



A Maze of Flowers

Gardner Elementary School
Spring 2021

Dear Reader,

One afternoon in Mr. Krajewski's class, Jayden asked, "Ms. Kelsey, what are you writing?" I tilted my laptop camera down so he could see the fluorescent post-its on my desk. I explained that as a writer, I'm in the habit of jotting down turns of phrase that strike me: the evocative, the hilarious, the profound. I keep these quotes above my desk, and so naturally, words from Gardner Elementary's poets were on my wall, too. For instance, from our brainstorm of images of light: *sun on the beach, a chandelier, the lights your dad got for Ramadan*. From Roderick, the message he said he'd like to put on a billboard in his front yard: *Never stop doing what you love, even if it takes a long time to do it*. From Hussain, his response to Frida Kahlo's "Self Portrait With Thorn Necklace & Hummingbird:" *The artist is in a maze of flowers*.

The day before Governor Whitmer closed school for 2020, I was at Gardner Elementary, writing poems amidst the puddles of hand sanitizer, the PA crackling on with reminders to keep our hands to ourselves. Through a canceled year, I missed these poets and my wonderful co-teacher, Wafaa Mustafa. I was both excited to rejoin them and sad we wouldn't be together. But virtual sessions brought unexpected joys: little brothers and sisters running onto our screens, guest appearances by guinea pigs, cats, dogs, and stuffies. We listened to music from Sons of Kemet and Dorothy Ashby and studied the works of artists such as Gordon Parks, Kehinde Wiley, and Brandon Odums. We wrote odes to loved ones, celebrations of ourselves, and messages of hope. Yes, we navigated dropped WiFi signals, mic hiccups, grief and frustration, but at every turn we found a little beauty, too. Even in the twists and turns of the pandemic, some things were in bloom.

Hussain's gorgeous phrase seemed to capture the particular complexity of this year. Wafaa and I warmly welcome you to *A Maze of Flowers*.

Kelsey Ronan
Writer in Residence

Ms. Peoples' 2nd Grade Poets

Finding Our Light

Group Poem

I find light in the end of Covid,
when the sun will be out.
Staying closer to the moon,
the happy sun will be back.
I find light in my little sister.
When I'm sad or mad, I just
hear her say, "Hey Mariah,
what's up?" and she always
cheers me up.
I find light going to my dad's
house to play with my brothers
and sisters.
I find light playing tag with my cousins
and other games, like Nintendo.
I find light in my Nintendo Switch!
I find light in Roku TV.
I find light in Among Us.
Find light in playing with your
sister outside. Go out on a
scooter if you've forgotten
to ride your bike!
Find light in having fun.

Mr. Drayton's 2nd Grade Poets

Feelings

Group Poem

I feel stylish.

Style is the color purple.

Style is having a teddy bear as a hat.

Being stylish is having a special style.

I feel stylish when I wear a t-shirt and shorts.

I feel happy.

Happiness is swimming and skating

with my cousins after school

and playing new games like

Fortnite and Monopoly, Roblox and PubG,

where I get to be the Black Knight.

I still feel happy.

Happiness is being with my family.

Happiness is me on my birthday

Happiness is having fun going

somewhere to get food.

Happiness is my dog;

it is spending time with my family,

going out to see those

we haven't visited in a long time.

Our Gifts Of Warmth

Group Poem

My grandma gave me
this jacket from Iraq.
It's one of those jackets
that the cold can't get through.
My hoodies make me feel cozy.
My rainbow t-shirt from my dad
makes me feel happy.

Sweetness In Rainbows

Group Poem

I can hear soft wind,
and feel the sun shining.

I feel the rainbow like I'm
in the colors blue, yellow and pink.

I feel the rainbow over me,
behind me, and up in the sky.

You can see a whole bunch of colors
and in the night, you see stars in the sky.

I taste the sweetness in rainbows,
like rainbow ice cream.

Summer tastes like chocolate candy
and chocolate melting into my mouth.

I feel like huskies and pit bulls are raining
down like I'm in the pet store.

My feet are in the grass
and I feel the sand in my toes.

Little Keychain

To see you, little keychain
that goes on my backpack,
is to see rainbows and the
color silver.

New Sister

Thinking of a self-portrait,
I see my new baby sister
on the way.

I'm thinking of how I should
not be nervous and just
do it.

I look forward to being a good
sister and helping her in
whatever way.

Ode To My Mom

You have colorful hair and you're beautiful.
You're the best mom a person can ever have.
Even if you don't want to buy something, you still do.
The best mother in the whole wide world.
On Easter, she's going to make baskets
and boil eggs with food coloring for us to find.

The Inside Out Rainbow

Today I am orange.
I think it feels amazing
and cool, like I'm in Heaven with my grandma.
Sometimes, I am a rainbow cheetah print
with sunset colors and black spots.
These colors I'm editing on Photoshop make me feel like
I am a rainbow inside, like I can do anything!