



# Our Natural World

25 Haiku for Alexandria  
Haiku Contest

Zeina Azzam, Editor  
Poet Laureate, City of Alexandria

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Kevin Windmiller

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## **Foreword**

Haiku, the lovely and compact Japanese poetic form that has made its way around the globe into many languages and cultures, is now gracing the streets and green spaces of the City of Alexandria, Virginia. The evocative, few words in a haiku try to capture our experience of natural phenomena as well as of everyday occurrences. It is a joy to read, write, and share haiku in our city.

Funding from the City of Alexandria's Office of the Arts Business and Arts Collaborative Grant enabled a longstanding institution in the city, River's Edge Yoga, to work in concert with me, as the poet laureate of Alexandria, to create a community Haiku Project in 2023. I conceived this idea in order to involve community members in the reading and writing of poetry. I also wanted to offer everyone the opportunity to learn about haiku, enjoy its presence in many parts of Alexandria, and appreciate it as a reflection of our natural environment. The project has consisted of a workshop, a contest for adults and students in grades 1-12, contest-winning haiku displayed on placards in different parts of the city, and an event to celebrate the writers and winners. Finally, as the capstone to our activities, we have published "Our Natural World: 25 Haiku for Alexandria" to honor our haiku writers. This booklet also allows us to reach an even wider audience and serves as a memento of our Haiku Project.

This booklet features the haiku of the 12 contest-winning poets, selected by three judges external to the project. The theme was "Our Natural World." Congratulations to these accomplished prizewinners! Also included are an additional 13 haiku by other contest entrants, which I chose with the aim of adding more talented voices to our publication. The submissions were from the Washington, DC metropolitan area—Virginia, Maryland, and the District of Columbia; indeed, we were pleased to engage poets in our local community as well as those in nearby jurisdictions. This booklet is a tangible and delightful result of our collective creative efforts.

### **Zeina Azzam**

Poet Laureate

City of Alexandria, Virginia

2022 – 2025

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## **A Note of Thanks**

Special thanks to Margaret Townsend of River's Edge Yoga, the indefatigable business partner who administered the grant, connected all its parts, and served as the engine to ensure the project's success. We are grateful to Kevin Windmiller for designing this beautiful booklet — as well as the lovely haiku placards in Alexandria — that, together, truly bring the poems to life. AlphaGraphics Old Town Alexandria did a wonderful job printing all the aspects of the Haiku Project. Niki Van cheerfully and efficiently created the website and worked out the mechanics of the contest. The Ivy Hill Cemetery Historical Preservation Society was most generous in underwriting the contest prizes. We offer thanks to many supporters in the community including Cheryl Anne Colton (Alexandria Office of the Arts), Pat Miller, Chip Watkins, and the Canal Center, and Dina Ramon (DRPR). Special gratitude goes to the three contest judges: haiku writers and esteemed educators Abigail Friedman, Cathy Hailey, and Miho Kinnas. We are especially thankful to the community members who submitted 226 haiku to the contest!


None of this would have been possible without the City of Alexandria's deep commitment to support and invest in the arts. We are grateful for the commitment and engagement of Mayor Justin Wilson and the City Council, the Office of the Arts, the Alexandria Commission for the Arts, and the galleries and bookstores in our city, the libraries and public school arts programs, the music, theater, and dance organizations, the pivotal work of the Old Town North Community Partnership and the Old Town North Alliance to host music, visual arts, theater, dance, and poetry events, and everyone living in our city who enjoys and supports the arts. We are so pleased to bring haiku to the celebration of the arts in Alexandria!

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Empty house  
A wisp of mother's scent  
In the midnight hour.

**Jillinda Glenn**

1st Place, Adults Category, Alexandria, VA

Winds scraping hollows  
ragged gusts gasp through canyons—  
his last breath echoes

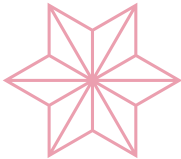
**Pamela Mathison Levitt**

Honorable Mention, Adults Category, Rockville, MD

The apricot sun  
touching her cheeks with soft gold—  
I can't look away.

**Holly Mason Badra**

Adults Category, Clifton, VA



pink azalea  
she tells her granddaughter  
memories of rain

**Sean Felix**  
2nd Place, Adults Category, Hyattsville, MD

Flowers grow many  
Birds bees and butterflies dance  
In my earth's garden

**Satyen Pal**  
2nd Place, Grades 1-5 Category, Rockville, MD

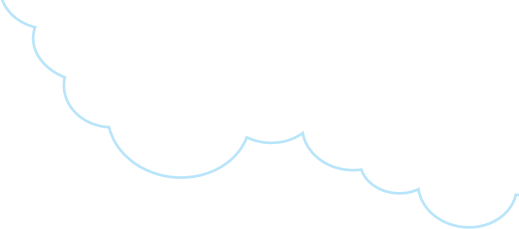
The heavenly scent  
Of lilac bushes in bloom  
A house abandoned

**Celia Panagopoulos**  
Adults Category, Alexandria, VA

Dandelion breaks through  
concrete ceilings, believing  
in a sky unseen.

**Anne Marie Wells**  
Adults Category, Washington, DC






Wilson Bridge opens,  
Tall Ship Providence sails through,  
Summertime arrives.

**Nancy Lopez**

**3rd Place**, Adults Category, Alexandria, VA



Summer barbeque  
Heavy metal music blazes  
Heat index rising

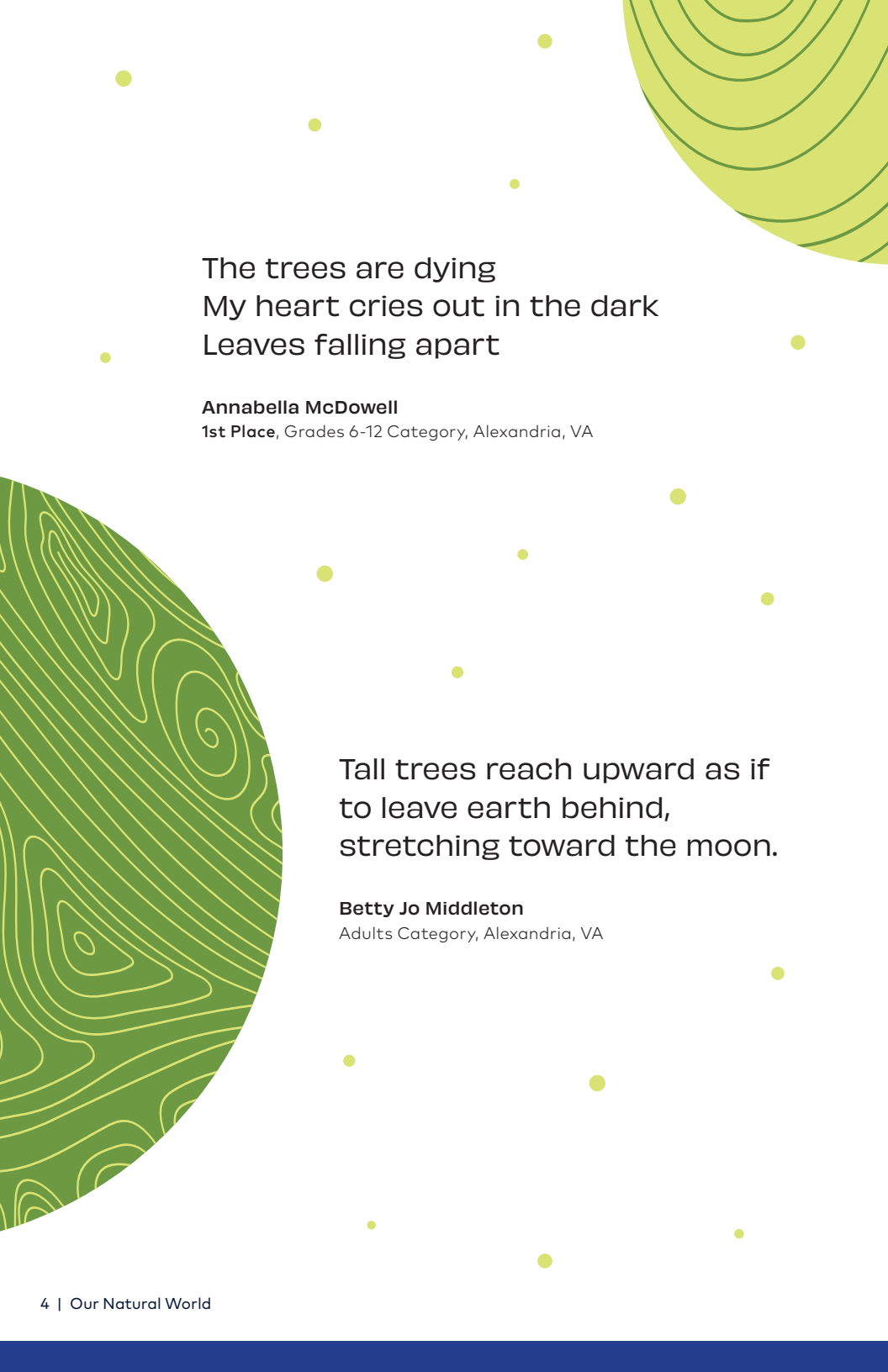
**Kathy Shuey**

**4th Place**, Adults Category, Alexandria, VA

Potomac sunrise,  
the Canada geese  
lift their heads

**Jonathan Lewis**

**Honorable Mention**, Adults Category, Alexandria, VA



The trees are dying  
My heart cries out in the dark  
Leaves falling apart


**Annabella McDowell**

1st Place, Grades 6-12 Category, Alexandria, VA

Tall trees reach upward as if  
to leave earth behind,  
stretching toward the moon.

**Betty Jo Middleton**

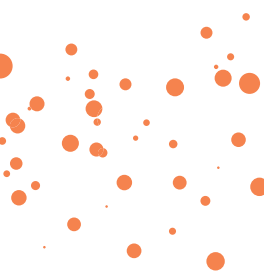
Adults Category, Alexandria, VA



Mountain peaks stand tall,  
Majestic earth guardians,  
Wisdom in their heights.

**Adrienne Moseley**

2nd Place, Grades 6-12 Category, Alexandria, VA



Sand — a thousand stars  
Glistening depths crash the earth  
Rays radiate joy

**Eliza Shearer**

Honorable Mention, Grades 6-12 Category, Alexandria, VA

Volcano explodes  
ash and dust engulf the sky  
Earth reclaims her land

**Laura Singer**

Adults Category, Washington, DC



Fish in the blue sea  
Swim fast! Hide in the coral!  
Here comes the gray shark

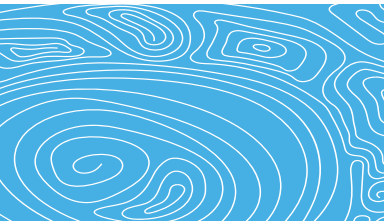
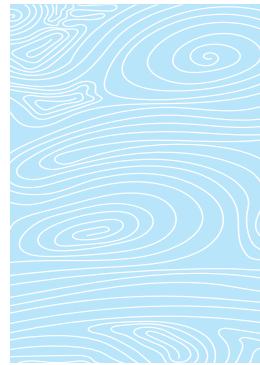
**Autumn Perry**

1st Place, Grades 1-5 Category, Alexandria, VA

Scurry little legs!  
Escape the encroaching wave  
Chase it back again!

**Sean Brown**

Adults Category, Alexandria, VA



Spiraling darkness  
The terrifying unknown  
The consuming depths

**Hanna Shearer**

Grades 6-12 Category, Alexandria, VA

Foxes run very fast  
Foxes eat a bunny so fast  
Animals die too

**Tazi O'Hair**

Honorable Mention, Grades 1-5 Category, Alexandria, VA

all traffic stopped—  
the box turtle takes his time  
on the hot pavement

**Deborah Finkelstein**

Adults Category, Alexandria, VA

A blue jay chose me  
Said I was part of its flock  
Showed me I could soar

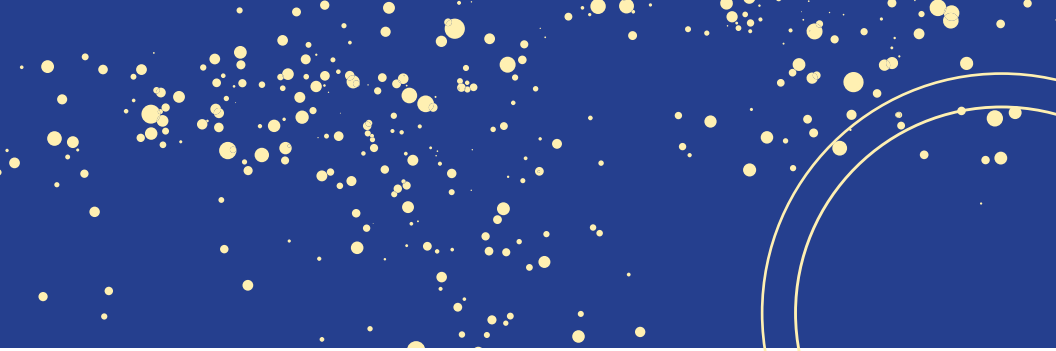
**Phallon Perry**

Adults Category, Alexandria, VA

Twinkle off and on!  
Harbinger of summer fun,  
How long can you stay?

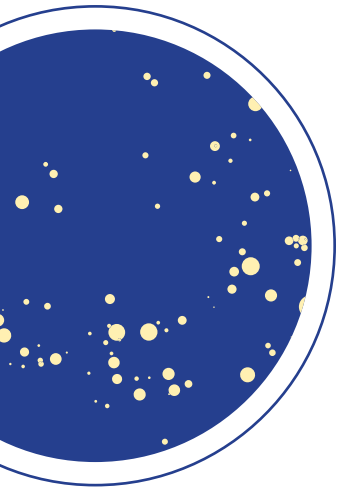
**Meg Melusen**

Adults Category, Berryville, VA



the still midnight air  
my white breath rises into  
the glittering black


**Michael Santos Sandoval**  
Adults Category, Springfield, VA



An eternity  
since last I saw the moon. Tell  
me, stars, she'll come home.

**Ariya Harrington**  
Grades 6-12 Category, Alexandria, VA

Moon rising above  
Reflecting bright on the bay  
Ships pass through the light



**Tracie Harris**  
Adults Category, Alexandria, VA



## **Select Resources to Learn about Haiku**

### **Books**

Jim Kacian, Philip Rowland, and Allan Burns, eds., *Haiku in English: The First Hundred Years*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, reprint edition 2016.

Jane Reichhold, *Writing and Enjoying Haiku: A Hands-on Guide*. Tokyo: Kodansha International, 2013.

### **Websites**

**Haiku Society of America**  
[www.hsa-haiku.org](http://www.hsa-haiku.org)

**The Haiku Foundation**  
[thehaikufoundation.org](http://thehaikufoundation.org)

**Haiku around the World**  
[thehaikufoundation.org/](http://thehaikufoundation.org/)  
[the-haiku-foundation-world-of-haiku](http://the-haiku-foundation-world-of-haiku)

**New to Haiku: Advice for Beginners – Lenard D. Moore**  
[thehaikufoundation.org/](http://thehaikufoundation.org/)  
[new-to-haiku-advice-for-beginners-lenard-d-moore](http://new-to-haiku-advice-for-beginners-lenard-d-moore)





