

Poetry Ourselves

Utah's Original Poetry Writing Competition

For 9-12 Grade Students

2026 Honorees



1st Place – English Language Poetry

Elli Douglas

Liberty University Online Academy



“Teen girls”

and

“They mock poetry”



1st Place – Spanish Language Poetry

Nicole Guzman

Olympus High School



“El idioma de las lágrimas”

(“The language of tears”)



Runner Up – English Language Poetry

May Obermark

Rowland Hall



“WHAT SIGHTS”

and

“I FELL IN LOVE WITH THE STARVED
DOG IN BALTIMORE”

Runner Up – Spanish Language Poetry

Andrea Vallejos

Olympus High School



“Como me dueles, Perú”

(“Oh, how you wound me, Peru.”)

**First Place Entry
Poetry in English
Elli Douglas**

Poem #1

Teen girls

By Elli Douglas

27% sip from the cup of addiction,
15% succumb to the lure of numbing prescription.
18% smoke for peace they've never seen.
21% inhale a synthetic dream.

20% find pain in pixels,
people's words firing like missiles.
17% their voices muted,
school once safe, is now polluted.

And in the quiet confessions of the night,
18% of girls bear the scars of unspeakable touch,
Their innocence stolen, their trust shattered,
Silenced by the shame society deems too much.

In these numbers lies a story untold,
because these aren't just mere percentages,
or statistical frames.
For within each digit lies a soul,
A journey, a struggle, a name.

First Place – Poetry in English - Poem #2

They mock poetry

By Elli Douglas

they mock poetry,
mock the words,
call it useless,
call it weak.

yet there's an author in all of us
a storyteller,
a dreamer,
a voice that begs to be heard.

we all want to make beauty out of our pain,
to turn the cracks in our hearts
into stained glass windows,
to spill what aches onto the page
and watch it take shape,

something we can hold,
something we can name.

they mock what they don't understand,
but still, they hum to the rhythm of their own thoughts,
spin their scars into songs.
and isn't that poetry, too?

there's no shame in the art of survival,
no weakness in the act of creation.
to write is to heal,
to speak is to live.

First Place Entry
Poetry in Spanish
Nicole Guzman

with English Translation by Manuel Aaron Garcia

“El idioma de las lágrimas”

By Nicole Guzman

Una lágrima se convierte en otra,
y de repente está llorando por todo lo que su corazón ha guardado en silencio
Llora por la familia que nunca quiso entenderla,
por la escuela que no la deja descansar,
por el cuerpo que ella nunca aprendió a amar.
por su mente que no la deja en paz
Ella llora, por sentirse como
una extraña dentro de su propia piel,
por los amigos que se alejaron sin mirar atrás,
por los errores que no puede perdonar.
Ella llora por el futuro que la asusta,
por los sueños que se sienten muy lejos de alcanzar,
por la niña dentro de ella
que aún espera sentirse suficiente y amada.
Ella no solo está llorando,
ella está contando cada parte de su vida
en cada lágrima, sin ser escuchada,
porque cada vez que intenta hablar,
las palabras se le rompen en la garganta,
y el corazón una vez más habla por ella.

“The Language of Tears”

by Nicole Guzman

Translation by Manuel Aaron Garcia

One tear turns into another,
and suddenly she weeps
for all her heart has kept in silence.
She weeps for the family
that never sought to understand her,
for the school that grants her no rest,
for the body she never learned to love,
for the mind that leaves her no peace.
She weeps, for feeling like a stranger
inside her own skin,
for the friends who drifted away
without looking back,
for the mistakes she cannot forgive.
She weeps for the future that terrifies her,
for the dreams that feel too distant to reach,
for the little girl inside her
who still waits to feel she is enough, and loved.
She is not merely crying,
she is recounting every piece of her life in every tear,
completely unheard,
for every time she tries to speak,
the words shatter in her throat,
and her heart, once again, speaks for her.

Runner Up Entry
Poetry in English
May Obermark

Poem #1

WHAT SIGHTS

by May Obermark

After the Georgia school shooting
–the only because it had been hours since it happened,
in a year it would only be a Georgia school shooting–
I was crying in my living room because I couldn't understand
my precalculus homework, and because my brother
was listening to “Make me an Angel”
loud enough to shake the metacarpal bones that held my pencil.
My bright red iced tea was leaving a bloody ring
on our antique table, and my father was telling me
I should just cheat to keep up my grades.
Three months ago I had been running away from home
as fiercely as possible, because I hadn't yet learned
that monsters are everywhere, and that bad things just happen
to people, even the people you love very much.
I asked my mother if she wanted me
to turn off the light when I went to leave the room.
She had quit being a school teacher years ago
and liked to make jokes when I cried to get me to stop.
“How will I see?”—Why would you want to?
I thought about the kid in my grade who stole my glue stick,
and how he was only fourteen, and I how I hoped
no one would ever let him be monstrous
or dead.

I FELL IN LOVE WITH THE STARVED DOG IN BALTIMORE

by May Obermark

Tell me about the brother that wants to kill you.
Tell me about the young dead mother
and the father that was gone,
whose skeleton you crawled inside
just to scrape justice off his bones.
I thirst for your blood idiot,
I'll chew the texture out of your scars
until they're soft again,
I'll pull out the teeth sharpened
by chewing on rocks.
You struggled to survive? Who didn't? You're not special for living,
you're special because I love you,
so damp down your claws, wash off the blood,
doubt that the world does hate you.
You and your heavy teeth,
you war-hardened boy, take
off the armor and the hilt,
it's too heavy, you're tipping the bed,
I can't sleep with the weight of your fear next to me.
I don't know how to make you feel safe
or how much gauze is packed into your body
to make you seem whole. Someone
should have told you by now that love isn't meant to be
a falling-into-the-knife sensation.

Runner-Up Entry

Poetry in Spanish

Andrea Vallejos

with English Translation by Manuel Aaron Garcia

“Como me dueles, Perú”

by Andrea Vallejos

“Como me dueles, Perú”.

Palabras que jamás imaginé pronunciar, ay, como me dueles, Perú.

El país que moldeó mi niñez, que sembró raíces en mi alma,

aqueel que llevo en mi corazón, sin importar la distancia.

Mi Perú, ¿qué te pasó? ¿Quién te entregó en manos del infierno?

¿Quién te hizo creer que mereces vivir arrodillado ante la injusticia? Atacan a los pobres, a los que “no importan”, atacan a los trabajadores,

a mi familia, a mis amigos, atacan a los míos.

Los taxistas advierten con miedo: “No se siente a mi costado, señito, la pueden matar.” A

eso hemos llegado: conductores de buses escriben en sus parabrisas “Mi familia me espera en casa”, suplicando regresar con vida. Rogando que la ignorancia y la avaricia no

les arrebatte el mañana.

Gente corrupta se llena los bolsillos de dinero,

mientras deja derramar la sangre del pueblo en las calles.

Perú, ¡cuánto me dueles!

me nublas los ojos de lágrimas, me ahogas el alma con impotencia. Saber que la gente inocente muere por no poder pagar su derecho a respirar. Los muertos no deberían ser los que trabajan por un plato de comida,

sino los que matan sin culpa, los que tiran del gatillo creyendo que la vida es un juego.

Vacados de humanidad, con libertad condicionada y manos ensangrentadas, te siguen llamando blanquiroja, pero ya casi no queda blanco... solo el rojo del dolor que no cesa.

Y aun así, entre el humo y la sangre, el cielo escucha el clamor del pueblo que no se rinde,

Dios levantará a los que luchan con el alma encendida,

protegerá a los que mueren por libertad y unión,

y hará temblar a quienes vendieron su hermosa nación.

“Oh, how you wound me, Peru.”

by Andrea Vallejos

Translation by Manuel Aaron Garcia

"Oh, how you wound me, Peru."

Words I never dreamed I would utter,

oh, how you wound me, Peru.

The land that shaped my childhood,
that buried roots deep within my soul,

the one I carry in my heart, no matter the distance.

My Peru, what has become of you?

Who surrendered you to the fires of hell?

Who convinced you that you deserve to live on your knees before injustice?

They hunt the poor, those who "do not matter,"

they hunt the working hands, my family, my friends,

they are hunting my people.

Cab drivers whisper in terror: "Don't sit beside me, ma'am, you might get killed."

This is what we have come to: bus drivers tracing on their windshields

"My family is waiting at home," begging to make it back alive.

Praying that ignorance and greed will not steal their tomorrow.

Corrupt men line their pockets with wealth,

while letting the blood of the people wash through the streets.

Peru, how deeply you wound me! You blur my eyes with tears,
you choke my soul with despair. Knowing the innocent die because
they cannot afford the ransom just to breathe.

The graves shouldn't belong to those toiling for a single meal,
but to those who kill without remorse,

who pull the trigger as if life were a game.

Stripped of humanity, roaming free with blood-soaked hands,

they still call your flag the white-and-red, yet the white is almost gone...

leaving only the red of a ceaseless agony.

And yet, through the smoke and the blood,

heaven hears the cry of an unyielding people.

God will raise up those who fight with a burning soul,

He will shelter those who fall for freedom and unity,

and He will make the earth tremble beneath

those who sold out their beautiful nation.