

Trenton Veterans Memorial Library
Proudly Presents



THE SPRING CREATIVE
WRITING

CONTEST

ADULT WINNERS 2024

Theme: Seeds



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Attention Local Writers: If you are interested in joining our monthly adult creative writing group, please contact Erin Chapman, Adult Services Librarian: EChapman@trenton-mi.com.

Thank you to the Friends of the Trenton Veterans Memorial Library for sponsoring this writing contest, including our Winning Writers Showcase on June 8, 2024, and the publication of this book! To learn how to join the Friends, please see our website: www.trenton.lib.mi.us/friends-of-the-library/become-a-member-1

Seeds by Threes by Erin Fedeson

I. A writer is a farmer

A writer is a farmer
With words the seeds he sows for
An abundant harvest soon.

Paper is his tilled soil,
Guiding his seeds with each row
Of a promising harvest.

Each field is nurtured sweetly
As each crop feeds readers' souls,
Cultivating their whole beings.

Oh vegetables, raw or cooked,
Grants knowledge by non-fiction
And honest logic and reason.

Oh, fruits are quite the range of
Sweet and sour as fiction
Nurtures imagination.

Oh, flowers feed the reader's
Mind with poetry's
Hues and musical delight.

A writer is a farmer
With words the seeds he sows for
An abundant harvest soon.



II. 'Tis a fact indeed

'Tis a fact indeed,
A writer's seeds only bloom beneath devoted care.

Yet 'tis a fact indeed,
Some scatter their seeds to the wind.

'Tis a fact indeed,
Others plant one seed at a time.

Yet 'tis a fact indeed,
Some walk away to let fate decide what sprouts.

'Tis a fact indeed,
Others diligently tend their precious seeds.

Yet 'tis a fact indeed,
Some claim the title of 'writer' but fail to harvest
their crops.

'Tis a fact indeed,
A writer's seeds only bloom beneath devoted care.



III. What are the seeds of stories?

What are the seeds of stories?

'Tis by words.

As word by word,

Do sentences grow.

Sentence by sentence,

Do images unfold.

Image by image,

Do emotions awake.

Emotion by emotion,

Do the stories bloom.



About the Author:

Erin Fedeson has been writing since her dad told her he was writing a book when she was in 4th grade. Since that day, her writing has transversed poetry, fanfiction, fantasy stories, feature articles, and informational pieces. All of her writing is driven by her wish to enlighten, entertain, and enrich her readers.



Seeds of Success

by Katie Amaradio-Taylor



Hands in soil, lugging bags of pine bark, and troweling my way through a tiny, but robust, garden seems to be both a key stress reliever and jubilant joy in my life. In Michigan, gardening is a window of wonder—soon after the frost lifts and the trees bud. The summer season is symbolic of hope and change, much like the fall, winter, and spring seasons in a school year. I appreciate both teaching and gardening; each starts with something small.

My 6th graders come to middle school with a tentativeness and nervous energy, but they soon find just how cared for they are in our building and in our reading and writing classroom. They show confidence and character when they feel both seen and heard. Before long, they burst out of their seats with a shared excitement for being in class. Students composed a gratitude journal earlier this year, and in one poem a student wrote about me being, “Supportive no matter what.” Even 19 years into this profession, those words hold an impact of what each student deserves—to be lifted, and what teachers want their students to recognize about our level of care and concern.

Books are seeds; they provide mirrors and windows to readers. They help young adults see their potential, compassion, and empathy. Literature takes them to new worlds, and it starts with a simple story. I observe my students as their writing advances because they have a “seed” of an idea. They write narratives, essays, comics, and poetry; they

encourage one another when they celebrate their work. We give compliments and tips as we grow in knowledge and experience. Together, we experiment with genres and writing techniques.

There is something so satisfying seeing my insignificant garden grow each May. Maybe it is because people stop on walks to admire the Michigan-shaped steppingstone, the beauty of the flowers, or little bigfoot staked in the ground purchased at a local art fair. Maybe they notice the various textures, color schemes, and the distinctive growth each time they pass. Maybe they see the labor of love that is involved in a successful spot for splendor. The months of July and August are a gardener’s reward in the Midwest. Much preparation goes into the thriving of nature in the months prior to these scorching ones. They are a time to unwind, regroup, and see the hard work pay off from the planting of the perennials and annuals, and the things that pop up as surprises from the animals that carried a seed along and left their footprint behind.

There are things that teachers see, hear, and experience in a school year that stays with them long after the year ends in mid-June. Moments and stressors are harbored in our brains, and we think about our “school kids” who leave a lasting impression on our hearts. Students have changed and grown throughout the year; finding their voice, or friendship, or an activity that suits them well. The months that follow June are indicative of all the hard work that the school year represents. They reflect the grit and dedication students have towards



reading. They hold the memories of “book trailer Tuesdays” and “first chapter Fridays” all school year long. During summer, as I shift my attention and energy to my own book-loving children, I read new releases to purchase for the classroom library the next year. When former students stop by the following fall to borrow a book off the shelf, I know they are continuing to sprout.

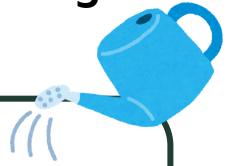
This gardening season, I plan to slow down, appreciate the nature that surrounds me: the birds chirping, basketballs bouncing in the distance, and children’s laughter nearby. As the school year concludes, I recall when a student said to me at the age of eleven, “I am not a reader yet, but I think this is my year.” This student went on to a prestigious high school program in 11th grade. That student was one seed in our classroom who recognized the potential of oneself. That student, like so many others, bloomed. I will reflect on the readers who leave our classroom, not as soon-to-be seventh graders, but as flourishing preteens. Like flowers, they have blossomed into the people they are meant to be. Through the nourishment of books and their own writing, students are rooted in their life gardens.

About the Author:

Katie Amaradio Taylor is a dedicated mom, wife, and middle school educator who finds joy in sharing her love of books with her students. Katie wrote “Seeds of Success,” as a heartfelt tribute intertwining her love for nurturing minds and plants alike. When not at the hockey rink or promoting literacy through her Instagram (@book_sandwiches), she enjoys time in her garden and taking walks with her husky.

Are You Ready for a New Beginning

by Judy Davis



When we think of a seed, it may remind us of a new beginning. Seeds are planted with the anticipation of hope for the future.

Seeds are a miracle. They can bring us beauty and joy. Each spring, we look forward to the beautiful colors welcoming us once more, as they have in the past. They are like old friends that we haven't see in a year, and we wait patiently for their arrival. We know exactly how the flowers will look. And yet the thrill of their arrival surprises us time and time again, just like the first time we saw them.

Seeds are predictable. We may take a picture every year of our lovely new flower garden, even though it really isn't noticeably any different. When we look deeply into a beautiful bouquet, we see so many intricate patterns. We wonder how can so many flowers from so many locations, all look absolutely identical? The pattern in each flower is spaced so exactly, that one would think it was mathematically measured.

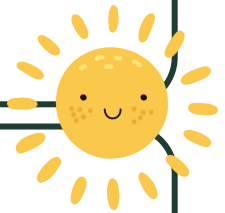
Nature gives us gifts every day. Often, we are so busy that we don't even notice these glorious gifts which are free and all around us. Such beautiful, bright colors and interesting patterns that could easily be missed with an interruption from a cell phone.



Now is your time to stop and take in the wonderful scent of the fragrant roses, lilacs, and many other flowers. If you are feeling overwhelmed at time, perhaps a stroll through nature, walking along with only your thoughts and no interruptions to distract you, could be the answer to your restless spirit.

To quote Pope Francis, "Rivers do not drink their own water; trees do not eat their own fruit; the sun does not shine on itself, and flowers do not spread their fragrance for themselves. Living for others is a rule of nature. We are all born to help each other, No matter how difficult it is ... Life is good when you are happy; but much better when other are happy because of you."

Let the gentle breeze, billowy clouds, warmth of the sun, and cleansing rain speak to you. Flowers are nature's wondrous gift. Their seeds blow from place to place, bringing comfort and joy to all who see them. So, don't let this opportunity pass you by. Begin today. Take that quiet walk through nature. Listen to the message in the songs of the birds, and the whisper of each breeze. Plant the seeds of kindness each day, and you will be blessed beyond measure. If everyone did this simple act, what a wonderful world this could be!



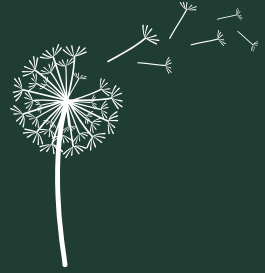
About the author:

Judy Davis has been a member of a writing group in Naperville, Illinois for almost 10 years. She grew up here, and now has returned to be close to family. Judy has five married children and 11 grandchildren who all live in Michigan. Her oldest daughter suggested that she enter the library's writing contest. Since writing is Judy's passion, she couldn't wait to get started!



Serenity

by George Valenta



Hatha Yoga compares itself to the dandelion

The golden sun of Ha is the blossom

The silver moon of Tha is the seeds

Each seed contains truth, beauty and hope

Each seedling bestows wisdom, love and faith

Thus the world appears over time

To be renewed in countless stands

Of peace and tranquility

About the Author:

George Valenta - age 91 - is a retired speech pathologist/audiologist in Ann Arbor. His poetry and photography are published in The Huron River Review. His photography is also featured in a brochure for River Raisin National Battlefield Park in Monroe. Mr. Valenta is currently seeking a publisher for his poetry.

The header features a white banner with a green border, set against a dark brown background. On either side of the banner are two green seed pods hanging from a branch. The banner contains the title 'Timelapse by Kaila Graham' in a bold, black, sans-serif font. There are also decorative patterns of small green dots on the banner.

Timelapse by Kaila Graham

These seeds are new to the world, young and vulnerable, and there are so many of them. A whole world of seeds suddenly here and all alone together. Scattered about in so many meadows. Thousands are lost to birds and rodents. If not eaten, the seeds may just burn in a high-noon sun or be buried alive under an early winter frost. There's not much time for a seed. There are so many ways that things can end before they even begin.

One Seed, either more self-involved or simply more aware than some others, wondered why they were made so weak. Such a little nothing. Just a seed, after all. The injustice of it all angered the Seed.

A change needed to come and one always will. So many of the others would simply lie around, waiting to be eaten or buried or to wither away. No waiting around to die for this Seed. But it's hard to make your own way in the world for a seed. The shell helped. It made the Seed stronger, harder to break. No bird beak or steep fall could get to the Seed now. Rodents couldn't pierce its shell with their jagged teeth. With this slim chance to be more than bird feed, the Seed saw the horizon of a new life and the Seed wanted more. It could want more, to be a part of something and do something. No, not just anything. Something big and beautiful, real and new. To do something with that potential that lived in those cracks and crevices. The Seed wanted a flower.

But first it had to move. The Seed couldn't grow, not here, not in the dust trap where it got its start. When you're a seed, you really can only go where the wind blows you and fortunately the Spring breezes were strong. Crisp morning wind snaps helped the Seed start its day tumbling over dry cracked earth and stumbling through tall grass. Things slowed down in the afternoon under the hot and stiff air. The buzzing flies and flying buzzards clouded the sky and honestly, they were really annoying. But the evenings! Oh, the evenings were perfect. The sky was quiet as it filled with blues, purples, and oranges of the setting sun. The air was cool and comforting. Rolling through that breeze felt like flying. It was a reminder that Nature was on the Seed's side, like it is for all seeds really. They make each other over and over, and help each other grow.

And that Nature was everywhere else too it seemed. There was so much to see out in the world! And just when the Seed thought they'd seen it all, there was even more. The rough bark of a tree agitated the Seed when it bumped into a trunk, but looking up the Seed saw an ocean of deep green leaves paint the sky. You don't want to get too up close and personal with a bird, but from afar and in a group their flight is a dance on the wind. It fed the Seed to be part of this world.

But the tour couldn't last forever and soon enough the Seed found just what it wanted: rich soil in a wide open field. So the Seed dug itself down, rested and allowed itself to grow strong for what would come. Who knew quite how longer this whole "changing yourself entirely" thing would take? So the Seed had a lot of time to think, to imagine, to dream.

Maybe the Seed would bring forth a vegetable or poisonous plant, something to feed or something to fear. Maybe there would be others, a whole family of seeds turned into something new.

In this limbo state everything was a little blurry and so soft. Everything seemed so possible with so much to wonder about and to hope for. The world was bursting at the seams with dreams. At the center of this swirl of new futures stood a flower, strong but cloaked in shadow. The Seed tried to crawl towards it. But remember, a seed can only get so far on its own.

—

What felt like an earthquake shook the Seed awake. Its strong shell burst open and out of the Seed's own body a green stem slithered out and out, pushing through the soil and toward the open air. The experience was like turning inside out, but luckily it was more surreal than painful. The pressure was overwhelming, too slow to really hurt but enough to give you time to think about the change that was to come.

There was really just a stem at first and the Seed was unsure. The stem was boring with just a green stalk and nothing special about it at all. Not the bright red petals of the roses that pierced the skyline or the rich purple of the pansies or the forget-me-nots with a blue so soft that it melts into the sky. Then tiny buds dotted along the stem and from the buds, leaves grew that ripped and stretched toward the sky. The leaves stacked on top of each other until they were strong enough and big enough to grow outward, creating a tower of foliage bursting proudly from the ground. It was a mesmerizing show, a dance in slow motion.

And this was only the warm-up to the main event. The star had arrived and was taking center stage. At long last, a flower bloomed. The Flower.

The Flower was vibrant and in love with the world, with the cycle of Nature of which it was now the center. The flower loved the sun. Its warmth surely, but more than anything its beauty and power. The sun's yellow was so bright and deep and warm. It was all the flower wanted and could ever want. The Flower kept its face tilted toward the sun to never miss a move made by the orb. This was a devotional love; the Flower would follow the sun always.

With this work done, the time for the Seed was over. The Seed had become strong, had made itself, and then made the flower. The Seed loved the Flower and loved itself for having made something so beautiful. Loved that the Flower's existence meant that they could rest finally beneath the cold, dark ground. Really the Seed was barely a seed anymore. It was more of a nub, just an open wound under the earth. Something that used to be from which something more interesting had grown.



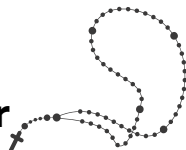
About the Author:



Kaila Graham is a native of the Downriver Michigan area who has been writing and reading as long as she can remember. Kaila's piece was inspired by the idea that in order to experience true transformation, even into something wonderful, that some other essential element must be left behind.

Henri's Beads

by Nancy Craanen Taylor



Henri's beads
Asian grain
Coix lacryma-jobi
Also known as
Job's tears
Food for many
But not for Henri
Planted not in his garden
Where vegetables grew
Planted not by his
driveway
Home of snapdragons
And moss roses
Instead
Planted by his old brick
barbeque
Grown each year from
seed
Harvested and dried
Grain became bead
Jewelry findings
A crucifix
And his beads
Became a rosary

One, two, three
Then hundreds
Of rosaries
Given to family
Given to friends
Donated to his church
Sold at their festivals
Henri is long gone now
Gone for almost sixty years
But
His legacy carries on
In memories and hearts
And in the rosaries
Made from the beads
He grew from seeds

About the Author:

Nancy loves reading both fiction and nonfiction and is an avid genealogist. About ten years ago, she began writing about her family's history. The poem about her grandfather she wrote for this contest may be the first poem she's written since she was a student at Trenton's Anderson Elementary School.

A Fruitful Heart

by Lauren Woolford

The potential of life is held in a seed, waiting to be watered and grow into the soil surrounding it. Seeds are often scattered but not every seed takes root. If the soil is hard, or rocky, or parched, life cannot be born.

I desire to have a heart that welcomes the life each seed contains. A heart soft enough to cultivate roots and consistently be watered with love. A heart that produces fruit used to feed others. But a heart full of stones cannot bear fruit, and what a heavy heart to carry.

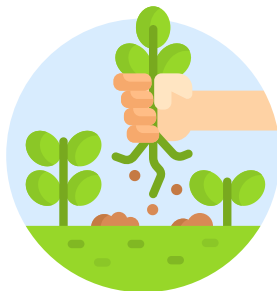
Everyone carries a garden, a foundation of soil that was created to bear fruit. Fruit of joy, kindness, love, and truth. Many of us have hardened over time, lacking water, gathering stones, a place that no seed can flourish. We were created with the desire for life, seeking seeds of truth and the living water, but often carry desolate hearts. We desire fruit but produce weeds. We need consistent water but experience a downpour followed by a drought. How do we cultivate the garden of our hearts?



Imagine a field, covered in bright green grass, with a patch of soil in the middle. There are rows of fruit planted in the garden, a variety of plants. There is a line of raspberry bushes with bright red fruit weighing down the leaves. In the next row, a line of blueberry bushes that are just starting to bud with small white flowers growing from the green leaves. At the end of the blueberry patch, there is a small blackberry bush that has just been harvested leaving the green leaves empty. In the last patch, there are strawberries and tomatoes planted, shining bright red with the sun beaming down on them. A beautiful and healthy garden, full of life, ready to be harvested. Many of us desire to live a life full of fruit that radiates beauty but a garden like this isn't grown over night.

Every garden needs a gardener. Someone to lay the seeds, water the soil, pull the weeds, remove the stones, and break up the hard soil. From the surface anyone can see the state of the crop, if it is withering or if it is thriving, but the real insight is often found when digging into the soil. A seed cannot flourish in parched soil and a foundation that has not been cared for does not yield crops. So, look for a gardener to prepare soil that welcomes seeds of truth and love leading to an abundant harvest. Look to the One who knows love, the One who is love, the One who placed the soil in your heart Himself. He knows the intention behind His creation.

What has taken root in your heart? The first clue to what type of seed has been planted is the fruit it has produced. Nourishing fruit can look like joy, love, kindness, hope, peace, or truth. Damaging weeds often look like bitterness, anger, envy, or selfishness. I have had some weeds in my own life, and I had to dig into the soil to find the true source of these weeds. Because if a weed is pulled from the surface, it grows back, it needs to be pulled out at the root. I have found weeds of bitterness towards those I love because they have something I so desperately desire, and weeds of anger directed towards someone who has hurt me. Weeds are just as damaging to the one who holds them as they are to the one who receives them. Sometimes the fear of weeds can lead to a fear of allowing anything to take root in our hearts. The softening from vulnerability becomes associated with pain. So, over time, our soil becomes hardened, and our garden becomes neglected. But I would rather have a heart full of fruit that I have to weed, than a vacant heart that never knows life.



The only good thing about hardened soil is it protects the garden from danger. But hardening typically comes from fear, the fear of being soft enough to allow anything or anyone to reach the foundation. The deeper we go the more we uncover. But not everyone wants to go deep, not everyone is willing to uncover what lies deep in the heart. So, we choose the safe option, we harden. We only let things form at the surface and we never experience the depth with which we were created. There's a reason the ground is a lot deeper than an inch. Seeds need depth to take root and there is a vast depth to be uncovered. It is such a loss when we choose safety out of fear instead of risk out of wonder. You were created to cultivate deep roots that produce beautiful fruit.

Guarding your heart can be wise in some instances. It is important to guard your fruit from those who take without consideration or permission. Giving the little you have can often leave you empty handed. But after all, fruit was meant to be consumed, and a blossoming garden produces more fruit than one person can eat alone. Discerning when to put up a fence and when to let others pick from your garden is a difficult task, a balance that no one has quite perfected, but how beautiful to have a heart of giving that is fruitful enough to match the desire.

Welcome the One who knows the depth of heart. Let Him search the foundation, bring rocks to the surface, and pull out the weeds that run deep. He is gentle and He is faithful. Let Him water your soil and soften it over time. Seek the seeds that will flourish into fruit and use your fruit to feed others. These things lead to an abundant life and an overflowing heart.

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful." (John 15:5)



About the author:

I have recently grown a passion for writing and love writing faith based pieces. I work a typical 9-5 but the dream is to do something I'm passionate about (which could a variety of things)! Also, I love learning about health and wellness while still enjoying the sweet treats of life.



Seeds We Plant

by Christy Granger



"Jaxon get over here. You are in big trouble!" His mom was terribly upset with his latest stunt. "Mr. Harrison just called, and you have detention tomorrow. Jaxon you are grounded!" "Mom it wasn't my fault Dwayne was being a jerk." "I do not care, give me your phone!" "This is not fair," Jaxon says!

Jaxon walked into detention upset he was in there. "Dwayne should be the one in there not me!" As smart as Jaxon was, he was always a little rebellious. Just ask his older brother Mark. Jaxon always stood out in the crowd with his red hair and freckles. Mark had a different dad. He was taller and cooler than Jaxon ever was. Jaxon lost his father four years ago and eighth grade was hard with a new stepdad.

"Sit down Jaxon." I am not thrilled I had to stay over today. Mr. Harrison usually went a little easier on him than he should have. He took pity on him because his dad died. Always trying to come off as stern but it usually failed ten minutes in. "It is time to do your homework." Jaxon sat in silence until he got home.

His mom asked him to help her plant the garden as part of his punishment. She hands him a handful of different seeds. He grumpily gets up and grabs the bags of dirt. His mom grabs a few pots and some digging tools. He is sweating and tired. This is the worst punishment ever, he thinks. He will do it, so he does not have to deal with his stepdad. His mom went in, he had six pennies in his pocket. He threw them into the dirt. Pennies are worthless to an eighth grader.

"Jaxon what is this?" "I do not know mom. I planted what you wanted!" "No really look at this. I have never seen anything like this." It stood much taller than the other plants. It had a golden tint in spots. Hmm this is extremely weird, but everyone just let it grow to see what it was.

"No way," he could not believe his eyes. The plant was growing money. "Mom come look at this now!" She could not believe their good fortune. "We will have to protect this. Someone will steal it." She transplanted it into the back yard and put a fence around it. "Jaxon how did this happen? I threw my pennies on the ground. This tree has dollar bills. I wonder if you put more change down if we can make more trees?" So, he tries it out and sure enough, the largest has \$100 bills. So many bills were on the trees. \$1, \$5, \$10, \$20 even \$50. "Tell no one," his mom says!

Jaxon got greedy and took a hefty sum of money off the trees for himself. They were his trees, right? About time he got something good in life. He bought himself new clothes, a phone, video games. He got his family not one gift. His mom discovered what he had done, and she is incredibly angry. "What? We can just plant more trees," he said. "Jaxon, I was going to use that money to help this family. We could use the help, but you spent it all on yourself!"

Jaxon finally realized his wrongs and planted the whole back yard full of trees. This was every person's fantasy. He held the key to it. The trees must be protected but he decided to use them for good and help other people. He wanted to do it anonymously. He donated money to the food pantry, to the homeless and he mostly flew under the radar. Until one day when someone saw him. It seemed like gobs of money for an eighth grader. The man followed him and discovered the money trees. He wanted for himself, just like Jaxon. He did not understand the gift that was in front of him. Greed was ruining everyone's shot at getting help. Was he going to take the trees at night?



The seeds we plant come back to us. If you plant a bad seed, it will not grow. It is up to us what we will do with our seeds. Sometimes we are given duds, which will never grow due to circumstances beyond our control. We must decide the kinds of seeds we want to be. They call it "bad seed" for a reason! Either you will be bad or good and there is no in between.

About the Author:



Christy embarked on her journey into book creation, discovering a passion for writing along the way. Reflecting on her work, she states, "I sought to challenge myself," highlighting her commitment to growth and creativity in her writing pursuits.

Trenton Veterans Memorial Library extends its heartfelt gratitude to the judges of this contest: Carol Colbert, Craig Hutchison, Peter Markus, and Jean Scheffler. We deeply appreciate these local authors for generously donating their time and energy. Thank you for your invaluable contributions!

Please revisit us in the Spring of
2025 for the second annual Creative
Writing Contest for Adults!



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