

**Sarah Mook Poetry Contest 2017, Grades 3-5, First place winner,
"Autumn in the Orchard"**

The first place poem for this age group, "Autumn in the Orchard," describes an orchard beloved by the speaker that becomes a harbinger of the coming season of winter. The two sections of the poem use setting, metaphor, and a tone of acceptance to evoke that change.

In the first eight-line section, the poet introduces the orchard. Its "sweet juicy apples / fall down off the trees," a common occurrence in late fall. The speaker further describes the orchard:

All the fruit
hanging serenely in the trees
hiding silently behind the leaves
in a place I never want to leave.

The word choices of "serenely" and "silently" evoke a calm and composed tone that clarifies the poem's peaceful setting. The last line, "I never want to leave," brings the speaker and his or her appreciation for this orchard's solitude directly into this poem.

The eleven-line second section prepares us for the end of autumn and the beginning of winter. It begins—"The sun is shining / for its last day," which paves the way for the thought that the "hanging" fruits will give way to another season. The next lines are especially fine:

before winter blows autumn away.
enjoying that one last moment,
waiting to give way
to the season that follows it.

I especially appreciate the visual description of winter "blow[ing] autumn away." The ending of the poem solidifies the transition from autumn to winter. Using metaphor that compares the sun to a clock, time passes as the sun "tick[s] the seconds away / where autumn begins / and finishes." The poet elegantly stretches out the last moments of autumn.

In this poem, this talented poet employs scenes from an orchard to capture the change of seasons with poise and thought.

Thank you for the pleasure of reading your work!

Marie Kane
Final Judge
Sarah Mook Poetry Contest, 2017
www.mariekanepoetry.com