

*To Walk
in Different Shoes*



Winning Poems

*From the 26th Annual
John Gardiner Poetry Contest*

*Courtesy of
Friends of the Laguna Beach Library*

Front Cover Image: Shutterstock

Dedicated to the memory of



John Abbot Gardiner

Photo courtesy of Mary Hurlbut, used with permission.

John Abbot Gardiner 1947 - 2017

John Gardiner was born in Hawthorne, California, and was proud to be a fifth generation Californian. He studied at UC Irvine where he received a BA in theater arts and he was an early cast member at South Coast Repertory Theatre in Costa Mesa. He lived in New York for several years, where he pursued his acting career. John loved acting in Shakespeare's plays. He appreciated the complexity of the language and, much to the delight of those who knew him, could recite passages and speeches from numerous plays from memory.

John was a long-time resident of Laguna Beach and was widely appreciated as a poet, actor, teacher, and raconteur extraordinaire. He read at numerous venues throughout Southern California and was invited to read his poems in Prague, St. Petersburg, and Rio de Janeiro and especially treasured the invitation to read in Ireland, home of the Gardiner clan.

John was the much-beloved leader of the Laguna Poets Workshop for the last 15 years and emceed the library's Annual Poetry Contest for many years. He was working on his 13th collection of poems when he died on October 24, 2017.

– Ann Brillhart and the Laguna Poetry Workshop

Mike Sprake

Master of Ceremonies

Reading of Winning Poems, June 1, 2024



Mike Sprake was born in Winchester, England. He studied at Winchester College of Art (1966-67) and studied sculpture at St Martin's College of Art, London, under the tutelage of many 'New Generation' sculptors (1967-70). He went on to study and make Lutes for some of the renowned lutenists of the time including Anthony Rooley and Nigel North.

He has been involved with painting and writing since living in the USA, over forty years ago, and is a member of the Laguna Poetry Workshop. He has poems published in anthologies by Tebot Bach and Moontide Press. His studio is waiting for his creative presence for poetry, painting, and sculpture.

Poetry in all its guises, as many know, runs through cultures and societies dating back to ancient times.

Its use of words is different from every language where words explain ideas in a logical way.

Words are the material of poetry along with punctuation and line breaks which the poet uses as though they were notes in music or paint on an artist's palette, enabling them to delve into feelings and thoughts that cannot necessarily be expressed in logical ways.

To quote Robert Frost, 'A complete poem is where an emotion finds the thought and the thought finds the words.'

Poems may not be able to be 'explained' away, because the arrangement and rhythm in the poem may well take the reader into realms of feelings that defy explanation, and each reader will have their own interpretation.

And so, we come to this year's theme 'To Walk in Different Shoes'. If I may be so bold as to say, that when we read a poem, we are as it were, stepping into the shoes of the poet, then walking or perhaps dancing in the world that arises, gleaning whatever images and sensations are conjured in our own hearts and minds.

Poetry offers us the freedom to slip into the shoes of blue or red, the sound of clarinet, caw of crow, not to mention the person right next to you, if you care to take a stroll in their miraculous world.

Mike Sprake
June 2024

26th Annual John Gardiner Poetry Contest Winners

Adult

1st Place:

Rina Palumbo

Other Shoes

2nd Place:

Nick Stephen

To walk in different shoes or maybe no shoes at all

3rd Place (tie):

Debby Arrin

The Estate Sale

3rd Place (tie):

Ameilia Itnyre

Spirit's Shoes

Ninth – Twelfth Grade

1st Place:

Ari Tran

a sort of adolescent experience

2nd Place (tie):

Kirra Holmes

To Walk in Another's Shoes

2nd Place (tie):

Skylar DiMaggio

To Walk in Different Shoes

3rd Place (tie)

Sydney Schaarsmith

In the Green Room

3rd Place (tie)

Lili Bazargan

The Hurricane

Sixth – Eighth Grade

1st Place:

Isabella Lin

Song of the Lonely Iceberg

2nd Place:

Jubilee Sung

Sun Among Suns

3rd Place (tie):

Ms. Laura Silver's 8th grade advisement class

To Walk in Different Shoes

3rd Place (tie):

Maryam Khazabian

To Walk in Different Shoes

3rd Place (tie):

Ariel Mualim

Soleful Stories

Preschool – Second Grade

1st Place:

Savin Tran

Moon's Eclipse

2nd Place:

Aria Shen

The Wonderful Princess

3rd Place:

Lochlan Weil

I Am The Chromebook

Adult: 1st place



Rina Palumbo

Other Shoes

I walked in my grandmother's shoes, heels worn, a broken lace
Where are you going? She asked once as I stepped out to her garden,
the rain had stopped,
the sun made diamonds on all the green and growing things
and tried to love the tomatoes and basil and zucchini as much as she did

My father's shoes never fit; he laughed at my attempt to walk
in the heavy brown leather, in the thick black soles, in the footsteps only he
took
to the factory floor and back
I never took that path
but I felt their warmth

My mother's shoes were different; she had two pairs
One for farm labor, for factory work, for cleaning hotels and banquet halls
And her favorite, kept in the box, black slingbacks, open-toed for
mass, and weddings and communions and confirmations and funerals
When I tried them on, those favorite shoes, they marked different places
To go and to be

Where am I going?
To other places
But it was those other shoes
that showed me how
to walk the same earth
And feel the same sun.

Adult: 2nd place

Nick Stephen

To walk in different shoes or maybe no shoes at all

Our father

Who flows heavily sessions

Hollow be the wave

When the surf grows everybody know when it's their time for a glorious situation

Give us this day our daily waves

And forgive us our hops as we forgive those who hop us

Lead us not into the jagged reef

But deliver us from the barrel

For there's a beach break and a point break to be ripping forever

Amen.

Adult: 3rd place (tie)



Debby Arrin
The Estate Sale

I am drawn to the estate sale
Not to buy your shoes, but to walk in them.
as a requiem for you and your life.
You deserve to be honored. You lived a life and any life is a win.

From what I can see
Dog-eared cookbooks, gift wrap and bows, a slightly melted scoop, and
crusty Crockpot,
You served and cared for many.

You traveled. Or read about travel. Your bookcase is full of adventure.
Your den walls are decked with maps. Maybe this olivewood bowl is from
Greece?
This bamboo basket from Taiwan?

From your closet, I guessing, you were cold a lot lately. Wool sweaters and
heavy jackets abound.
There is a heater in the corner and three handmade afghans draped over
three easy chairs.

But you did get outside sometime, I can see, to your once -tended garden,
now neglected. I'm sorry.
I will buy your Peace Lilly. I will revive it and keep it in memory of you.

Adult: 3rd place (tie)



Ameilia Itnyre
Spirit's Shoes

What's your name?
Spirit
Where are your shoes, Spirit?
I don't know!
The man sobbed
Like a child,
Looked up
With
Lost eyes
Where was he?
Somebody stole them
My backpack too
They took everything
And I didn't have nothing
To begin with
Okay, Spirit
You look sunburnt
Do you want some water?
Some sunscreen?
I want my life back!
Why don't we start
With some water,
And some shoes.

Ninth – Twelfth Grade: 1st place

Ari Tran

a sort of adolescent experience

happy the clown wore a blue
checkered gown and bowtie

far too small for his body
he owned a pair of shoes

with a similar type of humor
two or three sizes too large

he tripped to the beat of a
marching tune, arms akimbo

strategically-placed banana
peels more green than yellow

waits till the day he'd grown up
just enough so the shoes didn't

slip off during the steps

Ninth – Twelfth Grade: 2nd place (tie)



Kirra Holmes

To Walk in Another's Shoes

The world is so big with so many people.
I believe most are good and I know all are made equal.

I think diversity and acceptance run deeper than skin,
I believe it's who you are and the person within.

Some are loud and like to talk,
some are quiet and prefer their thoughts.

Some are tall, some are short.
Some like art while others prefer sports.

They all believe in different things,
they have their own thoughts and many feelings.

We all have different passions and perspectives and personality,
and appreciating these differences is to value originality.

With so many types of people in this world of ours,
seeing eye to eye may sometimes be hard.

I think despite differences love will someday succeed,
If for now we all learn how to plant its seed.

I hope someday all these things will be true but for that to happen we all
must learn to walk in another's shoes.

Ninth – Twelfth Grade: 2nd place (tie)



Skylar DiMaggio

To Walk in Different Shoes

This place feels so strange,
like somewhere I don't know.
I want to go home,
yet it won't let me go.
A sense of despair
gets stuck in my way.
As I walk this site,
I see clouds of gray.
This forgotten place,
that no one goes to see,
hidden from the world,
is this reality?
So full but empty,
not a house in sight.
People crammed together,
surviving with all their might.
Hunger spreading rampant,
like it has two feet.
Families losing hope,
these people must eat.
Home to these people
Is the frozen ground
The thought is bone-chilling
No warmth can be found.
My heart is beating with empathy, as a change must be made for all to see.

Ninth – Twelfth Grade: 3rd place (tie)

Sydney Schaarsmith
In the Green Room

Wade in a river of memories; come
Walk the mirage that glides through spread fingers.
True visage must maintain no guise, so from
The bottom of the throat, voice what lingers.

Resolve to surrender to the moment:
Sew the seams between histories and dreams.
Live countless lives, glorious and content.
This thrumming heart exhumes what's real, what gleams.

For want of grief, let the grave pasts arise;
Of bliss, glimpse the sun's guided beam anew.
Earth's a canvas before prismatic eyes,
Which always seek to translate ink to hue.

To see through the eyes of the wise and wild
Is the proudest burden of 'Thespis' child.

Ninth – Twelfth Grade: 3rd place (tie)



Lili Bazargan
The Hurricane

Before the hurricane it was good
life was simple, after all
I had only read the opening chapters
The girl ran through the meadows, without seeing the thorns
She danced in the rain, without fear of the lightning
When the clouds rolled in, she kept her head down
When her heart told her to take shelter, she ignored it
but the birds were in the trees and the cows had laid to rest
The girl didn't know what hit her but when it hit, it felt like there was
nothing left,
Nothing left to salvage.

When the wind tossed her into the roses, this time she felt the thorns
When the rain drowned her in its fury, the lightning electrocuted her soul
The girl drank the rain until the ground beneath her was dry
She didn't want to face the destruction, so she pushed it inside
When it became suffocating, she let the valve explode
the rain flowed out her eyes, her ears, her nose
She felt every cell in her body scream in vain
But the tears she cried brought her back to life
She could finally utter her name.

The hurricane left scars but they no longer hurt
they remind her of her strength
The hurricane may have torn her down
but she was the one who dug herself out of her grave.

Sixth – Eighth Grade: 1st place



Isabella Lin

Song of the Lonely Iceberg

In honor of the artists and scientists turning iceberg sounds into music

Because it's our nature to ignore good advice
To feel helpless when confronted with the world's vice

A group of scientists and musicians decided to turn our melting glaciers
into art

Don't you think this idea is smart?

Although this music sounds like magic
This art is also, to me, quite tragic

For in their voices of melting ice
Is contained the message of all the world's vice

It's man who is causing this tragic melt
We fail to consider how the icebergs felt

We forgot polar bears need ice to feed
How can we deny them this primal need?

When confronted with mass faceless tragedy, we become numb
Which is why we need to tell the story of one

One heroic iceberg singing its death in the sea
Although it never committed a crime against you and me

In Antarctica, there are icebergs that are a million years old
That were here before the dinosaurs and marigolds

Even though we humans have been here for only a blink of the eye
We've managed to make beautiful and ancient things die

So the next time you think you just have to buy that thing
Remember the lonely iceberg as it sings

Sixth – Eighth Grade: 2nd place



Jubilee Sung
Sun Among Suns

She used to think
That there was only one story
Hers
That she was the sun
And everyone else, planets
orbiting around her in the black void
It wasn't until
the black void swallowed her
And there were no planets left
That she realized casting herself as the only one who mattered
Had made her alone

Outside the void, she rippled past planets
And saw they were suns
That all along she had been a sun among suns

If only she had seen their light before
She could have magnified it
Instead of dancing in the shadows
Alone

Sixth – Eighth Grade: 3rd place (tie)



**Ms. Laura Silver's 8th Grade
Advisement Class**
To Walk in Different Shoes

Blistering and bellowing
We feel the pain of
everyone.

Flip-flops fly too close to the sun.

Ski boots tumble down the run.

Clogs slip and crack, ruining all the fun.

Stilettos allow one step and you're done.

Fins burn the toes like stinging poison.

Waders and boots smell only like chum.

Ballet slippers peel skin like an onion.

Sneakers have holes and laces undone.

Cleats after a loss weigh almost a ton.

Walking in other's shoes,
We feel the pain of everyone.

Sixth – Eighth Grade: 3rd place (tie)

Maryam Khazabian
To Walk in Different Shoes

They're dying and crying and barely surviving while you have a roof and a
bed
If you're bored, play a game! Every day is the same, you've always been
happy and fed
But she tears through the hospital not knowing if her loved one is living or
dead
You've never worked hard, not a day in your life, you've always been able to
rest
But he goes to work knowing that every day of his life will be nothing but
piles of stress
I don't know your information, situation, or occupation
All I know is this:
Every once in a while when you're feeling the blues
Try walking around in those people's shoes

Sixth – Eighth Grade: 3rd place (tie)



Ariel Mualim
Soleful Stories

In beat-up sneakers, worn every day
Flaunting a worn out Nike display
Each step a word in my life story
From my moments of sadness, to joy, to glory

In shiny, black flats, elegant and all
Complete my concert outfit as I stand tall
In front of a crowd, an audience for me
Nervous, but full of jubilation and glee

In leather boots, sturdy and strong
Marching with confidence through a throng
Leaving a mark on the world left behind
Unbreakable are the shoes well designed and refined

In striking heels, a graceful queen
Poised and proper, tranquil and serene
With every click and clack, the world takes heed
The flower of grace showers hopeful seeds

With bare feet touching the earth's embrace
Allowing flexible movement with pride and grace
Attached to the wonders of the wild
Liberated from society like a free child

To walk in different shoes is a gift indeed
Each pair reveals a different need
Yet in their diversity, we find our way
Through every step, come what may

Preschool – Second Grade: 1st place

Savin Tran
Moon's Eclipse

footprints on the moon
stay there for thousands of years
one day
i will visit the moon myself
leave my boots there too

Preschool – Second Grade: 2nd place



Aria Shen
The Wonderful Princess

I **W**onder **W**hat it's like to be a **W**onderful princess?
I bet she lives in a big castle in **W**atermelon kingdom.
She is **W**ay too excited because she lives in a castle.
She **W**ears a dress and a crown with shoes that have **W**hirly swirls.

Preschool – Second Grade: 3rd place

Lochlan Weil
I Am The Chromebook

I am going to be a Chromebook
I get to play games when I am off
And when I am on sometimes people scoff
That's because I'm so fun and they are hooked

The Annual John Gardiner Poetry Contest
is made possible through the generosity of:

Friends of the Laguna Beach Library:

<i>Karyn Philippsen</i>	<i>President</i>
<i>Justin Myers</i>	<i>Vice President</i>
<i>Susan Kent</i>	<i>Treasurer</i>
<i>Angela Irish</i>	<i>Secretary</i>
<i>Jackie Hall</i>	<i>Book Shop Manager</i>
<i>Simone Adams</i>	<i>Board Member</i>
<i>Helena Hounsel</i>	<i>Board Member</i>
<i>Sandra Hovanesian</i>	<i>Board Member</i>
<i>Ellen Girardeau Kempler</i>	<i>Board Member</i>
<i>Karl Koski</i>	<i>Board Member</i>
<i>Chip Lydick</i>	<i>Board Member</i>
<i>Owen Orgill</i>	<i>Board Member</i>
<i>Valerie Schimel</i>	<i>Board Member</i>
<i>Lynne Shain</i>	<i>Board Member</i>
<i>Kim Shields</i>	<i>Board Member</i>
<i>Andre Shields</i>	<i>Board Member</i>

*We look forward to your participation
in next year's
27th Annual John Gardiner
Poetry Contest.*

Booklet and Prizes
Courtesy of
Friends of the Laguna Beach Library
and Glenda & Patrick Curran
2024

