

Star Guide: Poetry contest for star gazers

"The Stars"

The stars reflected on water.

The ones above stood still.

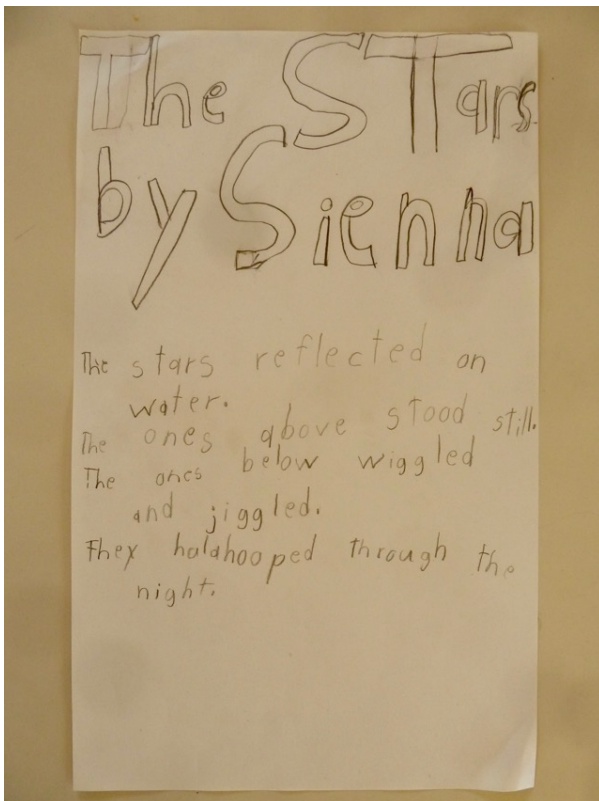
The ones below wiggled and jiggled.

They hulahooped through the night.

– Sienna Larrucea

By Tony Berendsen

This week marks the beginning of the 2017 Astro-Poetry contest and a call for poems. I couldn't think of a better way to announce this year's contest than to share "The Stars" by Sienna Larrucea.



She was a first-grader in Mrs. Fisher's class at Loyalton Elementary in Loyalton last year when she submitted a poem that won first place in the K-2 grade division. Her school webpage proudly displays captioned images of students, with my favorite stating, "learn to love, love to learn ... we rise above." I can't help but think she goes to a really great school.

The astro-poetry contest began seven years ago with the hope of inspiring young minds to think about the Earth as a place within the cosmos and share their thoughts through poetry. The contest is a creative exercise many teachers have adopted for writing classes, and many solo students from elementary to high school, private, public, and home school have entered too. Over the last six years we have received over 1,500 poems.

I have read all of the poems submitted. It's one of the many selfish things I cherish. The poems are from young minds imagining adventures in space, or honoring the beauty seen on a dark starry night, but some of them, like Sienna's poem, capture the youthful curiosity we have all experienced. It is that curiosity carried and nurtured through life that tends to reward our society with the great minds of scientists, doctors, and engineers that shape our future.

The contest rules are simple. All poems must be astronomy related, original, not longer than 20 lines, and only one entry per student. Poems are submitted by email to poems@tahoestartours.com. Include: name, address, phone number, school, and teacher's name. Submit poems in pdf or jpeg only. Poems must be received by midnight April 15 to be considered.

Poems are judged in three divisions: K-2, 3-6, and 7-12 grades. Winning poems will be announced on April 19 by email, and an award ceremony will be April 22 at the Terry Lee Wells Nevada Discovery Museum in Reno. Each winning poet receives a certificate and the opportunity to read their poem during the ceremony.

The winning poets also receive prizes. Celestron provides first and second place prizes of telescopes and binoculars for each division and Tahoe Star Tours provides tickets to the Dark Skies Cosmoarium at Northstar for third place. Poets need not be present to win.

I believe we are all poets in some way. Most of us don't take the time to write down the amazing moments we experience in life, but the few that do, and the few that decide to share with others document our humanity. I'm so excited to read the poems.

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