ethyl hexanol for a floral note, and
benzaldehyde and furfural for a whiff of almond.
it's like a recipe, with all these scents being
whisked together into an irresistible combination
that brings back memories and a feeling of comfort.

even if i don't have an armchair,
i hope i always have old books.
i can wrap myself in the pages
like they're soft blankets,
breathe in the aroma compounds,
and be at peace.

Intangible Heart

By fatherfig

a figment of my imagination
a lovely painted doll
you are warm and sleeping
graceful and pretty
i am strong and tall
we are switched in places
just like i would want
you are a kind boy in my arms
warm and small and there
an entire world is in your smile
and then you arent
and im alone
the world has ended
in a cascade of dawn
just like i thought i wanted
no one there at all
no one who is small
no one who is all i want
the cuddling is gone
and i am forced awake
by the alarm

Never Ask a Writer This

By Kaia Jersaga

Describe your crush, you say.
My eyes move to him,
In his corner of the gym.
He looks so dirty. That's okay.

No words does he ever speak.
His favorite thing is snacks.
That, and undisturbed naps.
He has quite a mean streak.

But he's the cutest little dude.
Four fuzzy pink paws,
Two beady black eyes,
One fluffy little tail,
Two needle-like teeth,
Oh, he's just begging for food!

Describe your crush.
Again? Okay, your call.
My eyes move to the wall.
My imagination is the brush.

He's my purple gemstone.
Purple streak in soft black hair,
Prettiest brown eyes, I will dare.
He and me, we're never alone.

He's not real, but if he were...
Five, four, sweet, and kind,
Quiet, youthful-not a man,
Refuge he can never find,
From the evil things I plan.
He's my recognizable character!

No, I don't need a real crush.
Me, my hamster, and imagination.
We're close enough to that sensation.
I don't need that romantic rush.

Flat Tire

By Ventomology

In spring, the roads groan
from bloodless nicks and cuts,
spiderwebbing chasms in asphalt
that bloom from every salt-and-tire abrasion,
every molecule of water that drips between the aggregate
and in the weary freeze and thaw of winter
expands--
wounds boiling up to break the skin of man.

I'll miss you but it's okay if you need to go

By Dossereana

Stars like large snowflakes
shooting across the sky
lifting me way up high
oh tell me how I'm supposed to
let you go
with someone that you don't even know
I don't understand
how you could have done this to me
but I guess I never really understood what we had
maybe even if you had stayed
it still would have ended like that
I guess it's the regret of letting you go
because it stuck with me
and it'll stay here for eternity
for I'll never let go of this regret
I guess this is something
that has to happen
at least once in someone's life
but I want you to know I'll be right here
if you ever come running back to me
because I still
want you



Invisible Chains

By ariah347

In solitude, I grapple with these binding chains,
A burdened soul familiar with these well-worn pains.
My narrator, meticulous in every neurotic critique,
Leaves no action unscathed, no effort unique.

A disease named perfection it courses through my veins,
Even in the midst of the sun live personal hurricanes.
Every flaw, a dagger to my burdened core,
Each battle is a campaign in an internal war.

Pen grips paper, a vice-like hold so tight,
A symptom of this infection, a relentless fight.
I carve my belittling into my soul deep inside,
Whatever you could point out, I've already identified.

Restless and unwell until it all is fit as 'just right,'
This pursuit consumes my days and haunts my nights.
Others dismiss, claiming it's all in my head,
Yet I sense truths lurking in words left unsaid.

In shadows between lines, I berate what doesn't exist,
An invisible link to the cold metal against my wrists.
The chains that bind, I yearn to break free,
Embracing flaws and scars and letting myself be.

these hands of mine

By Lovestrike

I wish I could unburn the fire
that came coursing down the canyon

part flames like a crimson sea,
re-erect each timber,
hang the rafters, reconstitute a body
from ashes like a genesis god
scraping adam out of dust

I wish these things
for you because I know homes
—like parents, like lovers—
are not supposed to die

even when they do.

The Prodigal Brother

By FireEyes

i was the aaron to your moises,

what is disappointing is knowing how their story ends.
we were different fates on the same
paper fortune teller, and i wish
i knew what your side said.

grief like a thick sludge pours down my neck
and clogs my airway so i cannot breathe.
every time i hear your name: pain.
what happened?

death has not pulled out its scythe,
but i have lost you to the waves of time.
we're both doing our best
to keep our heads above water.
i guess, though, time means nothing
when you have memories,
right?

i never loved you the way the story books
would twist it, but the space for you
in my heart has yet to callus over.
my baby brother, i never got the chance
to see us grow up in tandem.
as you surpassed me in height, i looked up at you
with pride, even if it made me mad.
(i'll forever be a month older.)

and that one month without you before i could
remember what it was like,
was replaced with moments together
that are blurry.
they were hand crafted like a painting,
but obscured in the varnish that was supposed to
protect it.

one month without you turned into two.
one bitter month,
two bitter months
three agonizing years.

each time i make a new friend, i'll never forget
who it was that gave me the ability to do so
in the first place.
you were more than a best friend,
you were a built in brother.

little brother, where are you?

come back

please

i wish you could hear my voice, even as i cry at my desktop

By yosh

i wish you could hear my voice, even as i cry at my desktop,
no, i'm not asking to hear yours, although i'd love to.

i just want you to hear me utter,
one sentence, one word, one syllable,
or maybe i'll just be talking to the empty summer breeze,
like before.

i wish you could feel my hands, even as i bury my face in them,
no, i'm not asking to feel yours, although i'd love to,
i just selfishly want you to feel my warmth—
whatever's left of me, and realize,
that maybe, there's something valuable in the remnants of
what
you left.

i wish you could see my eyes, even as i drown in my self-pity,
no, i'm not asking to see yours, although i'd love to,
i just want you to see this pain that you've given me ~~i've given myself,~~
and then you'll comfort me, and all will be forgiven,
perhaps i still hope to cling to you, to forcefully take the joy
that you've
given to another.

i wish you could give me what you took back, though i know it
will only burden you,
after all, what is love but self-indulgence?
maybe beneath this myriad of tears that i've shed is only a
greedy pig,
maybe humans should never feel warmth, lest we burn
ourselves to ashes,
but i still would like you to see my smile
once more

i wish i could stand before you, perhaps then, we'll see eye to eye,
and i might find closure, and we may part ways
but is it too much to hope for something real?
we can take off our masks and see the ugliness inside
and finally, perhaps i'll stop shedding my tears at my desktop
"no."

i wish you could taste my pain, perhaps then i'll feel like i've
gotten my revenge
~~i thought this was love? why are you now my enemy?~~
but then as i see you cry i begin to cry to myself
~~i thought this was love? why are we both in such pain?~~
but perhaps these tears are just fake, and i'm just crying
just so that you can see.

i wish
i could hear
your voice

just one last time,
even as i cry at my desktop,
burying my face in my hands,
drowning in my self-pity,
hiding behind this clever mask that i wear,

(perhaps then i'll remember what it was like?)
(to feel the empty summer breeze)
(and wish that time would stop)
(and nothing would change)
(and nothing mattered)
(it was just us)
(or just me)
(at least)

~~(but we both know there was nothing there at all)~~

Don't Cry

By Luminescent Ant

A tiny baby child, with a feeble body and soft skin,
Born just last week
Crying
She isn't used to this new, loud world
Her newlywed mother says,
"Don't cry, don't cry."

A young girl in a polka-dot dress
6 years old
Crying
She dropped her ice cream walking from school
Her unknowing father says,
"Don't cry, don't cry."

A bright and twinkly-eyed tween girl
11 years old
Crying
Someone in school said, "shut up" to her
Her "wise" grandmother says,
"Don't cry, don't cry."

A stressed teenage girl with dark eyebags
16 years old
Crying
She has so much work this week, she's stressed
Her naive best friend says,
"Don't cry, don't cry"

A brokenhearted young woman with running mascara
21 years old
Crying
The boyfriend she loved left her so cruelly
Her new boyfriend says,
"Don't cry, don't cry."

An adult woman, trapped in a cage of sorrow
30 years old
Crying
She suffers painful depression from
Bottling up her feelings so much
She says to her therapist,
"Please don't tell me not to cry,
I want to cry, I need to."

Her understanding therapist says,
"Okay, then cry. You can let it out.
It's okay to be sad, it's okay to cry."
And as she said this, a tear fell from her eye.
And they felt the pain together,
And they cried.

On a Tightrope

By alpacaboss

A hundred thoughts rush through my head
When I hear sentences strung through
Resonances I wish to never hear again
Forcing me for a reply

A demand to take a stand, I cannot
For I fear if I choose a side,
I will lose the other
Forever to the darkest depths

How many times have I voiced out
A complaint, a response, an opinion
For it to be hurled in the abyss
Trampled to dust

That is why I keep my mouth shut
Even if it wants to burst
I'm afraid I'll start laughing
For being too stupid to talk

You're too quiet, too neutral
But it's best to stay on the tightrope
For one misstep, a misspoken word
And it all comes crashing down

Mom Loved

By Plume

Hi
It's been raining here
Can I talk to you for a sec

Mom loved "Can I talk to you for a sec"

I walked down to the dock yesterday
Remember the dock?
And there was a duck there

Mom loved "And there was a duck there"

Yeah it was pretty close too
I didn't want to scare it away
So I just kinda stood there
And thought

Mom questioned "And thought"

I wasn't done >:(
I thought about how unafraid the duck seemed
It didn't even flinch when I walked up
Which was weird bc normally the ducks get scared
But she just watched me

Mom loved "But she just watched me"

Yeah it was nice
And I thought about what she was thinking about too
I bet she was happy to see the rain

Mom laughed at "I bet she was happy to see the rain"

It was weird though
Bc she was the only duck
Like I couldn't see any other ducks
She was alone

Mom disliked "She was alone"

Yeah :(
I just kind of smiled at her and then walked to the edge of the
dock
And looked out at the lake
And I thought about
Things
But then!

Mom questioned "But then!"

I'm typing one sec
I hear this weird noise behind me
Kind of like flip flops going really fast
And I turn around and its the duck
She's running like
Super eager
And then dives in the water

Mom laughed at "Super eager"

I'm kind of worried though

Mom questioned "I'm kind of worried though"

I never saw her come up

Mom disliked "I never saw her come up"

Maybe she did somewhere else I guess
Or maybe she's still swimming underwater
Or maybe
Idk
I left after a while
I watched the bubbles
But
I never saw her again
It was weird
Anyways what time are you coming on Saturday?
9:00?

Mom liked "9:00?"

Oh great
Maybe we can go to the dock

Mom loved "Maybe we can go to the dock"

I have to go now
I have
Something
Looking forward to seeing you soon :)

Mom loved "Looking forward to seeing you soon :)"

I love yo
*you

Mom loved "I love yo"
*Mom loved "*you"*

Ok bye :)

Eclipse of Gold

By spottedpebble

I sat on the bench
After watching the eclipse,
And I was contented to sit.

Though the "ring of
Fire" part was
For merely a second,
And I missed it,
The rest was beautiful.

The shadows of the moon
Left the shadows on the ground
Burning
And golden but
Dark
And inky
But soft,
As if watered down
By the fiery liquid
Gold light
Of the sun.

The sun was brighter
That day,
And during the drive,
I felt the sun so
Strongly that
I felt I must be
Golden myself.

Leaving all questions behind,
I rose up from below
The ground where
I had been resting dormant,
To stand and feel
The hot light on my face
Like a hand and
Celestial voice
Telling me:
*You are beautiful,
No matter how you refer to
Yourself,
No matter how others
Interpret you,
No matter how many
Hardships you've faced.
You are beautiful and strong
And as long as you are in my light,
You will be golden
And you will always belong.*



Ethereal Encounters

By Hkumar

Dreams are a gateway to our past,
portal to worlds beyond human grasp.
In slumber's embrace, we journey afar
to realms where spirits and memories are.

The departed ones, they return to us again
conjured by our mind, a fleeting space within.
Their presence is felt and their voices heard,
though in reality, their faces have blurred.

Cravings and longing from daily lives
are keys to portals when night arrives.
Time bends and twists, memories entwined,
as our minds create a world undefined.

In dreams, we find a moment's Solace,
as we embrace their heavenly presence.
Conversations are held and hearts renewed,
In dreams, the veil of death is subdued.

Feeling their vulnerable heartbeat again
we're reminded of our mistakes and the pain.
But the dawn breaks and dreams fade away,
leaving us again with a bittersweet dismay.

But it's not the last time we'll meet, we know,
a new portal opens, as whispers of night grow.
Dawn will come again to make the spirit go away
we hold on to hope, for another rendezvous someday.

Their essence lingers, though dreams may wane,
in our hearts, their love will forever remain.

Two Worlds

By Rose

Two worlds often combine
First, where dreams freely shine

A world where magic paints the sky
And happy endings are not just a goodbye

The other world, where reality unfolds
Where life's true stories are told

In the dream world, light never grows faint
And everything is adorned with a beautiful paint

In the realm where life's truth have their say, however
It is inevitable to strive through challenges forever

Though one may seem all fancy and fair
The other holds lessons that make us aware

Yet these worlds, hand in hand
Shaping the truth of who you are, distinct.



What, if anything, is essential to being human?

By alliyah

human (noun)

1. there is nothing quite so perplexing as their will to survive
- we have even observed some speaking to *ghosts* (see: faith)

faith - an essential element of the human-condition. a decidedly irrational tendency to believe what can not be seen. note that this condition has led some humans to believe their fragile bodies can fly, become birds, & live. (see: ghosts)

ghosts - humans attached by *love* to *stars*. (see: faith)

2. without exception, all bear the same strong temptation to blind oneself by staring at the sun too long - this may be related to a belief that the *stars* are connected by invisible strings to veins, roots, & other earth-bound matters.

stars - specks of *faith* incarnated into fire-light, spread across all the night. suspended across time, & space. unexplainable, but utterly ubiquitous.

3. they tend to *love* too much (see: faith), give too much (see: ghosts), & say too much (see: love) - all against their better judgement.

- remarkably, very few "humans" seem to be concerned with what they are; but they do have an answer for every query posed so far.

love - has yet to be clearly defined; but also has something to do with *stars*.

gauzey

By Hijinks

there is a strange limbo in the time before a goodbye.
the anticipation of something i know cannot be warded off
builds up in the heavy floor of my belly.
if friendship is a fabric, i haven't decided how to take care of it
just yet --
should i pull at the fraying edges so that it's gone
before the goodbye has a chance to take it from me
or should i absorb every detail until my eyes my ears my nose
my mouth are full:
the threading, the discolouration, the smell, the parallel feeling
against my finger pads. the overstimulation of all these senses
will make the goodbye
so much louder, so much more breaking when it comes
crashing down,
i know. but it feels faithless
to let this slip away into a jumble of yarn and knots.
years later i might fancy myself an anthropologist of sorts
and claim i have reconstructed our history -- but really i will
have woven in the accumulation
of years of misremembering. will our fate be any different if i
desperately try
to preserve us in the last moment before we leave? we will
always unweave eventually.
there are buttons in my belly and i feel sick.

boring domesticated life

By creaturefeature

i still long for nausea
in tongues and on couches. i am a simple man.

i think i could relive the same day over and over --
the sickness in my gut drifting off to the rise
and fall of your diaphragm, your heart
beating to the rhythm of mine.

my skin allows me to feel beautiful things
and i accept them with open arms. there is no guarantee
that life will be kind; no promise of a new beginning,
another childhood, another true love.

but when i wake up, i still see you.
no, i do not get tired of it.

Editor's Notes

Hijinks: *Poetry collections are often centred on a specific theme, intending to showcase many different people's perspectives on the same topic. This collection is unique in that we did not set any topic or expectation—yet, as we were reviewing the poems and deciding what order to put them in, certain ideas and motifs clearly emerged. It was fascinating to see how a discussion of relationships, passing time, nostalgia, and goodbyes surfaced in this open-ended collection. I think it speaks to how we are all humans who spend our time thinking about wonderfully human things. At the end of the day, I believe that's what poetry is best at: reminding us of our interconnected humanity.*

alliyah: *There is something special about writing poetry in a collection in that it starts to speak to each other – each poem a part of an ongoing conversation. It reminds me a bit of writing within community; there is something special about hearing the different voices and where our combined efforts become greater for having shared life together. This collection expresses not just something about what is so wonderful about poetry, but also what is so wonderful about community. I hope you are moved and compelled and let these poems linger with you. Maybe you will feel inspired to join in the conversation.*

Spearmint: *Reading poetry is like looking through lots of multicolored glass pieces. You glimpse the poet's perspective for a moment, and it changes you in some small beautiful way. On YWS, I have been fortunate to look through the lenses of writers from all over the world, who each have various backgrounds and beliefs and styles but are united by a shared passion for the written word. I hope this collection conveys that diversity and love for poetry.*

creaturefeature: *i have warm, fond memories of the poetry i've encountered in my life. i must've lived whole lifetimes just through writing things down. i especially think there is something so beautiful about writing as a collective like this; you can bear your soul to anyone willing to listen. it's phenomenal how people come together. as a whole, this proves there will always be someone there to listen. you just have to speak.*

Thank you for reading “The 'Best of YWS' Poetry Collection”

The **Young Writers Society** is an online global community for young writers. Find more poetry or join our writing community at **youngwriterssociety.com**.