

A POEM A WEEK
A COLLECTION OF 36 POEMS
WITH POETRY PROMPTS
FOR MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS
BY
ELSA PLA



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INTRODUCTION

Dear young poet,

A Poem a Week is a collection of poems that will hopefully inspire you and provide you with ideas for writing your own poetry. The poems follow the seasons and school holidays, and each includes a corresponding poetry prompt. You may choose to write to the prompt or follow your own inspiration. Before or while you utilize this collection, you should study the poetry documents on the Scrumptious Poetry page of my website www.writecook.com: "About Poetry," "Reading Poetry," "Writing Poetry," "Elements of Poetry," and "Poetry Checklist." The poems are mostly written in free verse and all contain elements of poetry for you to identify and emulate. Read and study the poems before composing your own. This will not only help you develop your craft as a poet, it will also spark ideas for further poems. As you read, try to have a small notebook with you, so you can write down any poetic thoughts that pop into your head. Then, just follow the writing process and enjoy! By the end of the school year you will have your own collection of poems to publish and share with family and friends.

Happy writing,

Elsa Pla

WEEK 1- SAILING BY DAY

The unfurled sailboat glides on,
urged by wind and will and brilliant bliss,
cutting its own magnificent path
across the crystal-blue abyss.

Stately and proudly it darts,
dressed in golden glint and morning might,
like a fiery arrow, onward,
toward the endless edge of sight.

Later in repose, becalmed
by the hush of moon and dimming light,
it nods, folded like a sleeping bird,
kissed by foam and salt and breath of night.



[illegible]

WEEK 2- THREE HAIKU

Rows of bent palm trees
Worship the sea, sun, and sky
In island heaven



Ribbons of sea foam
Wrap the emerald island
With angel-white bows

A pale-white ghost ship
Slides over the horizon
Silent as a dream



This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

WEEK 3- BY THE SEA

By the sea, my soul is silent,
and, like the spread wings of a seagull,
my heart opens up wider.
I imbibe water and wind, sand and fire;
I read the shoreline like an open volume
and take in all its joy and sadness.



By the sea, like a soaring seagull,
I open my heart wider
and let the ocean fill me
with all its strength and gladness.

By the sea, my small life stretches
like the long silver horizon.
Eternity is clear and obvious,
and God's mysteries, designs, and purpose
unfold with every wave in action.

By the sea, my world grows larger;

I'm close to other shores, to other lives, to other longings.

Somewhere on the other side of the blue chasm

perhaps another heart is open wider.



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WEEK 4- LUMINESCENT BLUE

The sea has soaked up the brilliance of the sun --
it lights up from within.

Translucent.

Like phosphorescent crystal
or incandescent glass.

Turquoise? Aquamarine? Precious Opal?

No name exists for such a luminescent blue.

It's a glowing gem that burns my eyes,
inflaming my senses with its blue-green light,
forever imprinting me with its fiery hue.



PROMPT: Compose a poem about your favorite color. Why do you like it?

Mention objects or places that possess that color.

[illegible]

WEEK 5- I AM THE OCEAN

I am the ocean, feral and brave

Moody, yet unwavering in my resolve

Cold, yet passionate in my embrace

Hiding dark depths and unexpected strengths

Life-giving and life-snatching

Beautiful and monstrous

Silent and shrill

Peaceful and wild

Made of tears and roars

Songs and sighs

Woman

Ocean

I



[illegible]

WEEK 6- AD

In the depth of the ocean lies a throne of rock
abandoned by a king who, legend has it,
died of forgetfulness and sorrow.

Dark and barnacles have taken over,
and enemies have ransacked the region.
But there is still great power to be had
and countless undiscovered riches,

and the position of Sea King
is still open.





[illegible]

WEEK 7- OCTOBER WALK

Oh, riotous autumn!

Summer greens pale and

Give way to the splendor of

Your burgundy reds and fiery oranges,

Your golden yellows and rusty browns,

Expectancy and possibility

Painted on each and every

Leaf that falls.

Lit by sunlight,

The luminous leaves explode.

The world is aflame!

Trees glow like bonfires,

Leaves drop like sparks

Igniting the ground

With golden fire.

I walk the flaming corridors of fall,

Embracing the blazing colors

Until I, too, catch fire

And join the conflagration:

Life, like a phoenix,

Burning itself up;

A million willing flames

Heralding rebirth and hope.



This image shows a full page of blank, lined paper. It features approximately 20 horizontal blue lines spaced evenly across the page, typical of notebook paper. The lines are thin and light blue, set against a plain white background. There is no handwriting or other markings on the page.

WEEK 8- MOON-DREAM

The misty morning moon
descends, diaphanous and divine,
on the snow-capped mountains --
a ghostly apparition.
Like a long-lost dream,
like a melancholy memory,
cloud-white on snow-white,
moon-dream on day-dream.



[illegible]

WEEK 9- OCTOBER LEAVES

I didn't expect to open the door

just as that mischievous cold wind

began chasing the chittering

October leaves,

shoving them like a bully until

they no longer scuttled and scattered,

but whirled and stormed and

somersaulted,

crashing into each other

in a crescendo of panic,

out of control like spooked

cattle or spilled marbles.

So I stood there shaking in the dark,

my hand to my chest

as they rumbled past me,

rattling and crumpling in protest,

scraping the rigid curb

of the road that lead them on
like a ghostly black river
from autumn into winter.



[illegible]

WEEK 10- TRANSFORMATIONS

When I'm by myself, I transform
into a warrior princess
or a model in a magazine cover.

When I'm with my brother,
we turn into secret agents
or blood-thirsty pirates.

When I visit my next-door neighbors,
we're super heroes
or rock stars in a music video.

When I'm alone with my best friend,
we're the coolest, most popular girls
in the whole wide world.

But the moment I step into my school,

I morph into an alien from another galaxy
who can't speak or understand
human language,
and who's embarrassingly aware
of her foreign freakish body,
totally unsuited to life on Earth.



[illegible]

WEEK 11- EACH LIFE

A minuscule speck
of energy and mass
holding a single breath
of miraculous life
and joining other lives
like strings of pearls
forming a winding path
that extends across time
and travels across space
from the first touch
to the last embrace.

Each tiny speck
a peculiar work of art
a microscopic mosaic
of subtle shade and light
so small, so very small

you must look closely to spy
every detail, so precise
so precious, so unique
each life.



[illegible]

WEEK 12- MY MUSE

I didn't recognize her
at first. I expected
someone grander, divine even --
an angel or a goddess,
irradiating brilliant thoughts
and calling forth the glorious rosy
fingers of the aurora,
exquisite, ethereal,
sublime.

I certainly didn't expect
this inadequate waif-child
I seem to be stuck with,
thin as a whisper,
hunched over from carrying
that old familiar Box.
"What's in it?" I ask,

as if I didn't already know.

She opens the box and shrugs.

"The usual: pain and hope."

I sigh and roll my eyes.

"Hold on, there's more."

She rummages inside and takes out

an ancient bronze lantern

and a delicate silver net.

"A lantern to reveal truth;

a net to capture beauty,"

the waif-child explains.

Ever cynical, I raise my eyebrows,

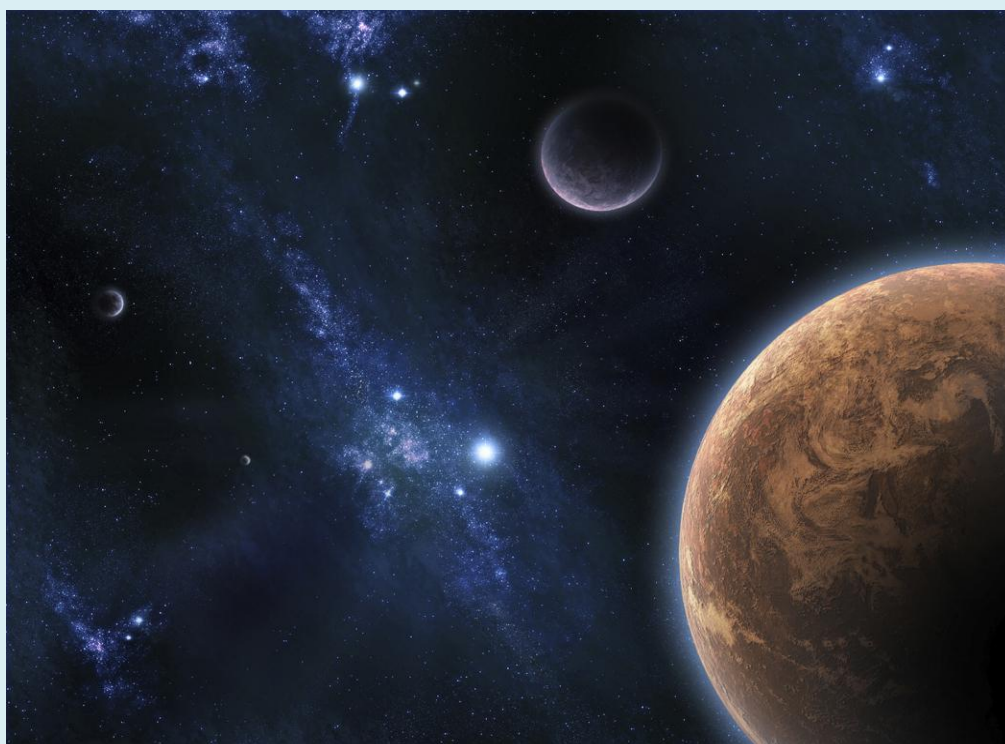
and sigh again.

Then she laughs.

And her laughter causes the sun

to explode into a supernova

that propels me into the next universe.



[illegible]

WEEK 13- PHOENIX

The sun rises like a newborn phoenix,
Stretching fiery wings over sea and mountain.
All day long it carries out its life-sustaining business,
Like a mother bird caring for her helpless young ones:
Diligent, brave, and ever constant.

But by evening, burnt and spent and, oh, so drowsy,
The phoenix sinks behind the gray horizon,
Leaving the world under a cloak of cold and darkness.
Yet, in their nest, her trusting children lie in fearless slumber,
Waiting for a new and radiant sunrise.



[illegible]

WEEK 14- THE SPIRIT OF THE SEASON

It descends

like a warm breath from heaven,

thawing and melting our hearts,

tickling the tip of our minds.

It sharpens our senses,

dusting and distilling memories

full of sights, sounds, smells, and smiles.

We inflate like balloons,

changing for a while

into magical creatures that can float and fly.

Angels of joy

clothed in a cacophony of colors,

we swoop down to swim in a sea of sweet scents,

singing like sleigh bells

and laughing like babes.



This image shows a full page of blank, lined paper. It features approximately 20 evenly spaced horizontal blue lines across its entire width. The paper is otherwise completely empty, with no margins, text, or other markings.

WEEK 15- A CLOSER LOOK

From across the street,
the glowing Christmas tree lot looks
like a misplaced emerald forest
from the magical land of OZ.

But after a closer look,
the trees seem starved and stunned,
and you realize this is not OZ,
but a concentration camp illuminated
by yellow, naked bulbs.

Get closer.

As you walk among the firs,
you'll hear the miserable,
uprooted whisperings
of the starving prisoners
as they beg for mercy.



But none shall be given.

Theirs is to be

a very slow death.

Closer still,

sit under the branches.

Place your arms around the

powerless trunks

no longer flowing with life.

Imagine yourself as the tree:

your life cut short,

hopeless and afraid.



Listen.

Hear the whimpering

of the nevermore-greens

on this glowing emerald

Christmas eve.

[illegible]

WEEK 16- THE SANDMAN

An easy fellow,
all warm and mellow,
has tucked me in again.

His worn, old blanket
around my feet,
a song of silence
he sings to me.

His magic dust
of dreams dispensed,
my eyelids close,
my breathing slows,
without a care,
I sleep.



[illegible]

WEEK 17- ON THE LAST DAY OF THE YEAR

A flock of hundreds of
little blackbirds like memories
chose to visit me this morning.
They flew in harmony, like a symphony,
like piano chords, landing in unison
high up on the bare tree branches,
then drifting down like scales onto the melted ice
below my window. Blackbirds like little memories,
their echoing sound waves disturbing
my brain and heart, stirring up
dark remembrances and secret hurts.
Birds like little black memories
-- here and gone --
past moments to mourn
with a sad song and a smile,
a twitter and a feathered
wave, goodbye.



[illegible]

WEEK 18- MILK AND WHITE ROSES

I open the morning door
to a resplendent milk-world.
My neighborhood has become
a white-frosting cavern and
my street, a river of fresh
cream flowing through,
untouched, unspoiled.

I step out into the whiteness.

The world's a nourishing,
whited-out cocoon,
bursting with possibility.

I can transform into anything
I wish: an angel with eagle wings,
a silver-armored hero,
perhaps even a real,
life-breathing girl.

I look up to see sugar sprinkling
from the upturned bowl above,
like little white roses that land
on my new self and dissolve
in the sun-kissed milk.



[illegible]

WEEK 19- LOADED QUESTION

They ask me where I'm from.

I'd love to say I was born on the shore

of an emerald island,

that the day moon is my mother,

the setting sun, my father,

the restless sea, my sister,

and the playful wind, my brother;

that when I was a child, I was lulled to sleep

by the songs of copper frogs

and the hush of silver waves;

that I awoke to sun kisses, tree rustlings, and bird trills;

that I am from a place of sunlight and rain and friendly people --

a place they should sometime visit;

but that now my sweet-home is somewhere else --

meaning here.

But what they really want to know is:

Who were your ancestors?

Why aren't you brown?

Why is your surname so strange?

So I sigh and look them straight in the eye and answer:

I'm from planet Earth.

Nothing more. Nothing else.



[illegible]

WEEK 20- TAXONOMY

All tucked neatly in

Boxes,

Drawers,

File cabinets,

Compartments,

And ignorant minds,

Superbly classified according to

Race,

Gender,

Education,

Bank accounts,

And, of course, I.Q.,

Forming a practical and efficient

List,

Order,

Pattern,

Gradient,

Or computer database,

Full of labeled information clearly

Absurd,

Useless,

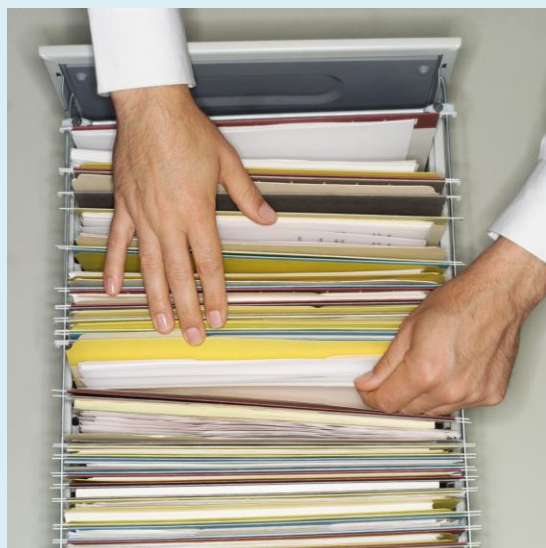
Irrelevant,

Misleading,

And infested with hidden agendas,

We find the meticulous and exact

Underestimation of a human being.



[illegible]

WEEK 21- MORNING DAYDREAMS

I like to get to school early
before anyone else shows up
when the railing is still dewy
the sun is yawning awake
and the day is like a glistening glass
of fresh orange juice.

I like to hear the sound of my steps
echoing down the hallways
talking stuff to themselves.

I like to stand still and steal
a few moments of solitary silence
in front of his locker.

I like to walk on the wet green grass
like a blue fairy or a gray ghost
dream about what the day will be like
and imagine that he smiles at me
as we brush past each other

in the crowded hall.

I like to make-believe

that something extraordinary happens

a silver spaceship lands on the field

right in the middle of the soccer game

a wily wind carries away

all our unfinished tests

or I make the winning three-pointer

just as the end-of-the-basketball-game buzzer

startles us into a full stop.

And that he smiles at me

(did I mention that?)

as we brush past each other

in the crowded hall.



This image shows a full page of blank handwriting practice paper. It features a series of evenly spaced, horizontal blue lines running across the entire width of the page. The background is a solid, light blue color. There are no margins, text, or other markings present.

WEEK 22- ONE ROSE

One rose

One heart

One longing

For a star.

One kiss

One bliss

One moment

To be missed.

One dream

One hope

One waiting

To be loved.



[illegible]

WEEK 23- BE CAREFUL WHOM YOU DRAW

What is it about boys with dark brown eyes?

What is it about those eyes that pulls you in?

I'm falling down the deep dark well of your eyes.

Instead of drawing from your well,

I'm drawn in, hooked like a fish.

But don't think that because

my eyes are green and tranquil,

they are shallow like tide pools.

And my arms may be slim like willow boughs,

my voice soft like the morning rain,

but, boy, underneath the willow lies the rock,

and the rain flows into a mighty river.

Be careful whom you draw into yourself.



[illegible]

WEEK 24- CAUTION! HIGH ENTROPY!

My locker

is such a crowded mess

that the densely packed particles

react and explode

from time to time

(like me, I guess).

I open my locker and duck.

Too much potential energy!

Like stretched rubber bands

the items SNAP

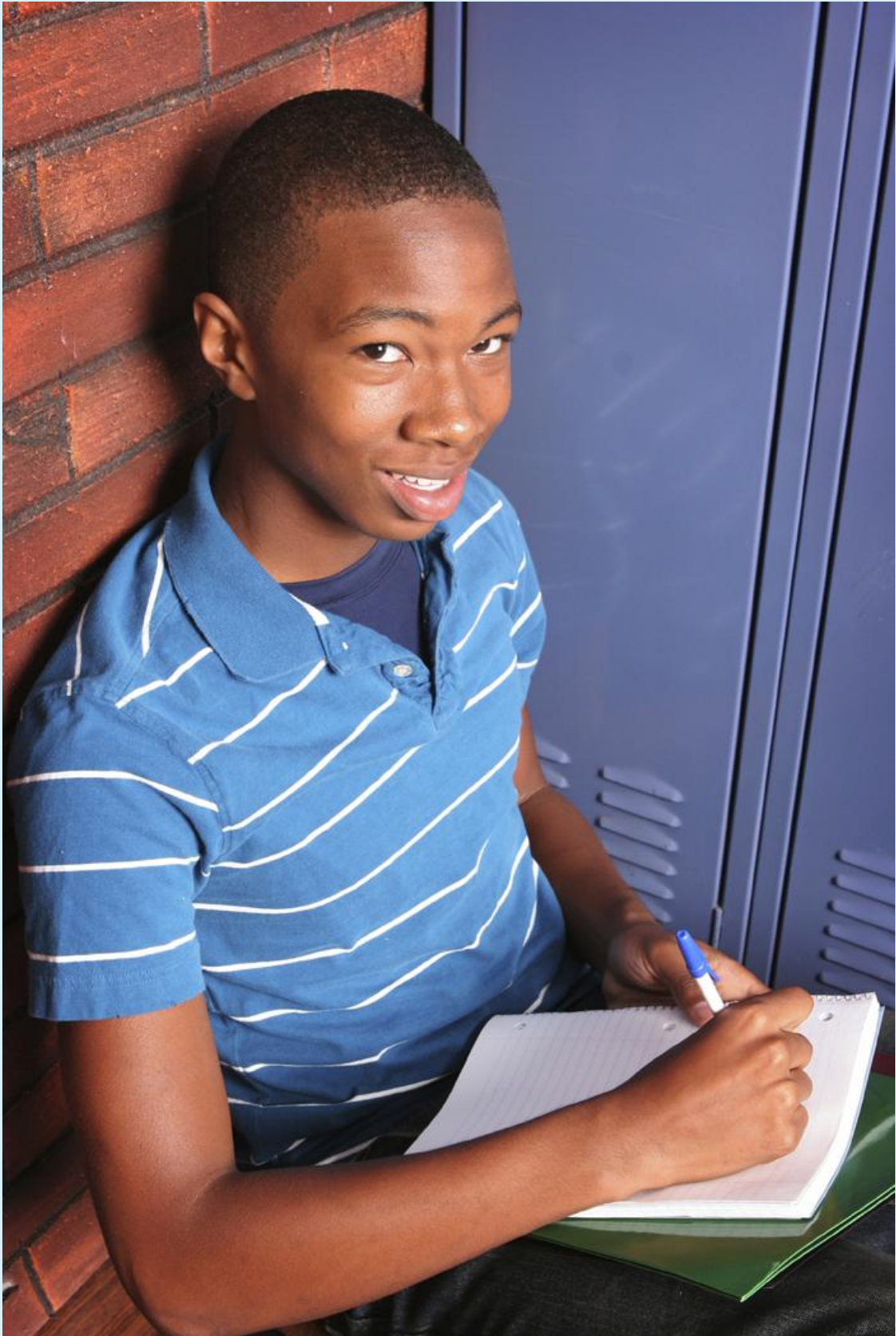
and projectiles shoot out

following a dangerous trajectory

hitting the class bully

SMACK!

right on the head.



PROMPT: Most of us have experienced some form of bullying in our lives.

Compose a poem about bullying.

[illegible]

WEEK 25- BOY ON A TRAMPOLINE

He rose high, bouncing
on the rickety, gray trampoline,
this 11-year-old rocket,
off into space, defying
the law of gravity,
ricocheting again and again,
trying to reach escape velocity,
wind and sky licking
his milk-chocolate face,
friends' voices like static
playing with the volume
knob in his head.

But the push just wasn't
enough.

Plus the Earth must have
turned (which wasn't fair),

and that's when she chose
to yank him back,
slamming him into the rough
cement, face first.

Such a cold, possessive mother,
not caring how much
it hurt.



This image shows a full page of blank, lined paper. It features approximately 20 evenly spaced horizontal blue lines across its entire width, set against a plain white background. There are no margins, text, or other markings present.

WEEK 26- AT THE SPEED OF LIGHT

If we travel at the speed of light,
we can visit wondrous worlds
and gain much knowledge of the universe.

But like Einstein pointed out,
strange things occur
when we travel that fast.

We would arrive at Alpha Centauri in four years,
return home in four more,
and discover that on Earth more than a century has passed,
and there's really nothing to come back to,
for we've become strangers and misfits,
rejected and despised by all.

So if we really want to leave this Earth,
we should plan on moving ever forward,
light and fast, never looking back,

determined to search for and to find
brighter bigger better worlds,
and to always travel at the speed of light.



[illegible]

WEEK 27- THE WARBLER'S SONG

When spring comes, it's time to fly
Under a candy-orange colored sky
Under clouds dipped in sugar-white
Over worlds waking up to life
Time to chirp and sing and dance
To whoosh on up and swoop on down
To budding trees and swirling streams
To sun-warmed roofs and children's knees
Time to snuggle and build nests
And eat of the sweet fruit of the earth
Time to bathe in cooling pools
To flit from tulips to cherry blooms
To fly above a land so green, so newly dressed
To count all blessings and be truly blessed.



[illegible]

WEEK 28- CHERRY BLOSSOMS

I walk along the cobbled path by the river,
immersed in the observation of cherry trees
that have burst into leafless bloom
and now stand bewildered and self-conscious,
laden with pearl and pale-pink blossoms,
their branches bent low over the glistening flow.

I step under the fragrant miracle
and let my spirit be touched by the spirits
of the newborn flowers,
kissed by the tender sunlight that filters
through their translucent pink.

My soul inhales the sweet loveliness.

Softly, gently, I am stolen,
taken, be-spelled, rendered helpless.

I become the tree,
the petals, the light, the flowing stream;

one for a fleeting moment with newly-birther Beauty.



This image shows a full page of blank, lined paper. It features approximately 20 horizontal blue lines spaced evenly across the page, typical of notebook or primary writing paper. The lines are thin and light blue, set against a plain white background. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the page.

WEEK 29- WATCHING THE BIRDS

I enjoy watching flocks of birds,
their choreographed comings and goings
like a performance of an aerial ballet,
harmony in all their movements.

I enjoy observing how they fly,
how they navigate the morning air,
stretching their wings like sails.
And I imagine I'm flying with them.

What a comical sight that would be:
a clumsy bird-girl bobbing up and down
in the sky, flanked by honking geese.

Then again, what a prodigious sight that would be:
to look down on the world,
instead of the world looking down on me.



This image shows a full page of blank, lined paper. It features approximately 20 evenly spaced horizontal blue lines across its entire surface, typical of standard notebook or school paper. The background is a uniform off-white color.

WEEK 30- THE FUEL THAT DRIVES US

The waste of the ages seeps through the gulf;
black gold, some call it.

The fuel that drives our suicidal efforts
born out of ignorance and madness.

Under the contaminated waves,
grim consequences bear witness:
pierced depths, poisoned organs,
bleached bones that now lie blackened,
and an unstoppable massacre of newborns.

Indolent arrogance and greed --
that's the true fuel that drives us.



[illegible]

WEEK 31- BEACH:

Evidence of time and death
of the ebb and flow of life
remains of inevitable battles
that repeat again and again
discarded and gathered
on the sunburned sand.

The ocean washes itself of death
scours his skin and rinses off the filth
brittle sponges, broken coral, calcareous debris
empty shells, dislodged kelp, fish bones
plus all the human garbage
pushed away to form a billion million mounds
of decomposing and eroding refuse.

Beach: graveyard, junkyard
dumpster of the world.



[illegible]



WEEK 32- THE LAST PIANO LESSON

I walk to my piano lesson
past the small houses of my neighborhood
old and simple cement houses
weathered down, old fashioned
their rusty grillwork too ornate for modern tastes
shrubs and wild roses crowding their tiny gardens
houses that smell of rice & beans
café con leche
and fried plantains

I walk past fragrant houses
where middle-aged women are busy
making a simple home and a dinner

I walk past my cement neighborhood
and cross the cement bridge over the cement causeway
littered with the refuse of weathered-down lives

I walk by the river canal
and peer down at all the simple items
casually discarded by the mossy-green current
broken toys, plastic bags, cardboard boxes, dented cans
the neighborhood's flotsam and jetsam

I walk to my piano lesson
making up simple refuse stories
as I enter the new neighborhood
full of quiet and barren houses
all larger and whiter than mine
all smelling of fresh paint, empty house
and busy, complicated lives
too early for mothers to be home from work
too early for food smells and laughs

I walk to my piano lesson
making up simple family stories
wondering what it will be like

to live inside a bigger house
in a different neighborhood
having a busy, complicated life
wondering what it will be like
to walk fifty years from now
down these cement streets
wondering if the houses will appear
small and simple and worn
like mine does now

I walk to my last piano lesson
I sit and let my fingers play
simple good-bye songs on the piano
songs like old family houses
like flotsam and jetsam
like fried plantains
like life



[illegible]

WEEK 33- MOTHER MOON

My mother moon
brings me to sleep ashore
lulling me with her sea-song
full of tears and sand and fog.

There she guards my silver sleep
tilting her head
benevolently
and peering down
adoringly
as I sleep like a pearl
within my stardust shell.

Lulled by my mother moon I rest
kissed by the ocean's tide
wrapped in the velvet coverlet
of softly-pulsing night.



[illegible]

WEEK 34- COFFEE AT THE BEACH

When we go to the beach,

my mother brings

a silver thermos full of

hot coffee and milk.

From eight to ten,

she lets me soak

in the bowl of salty sea;

then she calls out to me.

At first I ignore her --

I've morphed into a seal

and have forgotten such things

as dry land and mothers.

But soon my worn-out limbs

remind me, and I emerge

from the frothing surf,

fingertips turned to raisins,
pale skin and tangled hair
coated with briny sand.

Chilled by the sea breeze,

I turn from graceful, golden seal
into awkward, frozen chicken.

I rub my bumpy chicken skin
and do a silly hoping-dance,
my teeth clacking like castanets.

Mom laughs and wraps me

in a toasty oversized towel,

massaging its warmth into me
and holding me close.

And I let her,

though I'm too old
for such things.

Then she hands me a cup
of the sweet steaming brew.

I assure you, that coffee is magical;
nothing in this world
feels or tastes so good.





[illegible]

WEEK 35- THE TELESCOPE

My father and I took the telescope
he gave me for Christmas
to the sidewalk out front
where the old Buick was parked.

I love that small telescope;
I love its warm metallic scent,
the rusty fragrance of its little nuts and bolts,
like the smell of saved-up coins.
Such a tiny, tidy contraption,
small enough for a gnome or a fairy,
or a young girl's hand.

We held it reverently,
my father and I,
placed it on top of the dented hood,
balanced it on its skinny-legged tripod,

and pointed it toward the dark infinity.

Then, whispering to each other like spies,

we contemplated the sky

through its long metal eye

in wonder.

We saw Venus

suspended like a diamond,

Mars like a radiant ruby,

Jupiter like a flash of jasper,

and my favorite, the moon,

dangling in the dark

like a silver scimitar.

I imagined the heavens

as a black-velvet display

featuring the crown jewels

of a solitary star-king

waiting for his companion star

who has lost her way somewhere
along the milky way.

I asked my father if the sun felt lonely,
and he whispered, "Sometimes."

We were silent after that,
like two sharing a secret
too sad for words.





This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no text or other markings on the paper.

WEEK 36- SUMMER SNOW

Sizzling under the blazing sun
the lofty cottonwoods
release their wispy white seeds
which -- free at last --
dance on the summer breeze
pirouetting up and down the busy streets
like snow flurries
like newborn fairies
like hopeful dreams.



[illegible]

