

Melting Ice

Poetry Anthology



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Foreword

Claire Warrior, National Maritime Museum

Climate change is one of the most pressing issues facing humanity today. There is no doubt that our planet is changing, and that the polar regions – the Arctic and Antarctic – are feeling the effects first. The Arctic, in particular, is now regularly experiencing winter temperatures far above the norm, and sea ice coverage, year-on-year, is shrinking noticeably. For the millions of people that inhabit the lands above the Arctic Circle, their ways of life are being affected now.

Autumn 2018 marks the opening of the National Maritime Museum's new gallery on the exploration of the polar regions, drawing on a superb array of historic artefacts. The Museum's collections have their roots in the nineteenth century, in the large-scale expeditions of scientific and geographical discovery mounted by the British state, and in the 'Heroic Age' of Antarctic exploration in the early twentieth century. Understanding these histories is important, particularly because they have shaped how we see the polar regions today. The Arctic and Antarctic have been perceived in this country as places of great natural beauty, of disaster and tragedy, of heroism and courage. For many people today, the polar regions seem distant, isolated, marginal and remote, and yet they are not: our fates are mutually entangled, so that what we do here affects them, and what happens there affects us.

This poetry competition, run in conjunction with The Poetry Society, was intended to highlight young people's voices on this complex subject. This is their future, and we wanted to give them an opportunity to reflect on and express what this changing world means to them. We hope that these nine winning poems will spark the imagination and, importantly, underline our mutual responsibility and ability to act. We all have the capacity to shape the world that is to come, and the time to do so is now.

To find out more about the National Maritime Museum's 'Polar Worlds' gallery visit rmg.co.uk.

Helen Bowell, The Poetry Society

In 2017 Young Poets Network partnered with the National Maritime Museum to challenge young poets to respond to the changing face of our polar regions.

The Melting Ice poetry writing challenge suggested ways into the topic using prompts and photos from the National Maritime Museum's collections and archive, and we hosted an inspirational day at the Museum with poets Rachel Long and Mario Petrucci.

Given the global reach of the theme, we were delighted to receive entries from poets aged 7 to 25, from as far afield as the USA, Canada, Pakistan, Singapore, Sweden, India, New Zealand, and across the UK. The winning poems respond to our changing planet with passion, wit and skill, and we are utterly impressed.

The judges of Melting Ice were poet Harry Man, climate change specialist Lucy Wood and Claire Warrior from the National Maritime Museum. We hope you enjoy the winning poems included in this anthology as much as they did.

Young Poets Network is The Poetry Society's online platform for young poets and poetry enthusiasts up to the age of 25, where you can find articles, interviews with award-winning poets, and themed writing challenges. If you are inspired by the poems presented here, visit our online platform to read the resources and writing prompts we produced for this project, and to discover further poems, articles and new competitions.

To explore the Young Poets Network online platform visit youngpoetsnetwork.org.uk.

Summer Job as Glacier Tour Guide

Joyce Zhou, 17

In these last years, the glacier had turned a dull, trembling pink
and industry bloomed like soft dough, the city a softly-molded mountain.

In these last years of warmer ice, there were rules only we understood.

Rookies must be able to dig road in the amber of dusty lamps because
each rock could be a sinkhole when each person can be sunk as easily as dust.

Our youngest is sixteen, still turning.

Jumped naked into the nearest lake because he cared too much
about the rite, about the weather.

In these last years, I wanted to sink myself as a doorway.

Tell us a story they said. And so I opened.

On the tour,

the gravel scratches the children, and they suck on chunks of pink snow
around and around the soft of their cheeks, tongues sweetened by the cold.

More and more people have gathered to cup the mountain in their mouths
to swallow the glacier,
the glacier that pulls at the sky.

This is the story where everything
has begun to fade but no one apologizes.

In these last years, I came every April to dig the ice fields from light.

The ice is sinking lower into the valley.

I dream of this job as flight.

In these last years, the glacier has become less of a sight and more of a feeling.

The smoke from the mountain has begun to rise, yet we continue to live blindly.

This is the story in which the Earth has begun to flood.

And so I opened.

And so I opened.

And so I answered.



Joyce Zhou is a student of Neuqua Valley High School's class of 2018 in Naperville, Illinois. Her writing has been internationally recognized by Foyle Young Poets, Princeton University, National Poetry Quarterly, Penguin Random House, Scholastic Art & Writing Awards, *The Adroit Journal*, and *The Blueshift Journal*, among others. Through her work, Joyce has taken impactful steps to humanize the effects of pollution and to highlight the many different faces of environmental degradation through solidarity, empathy and storytelling.

Ice Cover on Lake Michigan

Ella Nowicki, 16

One hundred thousand years ago
a glacier flung its arms out wide
and dipped a gelid finger in the Mississippi.
It stumbled through the doorway to the north,
rolling mountains out like carpet.

It left us sweet cold lakes
in whittled bedrock where
a crackled breeze in late December
would lull them all to sleep.
The lakes ducked under riptides,
closed their glassy eyes,
clutched their algae-freckled knees
against their rushing chests.

Ice sidled from the stony shore
towards a drumming heartbeat
in the deepest, sloshing center,
where blaring lights of cargo ships
diffused in addled silence –
sheet-metal grizzlies
hibernating on a
wind-purged plain.

Ribbon clouds spoke frozen words
that skimmed through vacant ports
and settled in between the
jumbled tesserae of ice, with
snow and rabbit prints
as dense as grout.

This winter, the wind
breathes damp,
gorged on delicate dioxins.

This winter, the heart
beats warmer, flushing
ice floes out through arteries.

This winter, the veins
relay not curled white waves
but soybean-field runoff.

This winter, the skin
cracks like desert mud and
ice-clutched steamboat bellies
saunter through the lake again.

This winter, the December breeze
has lost its voice.

This winter, the sleep-starved lake
forgets its glaciers altogether.



Ella Nowicki is a student at Madison East High School, USA. Her poetry has appeared in the *Cadaverine Magazine* and *shufPoetry* and her literary criticism has been recognized in the Keats-Shelley Young Romantics Essay Prize and the Timothy Corsellis Young Critics Prize. She camps by Lake Michigan every year.

Take Hold

Zainab Ismail, 23

Palmfuls of chromosomes, the possibility of choices.
My hands can help and harm in a sea of choices.

Some chromosomes look like sycamores up close,
melting off blue-bellied trees.
Exclamation marks for many voices
branching bottomless to broadcast a plea.

Spectral pirouettes, speckled silhouettes,
burning butterflies in my body,
teardrops, glaciers, empty and filled spaces.
I feel at sea,
drifting apart from every ponderous statistic,
every metamorphosis,
the optic lens seeing a thinning filigree,

observing heartache from a distance.
Though footsteps root my soles downward to home,
my soul collapses
under reefs of little prayers,
sometimes my solitary role
of weightless grief, fragility,

seeking a more
compassionate connection to the planet,
learning from the way we ran it,
anchored to it as trustees –
so diagrammatic,
sycamores in our hands, blessed with the capability
to take hold of our delicate destiny.



Zainab Ismail is a graduate of the University of Greenwich, UK, where she studied English Literature with Creative Writing. Her work has been published in *Tears in the Fence*, *The Fortnightly Review* and on Young Poets Network, and she is a former Foyle Young Poet.

A Modern Penguin

Ashley Arinze-Osimen, 12

I have a screen. You can do loads of things with me. You can use my keyboard. You switch me on. I am on a global network. I can do things very quickly. I can write an essay. I can talk to penguins who are miles away from me. I know things that normal penguins probably don't know. I am used by thousands of penguins.

BUT!!!!

Unlike other penguins.

I can't think for myself.



Ashley Arinze-Osimen was born in 2004. His favourite subjects are Computer Science and Maths, which he studies at a boarding school in Kent, UK. He has never thought of himself as a good writer, and when he received the email saying that he was commended in the Melting Ice challenge he didn't know what to do!

High-Tide

Jamie Hancock, 19

We wrapped our heads around the afternoon
and watched as passing toppers broke
the ice-white caps of the waves.

You were pointing to where the high-tide mark stood
staining the side of a building, telling me how
each year the rivers strained their banks and the sea

would overspill like a bath. My height barely reached it
and I imagined myself swallowed where we were,
lost in the freshly-melted water.

Later, in a documentary, we were shown
a map of the coastline after sixty years
with the village recoloured in blue.



Jamie Hancock is a nineteen-year-old writer and student from Hampshire, UK. He has previously been placed in several competitions with the Young Poets Network and can also be found in the October 2017 edition of the student creative magazine *Notes*.

The Garden

Abby Meyer, 19

The garden here is half its size.

The place where the blue swing was
has crumbled down to sand.

Looking here, I wonder what happens
to the earth the sea charms away.

It whistles to the rocks,
I have come to join you.

Further down, by the cove,
the water laps at ankles of children

whose grandparents once
dove down to reach it.

It sings to them of ice,
of being part of an expanse
that polar bears could walk upon.

It whistles to the garden,
I have come to join you.

And the old shed falls
into its arms with a sigh.



Abby Meyer is a student of Japanese at the University of Leeds, UK, and completed a year abroad at Akita International University. She was a commended Foyle Young Poet in 2015 and was long-listed for the Christopher Tower Poetry Prize in 2016. On Young Poets Network she also won first prize in the 'I am the Universe' challenge, and third prize in the 2017 August Challenge #2. At her university she writes for *Scribe* magazine and *The Gryphon*. In her spare time Abby enjoys the music of Blonde Redhead, Wodenshrone and Wooden Shjips. She is currently attempting to learn the bamboo flute.

The Ice Polar Bear

Maia Reedy, 7

There was a girl who was made of bricks
Everything was made of bricks
Except she didn't know that there was an ice polar bear stuck in her mirror
It howled at night and whispered at day
She heard it whisper in the wind
It was a message
Every day it made clones of itself till it turned to water
One night the wind whipped hard
It made her mirror crack and the polar bear cracked with it
It turned to water
She cried and cried till she turned to dust.



Maia Reedy lives in Christchurch, New Zealand. She has a real passion for creative writing, which has she been doing for the past three years since starting school. To date she has been published four times, on Young Poets Network, on Paula Green's website, and twice in the *Otago Daily Times* in New Zealand.

How?

Meg Shearer, 11

Forests, flowing rivers,
Sky reaching trees.
All of these things I see.
But there is one disturbing thing.
Ice.
Lots of ice.
Melting ice.
I tear my gaze away from the hare,
But she is still staring at me,
Unblinking.
She nudges me, with her soft paws,
Almost like she's begging me.
As I run my fingers down her silvery coat,
Her fur glimmers.
Like ice.
Melting ice.

Meg Shearer is 11 years old and is a member of The Poetry Society's Young Poets Network. She lives in New Zealand.

On the Rocks

Ella Duffy, 22

I'll have an oil spill
on the rocks.
Earthshaking. Dirty.
I want the works.
Nitrous oxide, CO²,
give me rolling mist,
smoke, smog.
Polluted.
Can you fill it to the brim?
Raise the sea levels?
Spray it with acid to give it that
kick?
I want heat, flames
fuelled by fossil.
Complex notes. Bitter.
Rim the glass with coal,
garnish with palm,
and put it on my tab.



Ella Duffy is an actor and poet based in London, UK. *Wife* is her new one-woman play about women throughout history, art and legend. She is a former Foyle Young Poet and collaborated with The Poetry Society to deliver a workshop as part of Shakespeare's Telling Tales Festival at The Globe. Currently, Ella is writing a collection of poetry on environmental issues and is working with artists on a project which hopes to raise climate change awareness through creativity.

Add your voice

We hope the poems you've read in our *Melting Ice Poetry Anthology* have inspired you to think more deeply about climate change. For further inspiration, visit the 'Polar Worlds' gallery at the National Maritime Museum, visit Collections Online (rmg.co.uk), or check out our online Melting Ice Poetry Challenge resource (ypn.poetrysociety.org.uk).

Why not pick up a pen and add your voice to the climate change debate?

Your *Melting Ice* poem

