

We Are Real Poets

Poems of ESOL 3 and 4 Students
from John Bartram H.S., Philadelphia

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from John Bartram High School

It's not hard to teach kids how to write poetry. There's so much of it inside of them already, eager to burst into being. They pounce on ways to celebrate their uniqueness, chronicle what they've witnessed, make sense of tumultuous changes, and transform pain into beauty.

A by-product of all this is *fluency*. When our earliest memories and concepts are in another language, we long to express ourselves with the same spontaneity, complexity, and subtlety in our new one. Because it specializes in capturing the elusive, poetry refines our ability to respond to our world, ourselves, and each other through language.

Poetry also *builds bridges*. In a culture that seems to encourage isolation, it helps kids connect from the deepest part of themselves. Often students won't hesitate to share deeply personal expressions with classmates they've never even spoken to. Curiosity, understanding, and empathy blossom. In the words of storyteller Rex Ellis, "It's impossible to hate someone whose story you know."

Another reason kids love poetry is that they can do so much with so little. It doesn't require an advanced command of the language, just a willingness to be themselves on paper, and an openness to the gifts borne by new words and modes of expression. It can be exciting, fun, motivating -- and often, I suspect, deeply healing.

The poems you see here arose from a series of explorations aimed at bringing out the beauty and individuality of each student's voice. The students do a lot of speaking in their natural voice. They're also relentlessly pushed to dig for sensory detail and imagery, leaving behind "journal language" and cliches.. They're reminded again and again that it's the *particular* that brings readers right into the center of their world.

In a paper called "Mining for Gold," I summarize some of the many benefits poetry writing has for language students, and describe several activities I've had good results with. E-mail me at Naila786@verizon.net, and I'll be glad to send you a copy.

Claudia Gellert Schulte, Ed.D.

CAN YOU IMAGINE WHAT HAPPENED DURING THE WAR?

**Can you imagine what is happening?
I saw a beautiful flower
where a snake was going into its nest.
Can you imagine what is happening during the war?
I saw a man with one hand. Can you imagine
what is happening? I saw a woman putting her baby
into the well. Can you imagine
what is happening in the world?
I saw two women who were fighting
for a man's business.
Can you imagine what is happening?
I heard a baby crying in the forest.
Can you imagine what's happening?
What I heard was the sound of a rocket bomb
on the ground. I tasted a dog, a cat and a snake;
It was so nasty but what could I do? It was life
to live on. I smelled a beautiful flower that
smelled like a cake. I smelled fish,
cassava leaves, rice.
I felt a fire burning in my hand and a rocket bomb
in my foot. I was tired from all that.
I wanted to kill myself but my grandfather said,
"My daughter, it is life to live on."
Can you imagine what happened during the war?**

**Nahwloe Tarpeh (3)
Liberia**

THE BLOOD I SHARE

I remember when I
was in pain. After
every three minutes
I just wanted to die.
My water broke,
dripping and pushing
in my body. My
blood pressure was high.
The blood was all over
my bed. I went to
the hospital at eight
o'clock. And my blood
was pushing like I
was bathing. I did not
know what to
do, my blood was
like the dirty river
running over the rock.
My blood was like
boiling water. Then
my baby came out
and I came down.
It was the first
time in two years when
I found my peace.

Jayne Paul (4)
Liberia

POEM

I wonder about the first time
my mom met my dad.
She was walking the
forest, taking water from
the lake, had long hair,
long dress. As she passed
she overwhelmed
him with her long
hair, and he called
her. She started to
walk fast; he called her
one more time, then she
looked at him. He said,
"Come, let's walk in
the forest together."
Then I imagine
her feeling his face.
He tried to take
the grass from her
hair; it felt like
he was picking
roses

Nassah Roberts
Liberia

POEM

At last the man who will
become my father must bring
fifty cents and two handkerchiefs
to wipe her sweat and bow
down to her parents' feet
to ask to marry her. He also
had to bring three eggs and
two bed sheets, go fishing,
hunt, build, and bring
water from the lake for
her parents.

He touched her face. He said,
"Your face feels like a soft
pillow." Then when he
looked at her he
fell on his knees
until he came close,
to look at her eyes.

Nassah Roberts
Liberia

(Based on a poem by Julia Kasdorf)

TO A BEST FRIEND

Yeah, Rose, I know you're
having fun these few days.
You call me on my phone
telling me you're in a new love.

When I first saw your loved
one I was like, yeah girl, you
sure he's your type? You were
like come on girl, I'm in love.

When I told you for the second
time you didn't say a word; you
were like, actions speak louder
than words. But now I can't
even picture you,

'Cause your face is smooth like cream,
Your eyes are turning into red ice water.
But remember girl, a dangerous love
growing in the deep forest won't last
forever in a beautiful garden.

Mabel Duncan
Liberia

MY AUNT'S HOUSE

I wasn't prepared for
the house to be built
with mud.

I wasn't prepared for the
dogs and cat sleeping in the
same place.

She set the dinner table
before she cooked the food.

I wasn't prepared to see
the clouds get dark
before 7 o'clock.

I wasn't prepared to wear the
same clothes, same shoes
for two weeks.

And I wasn't prepared to stay
with her until she had her baby,
washing my body only to put on
dirty clothes, and eating from
dirty plates.

Henretta Johnson (3)
Liberia

TRAVELING TO THIS COUNTRY

I imagine about you,
about when you knew
it was the moment
to come to this country.
You never slept nights
when you thought about us,
when you tried to tell us.
I wish I knew
about that. When
did you first feel
that moment?
When did you
start buying things for the trip?
When did you sell the house things?
You were successful
when you worked so hard,
when you were
preparing
to take some clothes,
to take some food.
I'm so happy for what
you did for all of us.
I never expected
to come here at all
in my lifetime.

Tsion Tadesse (3)
Ethiopia

**EXPRESSING MY FEELINGS TO MY EX
ABOUT HIS BEHAVIOR**

**You will regret it when you
think of me.**

**You make me feel like
a fool.**

**You will regret when
the day goes blue, when
the one you have now
has turned into a tiger
wrapping around you
like a snake
in the woods.**

**You rolled over a young
baby who can not talk
or say a word.**

**Remember when
I used to put your
legs on top of my lap?
You had me pulling
shoes from
your feet, rolling
dirty socks off your
feet.**

**You will regret that day
when the sun goes down.**

**Wokie Gbahtuo (3)
Liberia**

FALLING APART

I try to put together
the words to say how
I feel.

Sentences fall into my
mind but nothing
comes out.

My mouth feels dry, my
lips are heavy lumps and
my throat gets bigger and bigger.
I open my mouth but
my thoughts evaporate.

The world is spinning,
the mountains, the valley,
the ocean where I'm standing.

My palms are sweaty.
My legs are shaking.
I feel like I'm falling.
I look into your eyes
for a clue, something to
hold on to, but slowly
I'm falling off the edge.

Mamie K. Gbodai
Liberia

UGLY GIRLS

*Ugly girls,
I hate ugly girls.
Ugly girls always
act stupid and ugly
in public.
I sometimes like
ugly girls.
Even when you love to be
their friend, they can't
do anything because
they're ugly.
That's the only thing I like
about ugly girls.
I hate their hobbies and
like their bodies, but
not their face, smile, and
the way they dress.
Ugly people always jump
on you when they
see you among a lot of people.
Don't tell anybody
when you're going out with
an ugly girl, and don't
let her come around
when you're out with your friends.
Oh! My God, I hate them.
No ugly girls should come
around me.*

*Sandor Zoegar
Liberia*

"TOILET"

"Toilet"
is a nickname I gave
to my friend.
He's a nice friend,
but he likes to say
bad words.
One day he quarreled with me.
He used bad language.
I was angry.
I said his mouth
is dirty like a toilet;
he is a toilet.
He was dumbfounded.
Everybody laughed;
then every day
I could hear
someone call him:
"Toilet".

Shao Rong Chen (3)
China

SAD NIGHT

The sun stops giving light to the earth.
Everything is surrounded by darkness.
The city has night.
People have night.
Many trees are quiet as if sleeping.
There are a few sounds of animals
 moving during the night.
Everything is deeply sleeping.
Middle of the night!
Only the moon is still awake.
She is so bright.
She is so nice.
Whisper, softly!
She's telling stories with her friends.
The stars, full of respect,
listen to her. . .

That happens in the sky; how about on the earth?
I like to hear the sound of her voice
from the wind,
from dreaming.
With lonely and sad feelings
just the same, we become friends.
The night is so deep.

Immediately!
The bright sun wakes up
He's strong.
He's happy.
He's lovely.
With his light, he brings life to earth.
A new day is beginning.

Helena Le
Vietnam

NAME POEM

I am a
car that
doesn't know
it can't fly
like a plane,
but everybody
wants to ride
me because
I smell good
and run good.
I never have
any problems
in the street.

And they never
pull me over;
I always
control myself.
I never crash into
anything. I want to
live forever. I want
everyone to get a taste
of me.
I'm always gonna
keep myself in
good shape so
they take me out
every time
they want to.

Onikel Dossa
Haiti

MY NAME

My name is Crying Girl.
I don't know; I just like crying
when people hurt me,
when people do something bad
to me.

My name is Crying Girl.
My best friend always talks to me,
to change the way I am,
but I can't.

My name is Crying Girl
because since I was a baby
my mom always tells me I never
laughed, but I used to cry for
no reason. So I grew up with
those bad things inside of me.

My name is Crying Girl.

Natacha Sylvain (3)
Haiti

MY NEW COUNTRY

I was ready for the snow
and unstoppable
wind,
for the stars shining
over a golden
street.

I wasn't ready
for the helping hands
of the schools
and teachers.

One night I sat up
at the table thinking
about the place I came to,
and how different
everything looked.
Because the weather
was so different,
and because the time
in my new country
was five hours behind
what I was used to,
I couldn't sleep.

Mabel Dahn (3)
Liberia

AUNT CENDY

Was like a banana on a body with
soft skin, smooth with bright color.
Her flesh rich and shiny as a diamond.
When she went out, you saw
people from all over the world running
to see her.

She was selfish, and didn't like
for people to come around her.
She loved to stay alone by herself.
When people looked at her as she walked,
she always used abusive language toward them,
until they all went away from her.

She said, "Whoever comes near me,
there will be a big fight between us."
She never joked with people,
or fought with them either.

Then she was sent back to her house,
since she never wanted to be among people.

She said, "No matter --
that's how life goes."

Yahyah Siryon
Liberia

LET YOUR DREAM SHOW UP!

Close your eyes.
Let your mind
your thinking
your will
fly
away
from your body
to the dream.
When
you're ready
or
you're already
dreaming
let it go
let it show
a strange
world
that you wish for
deep
in your heart.
Look!
What a peaceful place!
Let's play.
Let the butterflies
play
with the colorful flowers.
Let the dragonflies
play
with the sky,

the biggest
purest
greatest
most peaceful place
in the universe.
Let the wind
play
with the leaves.
Let the boat
play
with the lake
that's
full of pure water.
Let the bugs
play
with the soil.
Let me see
more
places
the peaceful
places
the places
I always
wish
always
dream
will be there
some day.

Nancy Le (3)
Vietnam

DREAM BOAT

Look at it!
One paper boat.
It's going far away,
with the flowing stream,
with the cool water,
with the blowing wind.
It goes so slowly
because
it's carrying many of my dreams,
a little girl's dreams,
a ten-year-old girl's dreams.
With my parents' love,
with my teachers' sharing,
with my childhood's wonderful memories.
They always stay in my mind,
the beautiful dreams,
the lovely actions,
the sweet hearts of my relatives.
Forever. . .
forever. . .
in my heart.

Helena Le
Vietnam

THE MAN WHO SAT ON THE BEACH

He sat on the
beach looking at the sunset.
In the afternoon he walked around
the ocean looking at the
fish jumping up and down like
the sea, his eyes colored like a
rainbow. The tears from his eyes
shone like gold. His voice sounded
like an angel; his skin was smooth
and soft like a baby. His hair
smelled like a flower.
Sometimes he felt very sad like
a person who doesn't have anybody
in this world. But he said
the beach was his life.

Nahwloe Tarpeh
Liberia

THE ROAD OF AFRICA

The road of Africa
is beautiful like a rainbow.
The road has no end.
The road is smooth
like ice cream.
The road has all
the colors in it.
When it rains
the road shines like
gold.
If you have any problem,
when you pass on
the road all your
problems will
go away.
The road of
Africa is
like an
angel
who walks
by your side.

Mercy Tappah (3)
Liberia

SUNSHINE

Sunshine,
my name is Sunshine,
because I love the sun,
love sitting in the sun.
Without sun there would be no me,
without sun I would be
wet leaves,
without sun I would be cold.
When I was little my parents
knew to call me Sunshine,
because when I was sick
and I sat under the sun,
I would feel much better.
Sunshine is my name because
when people call me Sunshine
it makes my day, makes me
feel really hot.

Henretta Johnson
Liberia

Lonely Heart

What is a lonely heart?
Does it look like a stove
without gas, or like tea
without sugar, or a kitchen
without a sink? Maybe it's
just a lonely heart without love.

Mamie Gbodai
Liberia

(Based on "Dream Deferred"
by Langston Hughes)

I LIKE DOGS

I like dogs,
strong dogs,
dogs who protect
my yard.

I like dogs
who look like
lions.

I like dogs
who scare people,
dogs that do
tricks,
dogs who don't
hate.

I like dogs who
listen,
dogs that move faster,
dogs who jump higher
than others.
Dogs that act
in movies.
Smart dogs like
you and
me.

Dahnty Dahn
Liberia

POEM

In my living room one
afternoon my mother
walked up to me and said,
“Come here, Baby. What
are you waiting for
now?” And I said to her,
“Don’t worry about me.”
Now when I saw the moon
rolling down the stars like
a bird, I hid myself and
then she walked back to me.
“What is going on with you
there? Don’t be scared of the
moon when it is rolling down.
Just sit down and watch it.
Do you remember that sunset?”
She put me on her arm
and explained, “You are my life.”

Mamie Gbodai
Liberia

YOUR EYES

*The first time I saw
your eyes it made me feel
like a wolf, and you were
a tiger, coming toward
me to kill me somewhere.
Then I heard this loud voice;
there was a boy. He said, "Run down
the street and wait for me." Before
I turned around there was this boy
waiting there to take me away.
He took me up the tree. Then the tiger
left down the tree, turning and looking
for me. I smiled and said, "Good luck
with the other wolves."*

*Henretta Johnson
Liberia*

HIS NAME IS RAINFOREST

His name is Rainforest.
He loves the rainforest and he loves the
green grass. . .also the green leaves.
His dream is about the rainforest.
He always talks about the rainforest.
He lives in the rainforest.

His name is Rainforest.
He went up the tree
to hear the singing birds.
He wants to play in the rainforest.

His name is Rainforest.
He planted many trees
for the desert to become forest.
He brings water from the river,
pours it on the trees.

His name is Rainforest.
He loves rain like a flower.
He loves the forest like a lion or snake.
I wondered about this boy.

Tedros Asmelash (4)
Eritrea

LIGHT

I prefer colored light,
red light, blue light.
Light that's dim at night
light that makes me sleep
light that makes me feel
bright. Light that's bright at
night, light that oversees
the day. Light, light, light
that never makes you
sad. Light that always
makes you happy when
you see it.
Light that shines in the
dark.
Light that protects me
from danger.
Light that never makes me
cry for help in times
of trouble.

(I dedicate this to my life
and my friends' lives.)

Adama Munu
Sierra Leone

I Am The Light

I am the diamond that
can not fade; whenever you
wear me I sparkle like stars
in the sky.

I am the light
that reflects in the dark.
Whenever I reflect
you can shine.

I am the light
that never goes
off; whenever
you need me
I am there.

Laila Saibu (4)
Liberia

Fresh Air

My name is Fresh Air,
because I like to feel the air blowing on my
body and my head.

Every Sunday at 7:00 a.m.
I run to the park, and enjoy the
fresh air blowing on my body.

If I can't feel the fresh air
outside, my head will drive
me crazy.

Every night when I sleep,
the fresh air flows through my window
and I smell it; it makes my soul
get stronger.

And when I eat in the morning,
I can feel my heart
like fresh air go around
my body.

That's why my name
is Fresh Air.

Hung-Manh Nguyen (4)
Vietnam

THE MAN WHO WALKS AROUND ALL DAY AND NIGHT

The man who walks around
all day and night is innocent
like a newborn baby.
His eyes' colors are like a rainbow.
He likes little kids like a babysitter does.
He likes to play like a little child.
Every day he walks around the houses
looking for a child to play with.
On Sunday morning he takes a walk on the
beach; and he sits on the rock looking at the
sea going up and down; he looks at the
birds fly away. And he looks at the African sunset.

Nahwloe Tarpeh
Liberia

THE BOY WHO GREW UP IN THE VALLEY

The boy who grew up
in the valley without going to school,
he is smart like some who finished
high school. The boy who grew up
in the valley, he has no mother
or father; he was five years old
when his parents died; but he
looks like a rich boy who doesn't
have any problems at all. He said if your
past is gone you don't have to remember it
at all.

Nahwloe Tarpeh
Liberia

POEM

Girl sitting on a rock.
She's so beautiful
Flowers all around her
She's staring at the waterfall
Red roses around her neck
Can't keep my eyes away from her
She dreams about swimming
People can't take their eyes off her
Fish swim around her
She's staring at the beautiful sun
She feels the sun coming down
She waits until it rains,
Then swims
In the waterfall
Now she's ready to go home
Her mother asks, "Where were you?"
She says, "I was chilling
With my friends."

Onikel Dossa
Haiti

WALKING ON THE STREET

Very old man
walking out there
watching young students;
when they walk by,
giving his loving smile
just to show his caring.
Kind of blesses them,
remembering his early days,
the gift of growing old,
and watching the young pass by.
I see him every day
walking on the street.
He doesn't care about
what others think.
He doesn't care about
being cool.
Just walking, walking
all day long.

Asegedech Gmariam
Ethiopia

THE BOY IN THE WHEELCHAIR

Being crippled at a young age
at the age for playing
the age to run around
the age to be silly
the age for being a kid,
he was forced to sit,
to sit in a chair for a long time
a time so long.
it is called a lifetime.
Who might know
how he really feels inside,
how he pictures life
in the coming days?
What kind of pictures
is he used to dreaming?
Are they dark and creepy
or are they bright and warm?
How does he feel
living in this world?
A world that seems
to see only differences,
a world that treats him
as a stranger
while he has so much to give.
So much need inside
that angled body,
the need to be loved
and accepted,
the need to belong and
to be normal.
Who should he blame
for this kind of life?
Is it God, who made him?
Or is it we, who did not
accept him?

Asegedech Gmariam
Ethiopia

NAME POEM: NICKEL BOY

When this boy was
young, when he was
learning about money,
the first money he
learned about was nickels.

That stayed on his mind
from then on.

Sometimes he woke up
in the middle of the night
talking about nickels.

Whenever he got money
he always changed it to nickels.

Then one day I asked him,
"Why do you have all
this change in your
pocket?"

He said, "I can't help it;
I just love nickels."
That's when I gave him that name,
Nickel Boy.

Lamarre Dossa
Haiti

POEM

**Look up to the sky
blue and white
clouds.**

**Look at the leaves
they're flying
away from the
trees.**

**Lisa girl, don't
go away from
me. . . .
everything in my
heart is
yours. . . .**

**Nasiet Neak (4)
Cambodia**

The Smart Girl

People call me the
smart girl -- the girl
who loves to talk, smile,
read, write, and teach.

The smart girl
who moves with books
and pens. People call me
the smart girl.

The smart girl who
looks in the sky and
takes out worlds, and
looks deep into the sea
and takes out speech.
The smart girl. People
call me the smart girl.

The girl who moves
with power, pride and
dignity. People call me
the smart girl.

Cornelia Swen
Liberia

I WISH

I wish you could be honest.
I wish you could be a doctor to help me take care of
my health.
I wish Kim could have half a hand and one foot.
I wish Dr. Schulte would stop talking.
I wish everybody around me could see what I need.
I wish the mountain could come down and heal me.
I wish the stars would come and wipe my tears.
I wish my dreams would come true.
I wish my sister would find what she's looking for.
I wish to finish high school.
I wish I could be a Queen.
I wish I knew how to tell the truth.
I wish I could be a good wife.
I wish I could go to college and finish school.
I wish I could be a friendly person.

Adama Munu
Sierra Leone

I WISH

I wish, I wish, I wish. I wish I was the owner of Washington D.C. I wish the beginning was the End and the End was the beginning. I wish I could hear an angel voice saying, "Follow me and you will live a better life." But not everything that you wish for you can get.

I wish I could see things that other people can not see, like spirits, ghouls and dead people. I wish for a whole lot of things but no answer. I wish I was living with Cinderella or my old friend the Gingerbread Man.

If I have one wish I will wish for the world to become a fairy tale world. Sometimes I wish for you to be Beauty and me to be the Beast.

If I have one more wish I will wish for all the killing to be stopped. If I have another wish I will wish that one day when our lord Jesus comes we shall all go to heaven. Heaven is our Father's house. May God bless every one of you. And you too, teacher.

**Emmanuel (Jack) Benson
Liberia**

QUIET GIRL

When I go to school
I don't talk to people
I just sit and do my work.

When I go anywhere people
think I can't talk 'cause
I sit there staring at them

I don't sit with people at home.
I don't go out to play
unless I have to go to the store.

My sisters always tell me
that if I spend all my time
in the house people will be scared of me.

If a stranger comes to
visit I go up to my room and
watch TV. Where I live

people don't know me that well.
That's why my family and neighbors
call me Quiet Girl.

Sia Komba, Ethiopia

I LOVE YOU

You are my soul
I never can live without you
You are my heart
I never can breathe without you
You are my blue sky
Where I can fly around
You are my ocean
Where I can float around
You are my rainbow
Where I can see a lot of colors
You are my music
I can listen to you
You are my flower
I can smell you
You are my sweet heart
I always dream about you
You are my brush
I can't paint without you
You are my thunder
When I see you my heart starts pounding
And I'll always love you

Padma Saha
Bangladesh

SHE NEVER WOKE UP

I remember the time
when my aunt died.

It was Sunday night;
everybody was around her.
I saw her frightened eyes
moving all around the room
like she had lost something,
and her face
became red.
The crying of the people
came from all over
the room.

People gave her
water to drink,
but she was
too weak to drink.
Her mouth trembled
a little like she
wanted to say something
but it was too late
for her to say a word.

She closed her eyes
and slept quietly,
and never woke up.
As she slept
the cries became louder
and louder.

Shilpee Khatun
Bangladesh
(ESOL 4)

THE LANGUAGE OF LIFE

Come, be my eyes
to see the way
my country flies.
Get a close-up on
the way my people
talk, eat, sleep and also cry.
It all began up in the countryside
the kids are looking for
a good place to fly their kites.
Babies are crying
school kids are singing,
big dogs barking,
Momma Lee in the back yard cooking.
Papa is reading a story book
for the blind lady who is eating.
Come, be my eyes,
get a close-up.
It's raining, the rivers are
overflowing with coconut, crabs,
lobsters and mangoes
all coming down in single file.
The market place is over-crowded,
vegetables and fruits like mangoes,
plums, guavas, breadfruit,
all you can eat and buy.
So come, be my eyes
and get a close-up.

Kenneth Browne
St. Vincent
(ESOL 4)

THE SOUND OF A MILLION YEARS

The sound of a million years
whispering through my ears.
It told me that when I slept
it would bring me where I was kept
so I went and dreamed.
It took me down a stream
where people worked cutting rice;
it pointed at my mom, so young
to be working standing in the lake
so she could get a cup of water,
stepping in mud where your feet
could hurt, step by step hoping
there was no land mine.
Working so hard for just
a little bit of money.
Her face was hot from the sun,
tears dropping from her eyes.
The clouds had gone away, no rain falling,
so my mom started praying.
Two days without eating,
only a little bit of food to save for the family.
My mom had no money to go to school,
or time to play around.
She was tired and couldn't stand.
This boy came and told her she could.
He helped her up so she could stand,
and walked her home,
like a lady and a man.
That boy is my father, who came
and helped my mother.
This boy who kept trying to find a job.
He went to look for food.
He went fishing, worked hard to feed
the family, sitting in the sun, hoping
there would be fish around.
No money to buy a fishing rod,
only a stick and a tiny rope.
He had the only job he could find.
It didn't pay a lot, not enough to
feed the family.
He worked all day, every day.
He came home sick, but still went
back to work.
He prayed to God to keep living.

Nguyen Tran (4)
Vietnam

CAN YOU IMAGINE?

**Thinking without a brain
I feel the pain without heat
She looks beautiful without seeing her
Birds without color
Dying without resting in peace
Running with no feet in the street
Getting blessed without praying to the Lord
The fern floating in the air without wind
Talking without a voice.**

**Raoul Thelon
Haiti**

Who Are We?

It's hard to know
who we are
unless we tell people.

Some people think
we are dumb or stupid
because they always see us
act and play different.

I know it's hard to
know ourselves; that's why
people keep getting confused.

They can call us whatever
names they feel like or
take us whatever way they feel like.

All I get to say to them is,
we know who we are, what
we are doing, and what we
plan to do.

We are human
and we know where
we came from.

Musa Tholley
Sierra Leone

I ALWAYS LOVE TALK ON TV

She's always unhappy
if she doesn't see Eric in a day.

She calls his name everywhere she goes,
and she tells him whenever she sees him
in her dreams.

She always wishes and hopes he's happy
about her all the time, and she always
hopes Eric will be on her side everywhere
she goes.

She can always be on his side, no matter
the weather, and she can do whatever it takes
to make him happy.

She likes Eric more than anybody else
and speaks his name everywhere
and any time.

Musa Tholley
Sierra Leone

MY NAME IS RIVER WATER

My name is River Water
I love the river because when the
Sun is hot the river water is cold

My name is River Water
My mother told me that when
We were in the village
We used to go to the river at the farm.
She used to put me in the river water
The sun shone, came in the middle of the
Day smiling at me;
It was too hot; it was the time
When all the river birds came around
I love river water

My name is River Water
I remember my grandmother
Looking at me and laughing
And laughing, because I love water
And I am afraid of water.

My name is River Water
I love the grass, and near the river
The sand that is under the river
Is white and smiling at the
People with good luck

My name is River Water
I remember my friends and I went to
The river early in the morning
To get the river water for grandmother
Because she loves drinking river water
It tastes so good
She just loves telling me and my friends
To go get the early river water

My name is River Water
I love drinking river water early
In the morning like my grandmother

My name is River Water
Now here I am far away from the river.