



CITY OF SALEM, MASSACHUSETTS

SALEM PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Office of Mayor Dominick Pangallo

2024 Student Poetry Contest Entries
Celebrating the History and Stories of Salem

*Written & Submitted by 6th – 8th graders from Collins Middle School and Saltonstall School
Presented by the Office of Mayor Dominick Pangallo*

Greetings!

As the City of Salem enters into the inauguration of a new city government for the coming year, I'm pleased to take this opportunity to celebrate the remarkable efforts and accomplishments of the Salem Public Schools and our students in particular.

In 2023, in collaboration with literacy coaches at Saltonstall School and Collins Middle School, we initiated a poetry contest for 6th, 7th and 8th graders. Students were asked to write a poem reflecting on the rich history and incredible opportunity of Salem. Poetry is an artform with the power to move, inspire, and stimulate new ways of thinking about and viewing the world around us. I'm glad we're able to take space in this year's inauguration to elevate this form of artistry.

This booklet showcases the diverse entries received from these talented individuals and I'm thrilled to share them with you as part of our celebration of the start of 2024. I would like to extend a heartfelt thank you to all students who poured their creativity into this contest, and shared their poetic voices with us through this initiative, to literacy coaches Heidi Jimenez and Yamilis Cruz, and to the dedicated teachers, faculty and staff who facilitated this endeavor and who helped make this initiative possible. Please enjoy these poems, savor the artistic expression and voice these students have generously shared, and carry the inspiration they give you into the year ahead! We are immensely proud of all students who participated. While one student's poem has been selected to be read aloud as part of the inaugural ceremonies, all the entries demonstrate talent, creativity, and a deep love for our community.

What's more, the success of this effort has inspired the City to begin development of a City Poet Laureate program, the full details of which will be announced in early 2024.

Dominick Pangallo
Mayor
City of Salem

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Sidewalks of Salem by Liana Galvin

(Liana Galvin was the winner of this year's student poetry contest. Sidewalks of Salem was recited at the Salem City Government Inauguration in City Council Chambers on January 1, 2024)

No matter where you walk, there's a way
There's a path
Cracked concrete, backed with memories of the past
Of horses trampling, or maybe the weather
Of shoes against the concrete, running off for the better
Pursuing a new hope, this city of peace
Known for the people and the legends and myths and the peace
You are not defined by your past, O Salem,
Look around and see how you're steadily healing!
Too many different sidewalks to count, so I shout,
"Communities about, let's stand together,
Passing through the future without a shadow of doubt,
Come join in the path of love, and we'll soon find out--"
Where our future comes from, here resides,
The people of Salem, so magnified,
The autumn leaves blow about by October,
The winds of change are never so sober,
You can't give up hope here, with something to say,
A word of kindness, hope, or a glorious day
In Salem lie the depths of an early history,
Something so deep, something so heavy, BUT
Nothing too irreversible, nothing too horrible,
Light outshines the darkness, call the people and communities:
Different ways of life, different skin tones, and walk next to me—
Take a journey through the streets of Salem!
See how the choices, the legacy of the past stands here
Today
On an ever brightening path
Make a choice now, as you step on the cracks—
Look up, there's hope when you look for it:
Oh Salem, you're a blessing, you're so golden
With your people, kind hearts-- again, communities,
I stand on the sidewalks and lovingly remember the unity
Of people walking here, side by side
On the sidewalks of beauty, people unified.

Our Salem by Anastasia Tarozzi

We started here,
With ships from the sea.
We thrived here,
For the world to see.
Built up from the ground,
With creatures of the sea,
Spices,
And our friends,
Never wavering.

Through trials,
With which we've
Had our fair share.
And tribulations,
That we all share.
Still they came,
From North,
South,
East,
And West.

Now,
With vibrance,
These collections
Of forgotten parts,
Rise together!
We forge
Not only
Our paths,
But our bonds.
For if we become the path,
For others to follow,
Then,
We have truly
Completed the circle.

Through the foreign eye,
The city we know,
Appears vast,
Too large to concentrate on.
But look deeper,
My friends,
Venture forth.
Do not shun this place

Only because you,
You don't hold the bravery needed.

Tight nit,
Woven together by our past,
Our mistakes,
Our Boldness the world could not take.
We do not become these words,
These words become us!

They flock here,
For the tenth month of every year,
And spend their green paper,
On superficial, frivolous,
History.
But nonetheless, our history.
It is their right, but I would look inward
So that I may see all of a city.

As we march onward,
Into the light of a new dawn,
I believe we will march together,
As one body,
Take with pride, what it thrown our way,
And march *onward*!

Us Salem Dreamers by Senan F. Hunsucker-Hoffman

Dear Salem
Some of us are dreamers
Some of us are schemers
Some scheme for dreams
Some dream for schemes

But I dream for hope
We do not have to follow one like the pope
We are who we are
We all come from near and far

We all are human
We all are dreamers

When the people came to Naumkeag
They called it Salem
Salem means peace
I dream for us to keep that
Not release

Do not throw your wish in the well
Do not sell away your dreams
Do not sell

We are not just the city with witches
I dream for us to be the city that says which is

Which is good which is bad
You may have thoughts you wish you never had

Do not think of just the bad think of the good too
For I am me and you are you

Do not listen to the schemers
Be yourself

You are your own Salem Dreamer.

Untitled by Emmy Holt

Salem, the place with spooky witches and black cats.
From the founder of this town Roger Conant to our current mayor
Mayor Pangallo
Salem is and will always be a place of distinctive people.
Although we have had our moments as we have felt stuck in the belly
of beast salem has
Powered through to become what it is today

With the messy mud in the common as the kids gaze to the top of the
Hawthorne hotel to find
santa greeting them in the winter to the
Flowers blooming outside of the ropes mansion in the summer
With the people who come from the farthest away just to see of
the yellow and orange trees in the fall
And the people of all races come to not find themselves in the past
but in the future of our new year every spring

Though we have our hard and difficult times we come out victorious
As we always feel glorious while we stand in our shining sun on the 4th of july
While we watch the fireworks shine we think of the land we have stolen
As the lights flash before our eyes

To the coyotes that visit our backyard
to the houses filled with year long halloween decorations
that make us all feel the deja vu from
the year before
Not only to the neighbors but to the
whole neighborhood they are not just superb but at the point
that we have all reached they are family
But from this moment and on
all of us are a family

A Year in Salem by El Russel

This is home,
A magnificent place, full of wonder
The tangy sea smell in summer,
Fishing, swimming, boating, and the parade in June
All things to do here

So many people come in autumn,
For haunted houses, witches, ghosts and crazy locals
They get, is great food, comic stores, and weird bike lanes
They do of course get the haunted houses witches and odd locals

The wet slushy snow in winter,
Plows turning it brown and mucky
Snow shoeing, winter holidays,
The lighting of the Big Tree by the statue of Samantha,
Riding her broom past the moon

The crocuses poke through the half thawed ground
And the muddy scent of petrichor fills the parks
Spring has arrived in Salem
Mud soaked grass,
Parents warning kids not to get dirty
A wonderful mix of beauty and bizzarity
Wonderfully weird community,
Joy love and caring pouring out of the City
A beautiful place
This is home.

Untitled by Lily King

When the brightly colored summer fades to a dull array of reds and yellows,
And brought to life through nighttimes long anticipated by the inhabitants of salem.
its vendors and returning tourists reveal a sense of dull charm.
With nights within a city full of history, but hardly regarded as such
The remains of a tragedy, with what life is overwhelmingly spread, replaced
throughout a cold shoreline littered with grand ships.
With the promise of more visitors
From wherever they may come.
Though from each direction I glance, a sense of charm in the dancing wildflowers
grown just beyond my reach
Accompanied by the sound of crowded festivities
and its uniquely styled chaos,
From each direction I look.
Seeping deep into the night; a rising sense of restlessness,

Salem by Hannah Phelps

Salem is
Rusty lighthouses and the salty scent of the ocean
seagulls squawking loudly to each other
flapping their gray and white feathers
The Friendship sitting proudly on the waterfront
waves lapping against the shoreline
little carved sea snails perched on a rock
ready to emerge from their shells
to face the tide

Salem is
Crunchy leaves on a brisk autumn day
skipping
among red
orange
yellow
brown
green leaves
the wind rustling the trees
and lifting us into the sky

Salem is
Our history
the sparkling blue waters spotted with fish
castle-like churches
standing steadily above our city
Hawthorne Hotel
gleaming golden eagles
with deep blue awning
as dark as the night sky
Derby Wharf
the House of Seven Gables
Old town hall
places where we feel linked
to our city
that has been here all this time
that has been entrusted into our spirit
to keep being made into a beautiful place

Salem is
Going to the Common
on a warm day
the sun shining
walking on uneven brick sidewalks

grass and dappled stone
skimming beneath your feet
long branches on willow trees
swishing
swooshing
the sound of little brown sparrows
and the traveling crow
chirping in the bushes and on telephone lines

Salem is
Our art
dancing and singing and music
Swirling colors
putting meaning into a blank canvas
The murals that put character into our city
being able to see the beauty of life
through a simple brushstroke
the smooth thumping of a bass
melodic plinks of a piano
The streets coming alive with sound that bounces off of your heart
and make you want to dance

Salem is
The only place
where you can go out into the world
being whoever you want to be
and belong
with all of us understanding
that we need this place
to thrive
to connect
to give up a little bit of ourselves into our community
then receive the gift of fitting in
a key clicked into place
many times over again

Salem is
That feeling - how can I describe it
When you tip your head back to stare up at a bright sky full of clouds
and then back down again at brick walls draped with ivy
murals with crabs
lobsters
fish
down even more to the colorful painted sidewalks
pavement wet with rain
And then you feel pride

blossoming within you
making you warm even when the wind makes your face sting
and the snow is numbing your fingertips
Pride that is making us shine
even when the night seems dark

And Salem is
all of us

Because all of us
have Salem
as a place
to call home.

Salem Is by Ellen Sullivan

Salem is
The warm, welcoming
Feeling I get when
I meet a kind resident
Or join the caring community
Who accepts anybody,
And everybody
No matter who they were
Born to be

Salem is
The peaceful
Yet exciting energy
That is found downtown
On the old, uneven, dark red brick roads
That have been around for hundreds
Of years
Where I'll find the most flavorful
Seafood you've ever had
Or where I'll take a calming walk
with loved ones and
Feel the easy
texture of the bricks below my feet
Or I'll see the intriguing shiny, bronze
Statues built on fresh, healthy green grass
or pale, solid concrete

Salem is
The fresh smell
of sugar-covered fried dough
at the common in October
And the sound of
loud applause
from the energetic crowd at
the Haunted Happenings parade
And the sweet,
sugary, tasting candy I'll receive while
trick-or-treating
And the creative,
hand-made Halloween costumes found walking
In every corner of the city

Salem is
The crunch of warm colored

Leaves I step on
On the smooth sidewalks while taking a stroll
And the empty, bare branches
From which
leaves have fallen,
But will grow back when
Spring makes its way to Salem
And the beautiful Gardens
residents have on display in their yards
Filled with all of my favorite types of Flowers
Tulips, poppies, roses
Any plant I could ever imagine
Set out in a scrambled up rainbow

Salem is
The beautiful, cold
blue waves at Waikiki beach,
Reflecting the bright sun,
And turning the light,
Pale sand I lay on into
dark, wet mud to build sand castles with
And the sound of children's excitement
When winning an arcade game At the Willows on a warm summer evening
And the sight of the
Friendship boat floating At Derby wharf

Salem is
More than just
A city
Salem is
our home.