



Living River of Words

Youth Poetry and Art Contest



Isabel Velasco, age 15
Tucson High Magnet School – Marea Jenness
Grand Prize–Art–Category 4

*This book is dedicated to the 2020 Living River of Words Teacher of the Year:
Lori LaRussa – Innovation Academy*

*And to all the teachers, parents, and guardians who promote and support
the integration of science and the arts while creating opportunities for
children to connect with nature. Thank you!*

International River of Words Project

Pima County's *Living River of Words* program serves as a regional coordinator for the international *River of Words*, a project of The Center for Environmental Literacy at Saint Mary's College of California. Artwork and poetry created by this year's local finalists will be entered into the international contest for a chance to be recognized at the next level in 2021.

Beginning on page 33 of this book, you will see the work of this year's international finalists who were local *Living River of Words* finalists in 2019 and went on to be recognized at the international level this year. We are very proud to have these students and their creative work representing Pima County and Arizona!

Living River of Words Traveling Exhibit 2020-21

At the time of printing, Pima County Libraries are closed until further notice. The schedule for the *Living River of Words* traveling exhibit — featuring the artwork and poetry of this year's local and international finalists — will be posted on the Pima County Natural Resources, Parks and Recreation website once the libraries re-open and the exhibit is installed in its first location. For updated information, please visit: www.pima.gov/nrpr

Living River of Words: Youth Arts and Science

As desert dwellers, we have a special place in our hearts for water. We know there is nothing quite like a glass of cold water on a hot Tucson day, the sound of kids splashing in a stream, or the smell of creosote after a sudden monsoon storm. And we recognize that our communities and wildlife depend on water for life and livelihood.

The *Living River of Words (LROW)* program has been connecting youth in Pima County to the wonders of water for nearly 18 years by combining nature, art, and interdisciplinary science. The program usually begins with K-12 teachers who sign their classes up for an *LROW* residency to explore and reflect on the concepts of watersheds, the water cycle, wetland habitats, and water resources in our community.



*Drachman K-8 students sampling macroinvertebrates at the Santa Cruz River.
Photo: Christine Hoekenga*

After *LROW* instructors provide an introduction to these topics in the classroom, students take a field trip to the Santa Cruz River or another wetland habitat where they conduct water quality tests, study aquatic macroinvertebrates, and observe wildlife and vegetation. A community poet or artist spends time with the students by the water to guide their writing, sketching, or photography. Afterward, the artist visits the classroom to help students reflect on their field trip experience and turn their early inspirations into finished poetry or art.



*Students painting at Innovation Academy.
Photo: Elizabeth Quinn*

Youth ages 5 to 19 – whether part of a formal *LROW* residency or not – can then share their creative reflections on water by entering their poetry, visual art, or photography in the *Living River of*

Words: Youth Poetry and Art Contest. Out of more than 950 entries this year, the judges selected just 50 creative works as finalists and grand prize winners in each age category. These pages are filled with this award-winning poetry and artwork, inspired by *LROW* field trips, school residencies, and independent study.

Our Living River: The Santa Cruz

The Santa Cruz River has long been the lifeblood of the region, first attracting

humans over 12,000 years ago and sustaining agriculture and communities along its banks ever since. Today, due to groundwater pumping and other factors, many stretches of the river flow only when it rains. But thanks to the release of highly-treated wastewater into the riverbed, the river in northwest Tucson and Marana is alive with year-round flows, lush trees, and diverse wildlife – including a newly-returned native fish, the Gila Topminnow. In 2019, we also celebrated the first releases of water into the riverbed near downtown Tucson as part of the Santa Cruz River Heritage Project.



Student from Safford K-8 taking photos at the Santa Cruz River. Photo: Mike Kruse

The Living River Project, conducted by Pima County and the Sonoran Institute, measures conditions of this valuable ecosystem and tracks the impacts of our community investment. *LOW* supports the broader Living River Project by introducing students, teachers, and parents to the Santa Cruz River. During their field trips, students use study methods that reflect the Living River Project’s indicator assessments and discover the value of our living river for themselves.

We hope you enjoy the richness and wonder of these special places through the eyes of the 2020 *Living River of Words* award-winning youth poets and artists.

Thank You!

Living River of Words succeeds with in-kind services and financial support from Pima County Regional Flood Control District; Pima County Regional Wastewater Reclamation Department; Pima County Natural Resources, Parks and Recreation; Pima County Public Library; Pima County Department of Environmental Quality; Marana Parks and Recreation; The Udall Foundation: Parks in Focus; Friends of Agua Caliente Park; Arizona Project WET; Pima County Master Naturalists; The University of Arizona Poetry Center; and Sonoran Institute.

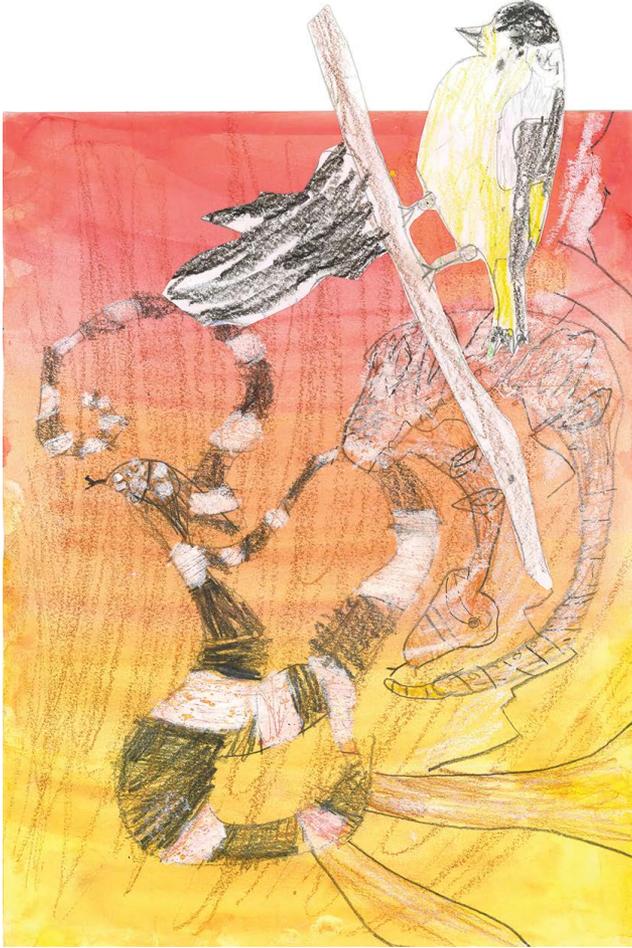
Many thanks to the community partners; teachers; school administrators; science, poetry, photography, and art instructors; judges; volunteers; and graphic designers who worked diligently to bring *Living River of Words* through the annual cycle of activities: Christine Hoekenga, Wendy Burroughs, Yajaira Gray, Marsha Colbert, Alex Wolfe, Jeffrey Babson, Sandy Reith, Axhel Muñoz, Julie Storm, Tiffany Wong, Barbara Goenaga, Elizabeth Quinn, Sevi, Clel Howard, Bret Muter, Mike Kruse, Miriam Aleman, Holly Thomas-Hilburn, Pearl Lam, Edie Price, Helen Wilson, Susan Knoll, Brian Powell, Doris Evans, Stuart Watkins, Tony Luebberrmann, Avery Lane, Janice Dewey, Paul Mirocha, Brenda Rentfro, Hazelle Gonter, Carol Brown, Franklin Lane, and Julie Hallbach.

A full moon night
four coyotes
with the Llorona in the river
below the mountain
near a tree.

Abelardo Mario Amezquita, age 6
Independent Entry
Grand Prize–Poetry–Category 1



Ryder Thompson, age 8
Innovation Academy – Pamela Barrett
Grand Prize–Art–Category 2



The Reptiles

Roman Olivarria, age 7
Safford K-8 – Robin Gilbert

Seashells in My Garden
Exquisite, Elegant
gleaming, sparkling, shimmering
balancing the soil for a natural pH
Seashells shining like the morning sun rising
Sea rocks

Ashley Martinez, age 9
Manzo Elementary School – Dan Stoner

Wilderness

If you listen carefully
You can hear the wind singing and talking
You can hear the water
The paws and hooves
The sticks and leaves

The dirt crunching
The grass
The twigs
The rocks splashing
The water rushing

And they are all talking and singing
Last of all
You will never stop listening
To the wilderness
And be relaxed

Ilsa Chute, age 7
Agua Caliente Elementary School – Kelli Baker



Climbing Home

Chaylee Dietmeyer, age 11
DeGrazia Elementary – Robert Mayer



Desert Animals

Ian Kroll, age 6

Roadrunner Elementary – Liz Gary

Chirping River

Smell the fragrance in the air

See the greenness

hear the children eating pretzels

Hear the water rushing through the store.

Ninos taken by the river

Feel the muddy mud and the sandy sand

And warmest warm water

Hear the nature and the quietness.

Nathan von Niederhausern, age 8

Agua Caliente Elementary School – Betsey Robinson

Comfort in the Desert

Running through
the desert on a cloudy spring day
The grass is dancing and the clouds are overjoyed
I ask, "for what makes you happy on this wonderful day?"
They say to me, "for the sun is asleep"
The Lady Bugs whisper
In my ear and say to me, "the rain is out!"
Por eso las hojas son muy frescas para comer"
I live in a desert how do I know?
Only in the desert is it a comfort
when the sun is asleep.

Alina Rudnitsky, age 10
Davis Bilingual Magnet School – Rebecca Mota
Grand Prize–Poetry–Category 3



Alyssa Joseph, age 16
Tucson High Magnet School – Marea Jenness

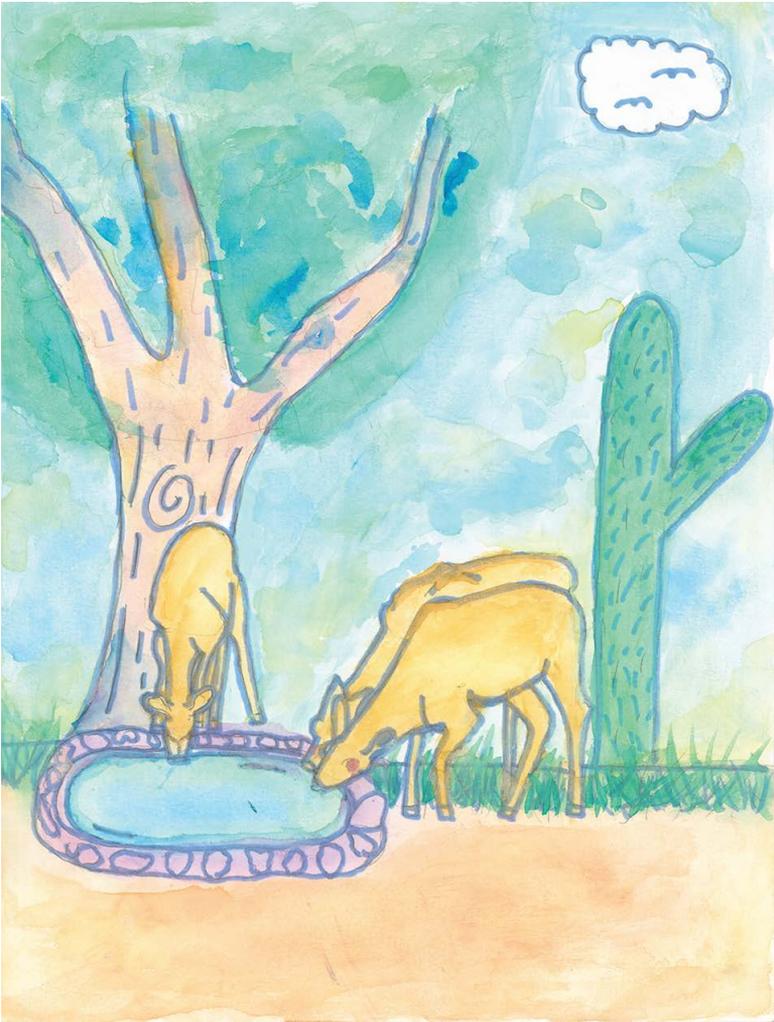
Rainbows

Sunlight and rain
Hit together
Makes a rainbow
Thunder and lightning
Animals in mountains
Having fun
Making rainbows so much fun!

Kassidy DeBake, age 6
Mesquite Elementary School – Janice Mortensen and Paula Maxwell



Adriel Valenzuela, age 6
Cragin Elementary School – Ellan Price
Grand Prize–Art–Category 1



Multidear

Angelleena Hoover, age 12
Hollinger K-8 – Rebeka Denson

At The Santa Cruz River

I hear birds chirping
I see hawks flying.
If you close your eyes
You can hear the water moving.
It is like a land of water all around you.
It is almost like we are not in a desert.
The dragonflies go zing, zing.
The rocks are green and rough from moss.

Sadie Fry, age 8

Agua Caliente Elementary School – Jennifer Mansour



Daddy, Mommy, and Baby Fish

Maria Lopez-Vallejo, age 6

Sewell Elementary – Charlena Dolan



Tree a la Stick

Rosalie Fonseca, age 8

Safford K-8 School – Nalda Francisco

Grand Prize–Photography–Category 2

Closer and Closer to the River

When you're close to the river you hear the wind and smell the plants.
I wanted to hear the river so I went closer and closer.
I walked through a tunnel and saw the river.
Then I could hear the river and the wind.

I couldn't hear hawks but I could see them.
When I was getting closer and closer I saw an old torn up suitcase and a
shopping cart.
Then walked back through the tunnel and climbed a hill.
And on the hill we saw a funnel web spider and her web.

Of course we saw human beings.
We did lots of water tests.
We did the tests by getting closer and closer to the river.

Watch your step! Thornbushes!

Lucas Randall, age 8

Innovation Academy – Rachelle Ferris



*Benjamin Castañeda, age 8
Innovation Academy – Lori LaRussa*



*Rey Compos, age 18
Tucson High Magnet School – Marea Jenness*

Our Beautiful Desert

Hawks soaring in the dark dawn
 Blooming flowers
Mountain lions roar like thunder
 Tarantulas hunt for their prey
Frogs croak at the top of the pond
 Loud, huge storm, lightening
 Birds chirping, ravens cawing
 Eagle's call like dragons
 Hares bounding
Wolves howling at the moon
 Rain is always amazing
 Sunrise, blooming clouds
 Bobcats hunt, owls hoot
 Colorful rainbows
 Giant Saguaro cacti
 Mayflies and dragonflies
So many insects and amphibians
 On our pond
Great diving beetles and fishing spiders
 Hummingbirds, honey bees
 Look for nectar
 Our beautiful desert

Reed Hallum, age 8

Mesquite Elementary School – Janice Mortensen and Paula Maxwell
Grand Prize–Poetry–Category 2



Beautiful Desert

Serenity Phillips, age 6

Roadrunner Elementary – Liz Gary



Clean Water

Angel Solis, age 8

Safford K-8 School – Shania Grijalva

Peaceful

I can hear the river going swish, swish.

I can see the fish having a blast.

I can feel, hear, and see all the greatness happening right now
in this beautiful and grateful place.

What can you feel, see, and hear?

I can see people learning.

I can feel the colorful rocks on my skin.

It feels amazing to be in a peaceful spot
because you have time to think about
what is going on in our life.

Terah Rosmaier, age 9

Drachman Montessori K-8 Magnet School – Kristin Sixt

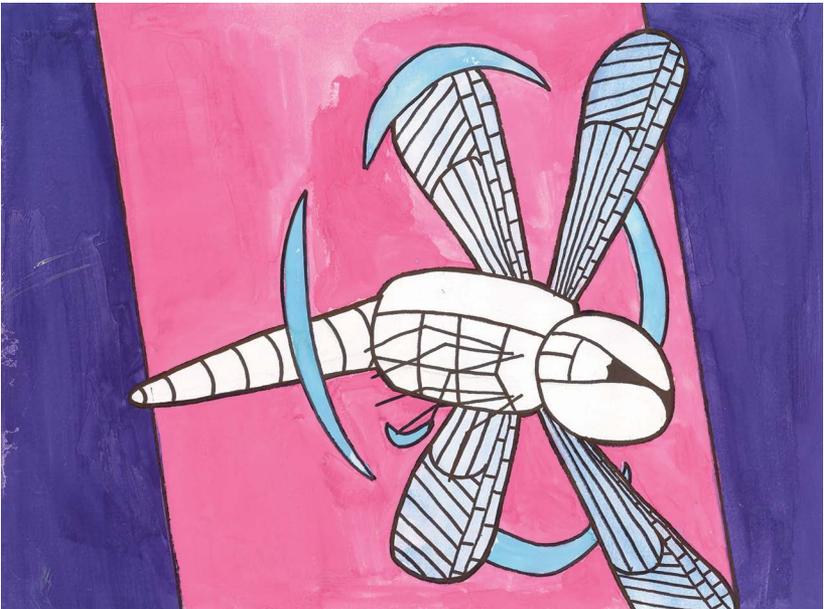


The Gopher Holes

Christopher Ochoa, age 11

Bonillas Traditional Elementary Magnet School – Phelan Mahony

Grand Prize–Art–Category 3



Seth Baldwin, age 15

Tucson High Magnet School – Marea Jenness



The Wild Animal

Wilhelmina Flint, age 5

Sewell Elementary – Maria Alvarado-Wells



Ant

Jacob Riley, age 11

*Drachman Montessori K-8 Magnet School – Jenny Russell
Grand Prize–Photography–Category 3*

The Santa Cruz River

The river smells like the
Creosote that grows on the
Bike path

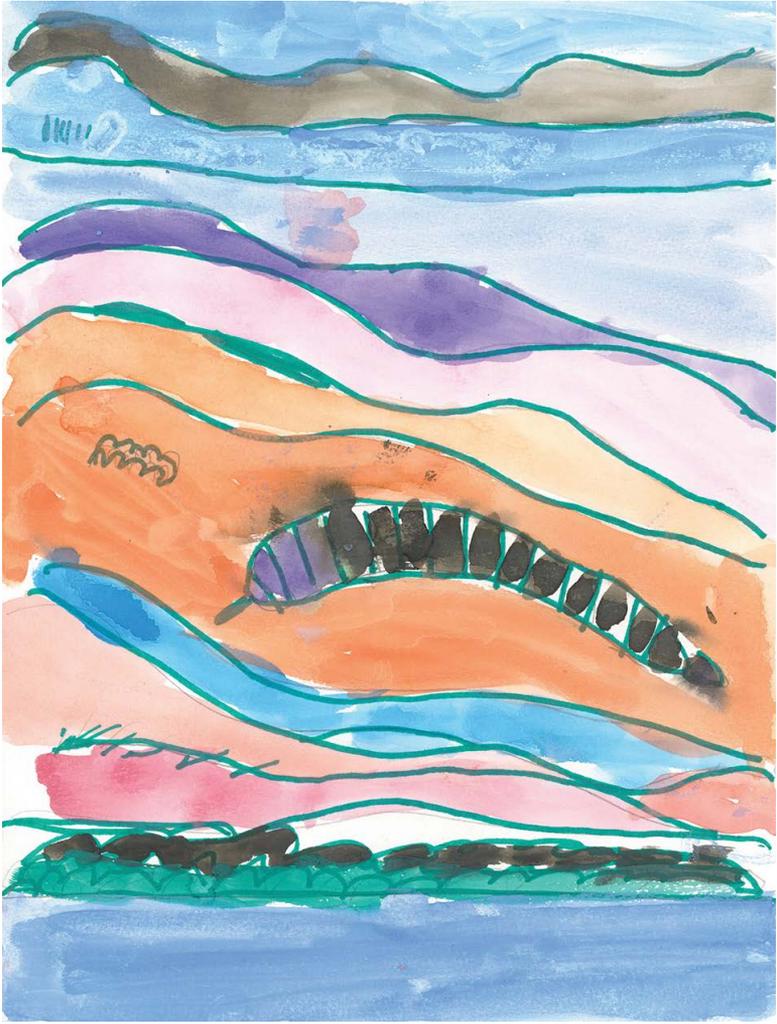
The river looks like a ditch with
Lots of beautiful plants

The river would probably taste like
Algae water

The river feels like sand from the beach

The river sounds like the amazing
Coyotes that sing for us in the evenings

*Marytza Catalan, age 11
Independent Entry*



Aniyah Dunn, age 6
Cragin Elementary School – Ellan Price



The Animals of the Santa Cruz River

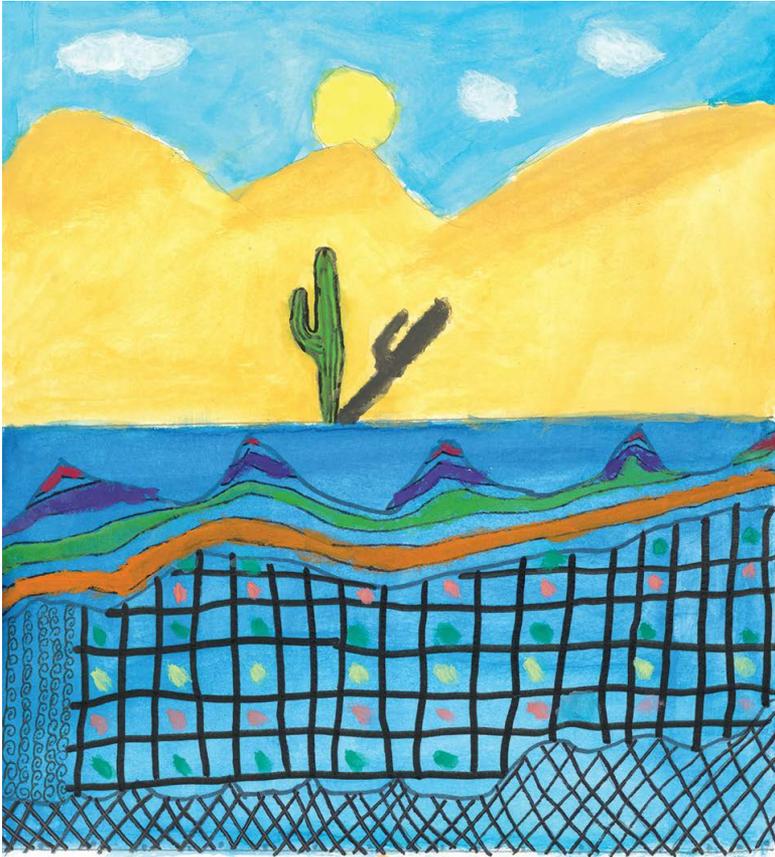
Adalina Ruiz, age 7

Safford K-8 – Robin Gilbert



Daniel Garcia, age 13

Drachman Montessori K-8 Magnet School – Jose Haro



I take the boiled pasta water
to water our tree.

Blue Skies in Tucson

Isabella Owens, age 10
BASIS Tucson North – Carrie Vonier



The Yellow Flower

Miah Dinicola, age 11

DeGrazia Elementary – Aimee Katz



Maia Garcia, age 15

Tucson High Magnet School – Marea Jenness



A Night in the Desert

Evelyn Allen, age 11

Mesquite Elementary School – Janice Mortensen & Paula Maxwell



A Very Berry Sky

Alexia Cota, age 12

DeGrazia Elementary – Aaron Hart

I love the Santa Cruz River

I hear the sound of rushing water
It reminds me of waves crashing
On the beach

The breeze helps put together the feeling
Of being on the beach
Dragonflies whiz to trees
And hawks circle in the sky
Vegetation grows everywhere
It is very pleasant

I love the Santa Cruz River
Mountains are in the background
It is the perfect place to meditate
Tarantula hawks zoom through the sky
Funnel Spider webs spiral
Colored glass is found all around
On the ground

Felix Croy, age 8

Innovation Academy – Mabel Rivera



*Bethel Eyasu, age 7
Cragin Elementary School – Heather Wenning*



The Desert Sunset
*Summer Looney, age 7
Roadrunner Elementary – Alissa Montminy*



*Parker Serrato, age 8
Innovation Academy – Brenda Mendez*



*Chris Yenesel, age 7
Innovation Academy – Pamela Barrett*

Half and Half

Half the year flowing half the year not.
Half the River polluted the other half clean.
Half the day sunny the other half dark.
I love both halves
no matter what.

*William Suhrheinrich II, age 10
J. Robert Hendricks Elementary School – Janet Slingerland*



*Rowan Ravesloot, age 7
Innovation Academy – Lori LaRussa*



Jasmine Aguirre, age 12
Drachman Montessori K-8 Magnet School – Jose Haro
Grand Prize–Photography–Category 4



Gillian Jones, age 15
Tucson High Magnet School – Marea Jenness

As you walk to the river,
The river sounds very nice and sweet.
The river does not have a dam.

As waves thump up and down,
You hear a bird that calls nature's name,
Cawking its meaningful words you can't understand.

This river is better than a beach.
You can't swim in it though, lots of fish are in there.
It may make you sad that you can't swim.
The river is out of reach.

Oh the river is so pretty.
The crunchy sand beneath your shoes,
The trees blowing leaves where no one knows.
How far do the leaves go?
Do they go where I don't?

The river is great, but humans choose its fate.

Jolieanna Graves, age 8
Presidio School – Trancye Foster



It Broke After This

Peyton Sharp, age 11
DeGrazia Elementary – Robert Mayer

The River

I hear the water flowing
Beneath the rustling trees.

I hear the rocks falling
From the wall.

Oh how I loved this in all.

But wait... There's more.

I hear the birds chirping
Their sweet little songs.

I hear the branches
Rustling while I write with my pencil

I hear the twigs
Dragging in the river
With flow.

I hear the leaves
Rustling on the tree
Like their free.

I see the moss that is so green.

I see a branch that looks

Like a tree

While my friend

Sits next to me.

Sophia Jacobson, age 8
Presidio School – Kelly Aliperti



The Plant in the Light

*Elizabeth Corona-Goss, age 12
DeGrazia Elementary – Aimee Katz*

Local Winners in International River of Words 2020

Living River of Words is a regional coordinator providing local support for *River of Words*: a project of The Center for Environmental Literacy at Saint Mary's College of California. *River of Words* is its own watershed: a linked network of people throughout the United States and the world who are committed to teaching the art and poetry of place to young people.

In the pages to follow we honor local student finalists from *Living River of Words* 2019 who went on to be selected as finalists in the international *River of Words* 2020 Youth Poetry and Art Contest.

Sleepy Years

The sleeping years of the ocean's pearl.

The quiet sleeping river

Is flowing through the waves.

The branches are on fire

And I am in the dark alone.

Adam Nelson, age 8

*Agua Caliente Elementary School – Jennifer Mansour
International River of Words Category 1 Poetry Winner*



Anya Kaldonski, age 7
Roadrunner Elementary School – Alissa Montminy
International River of Words Finalist

Black crows flying
Brown river moving slow
Green cactus

Camila Garate, age 6
Miles Exploratory Learning Center – Mary Hope Bergey and Jolene Terry
International River of Words Finalist

Roadrunner at noon
Willows weeping from heat
Sweat pours down my face

Maria Robles, age 7
Miles Exploratory Learning Center – Rosalie Perales
International River of Words Finalist

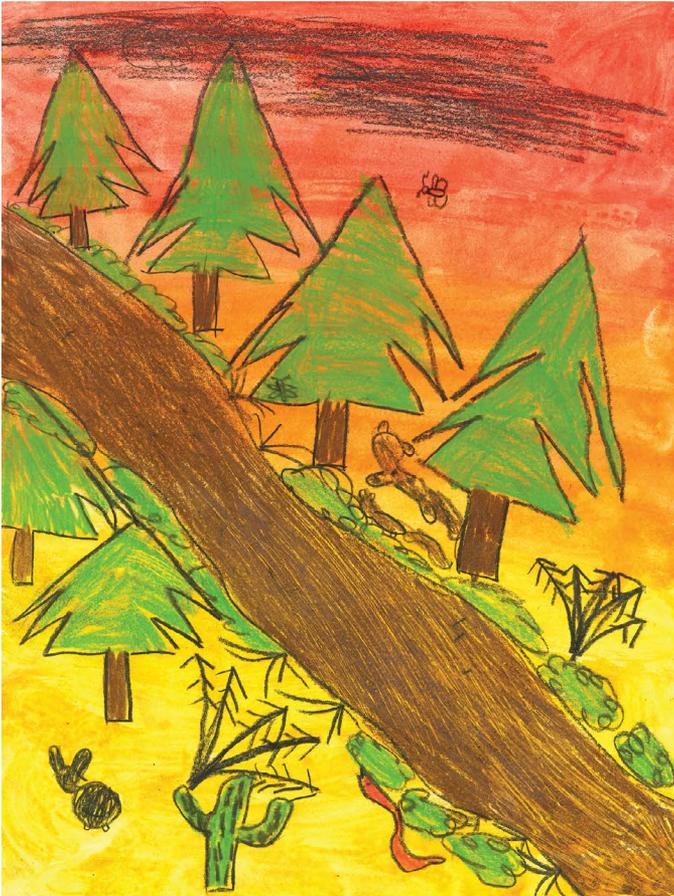


Leon Obezo, age 6
Cragin Elementary School – Heather Wenning
International River of Words Finalist

The Deep Sleeping Rivers

The deep sleeping rivers
As free as the moonlight crossing
Mist and miles away of your dreams
And the death of the rivers
The stones are still and
The whistles of the birds.

Madelyn Hand, age 7
Agua Caliente Elementary School – Jennifer Mansour
International River of Words Finalist



Ranando Josemaria Jr., age 8
Mission Manor Elementary School – April Brown
International River of Words Finalist



Deer at Sunset

Evelyn Allen, age 10

*Mesquite Elementary School – Janis Mortensen and Paula Maxwell
International River of Words Finalist*

The Awesome River

I hear the splash of the fish.
The train was roaring
The river was soaring.
The small bugs were in my face
The small bugs were moving at quiet pace.
Were the bugs in a race?

Peyton Puls, age 8

*Presidio School – Kelli Aliperti
International River of Words Finalist*



Student from Safford K-8 taking photos at the Santa Cruz River. Photo: Mike Kruse

For more information about *Living River of Words: Youth Arts and Science* contact:
**Pima County Natural Resources,
Parks and Recreation
Environmental Education
Phone: (520) 724-5375
Email: eeducation@pima.gov
Website: www.pima.gov/nrpr**



parks in focus
Udall Foundation



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**Natural Resources, Parks and Recreation
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Regional Wastewater Reclamation Department
Pima County Public Library**



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