

NEXT GEN WRITERS

INDIA



THE POETRY ISSUE · NO. 1 · August 2026



OUR VERY FIRST

Poetry Competition

*Winning poems from young writers, ages 10–14, gathered
from every corner of India.*

ILLUSTRATIONS BY BIJOYETI GHOSH

From the Founder's Desk

When I started Next Gen Writers India, it came from a very personal place. I was looking for a platform where my own child's writing could be read, taken seriously, and celebrated. I couldn't find one. So I decided to build it.

This poetry competition, our very first, is the result of that idea finally coming to life, and I could not be prouder of what poured in. We read poems about falling leaves and fresh spring mornings, about stars and heroes, about the ache for peace in a noisy world, and about learning to love yourself exactly as you are. Every single entry reminded me why this platform needed to exist.

A huge congratulations to our winners, Sanna Karachiwala, Tarini Mishra, Saashi Srivastava, and Shiv Tijare, and to every single child who found the courage to put their words on a page and send them out into the world. That courage is the whole point.

This e-magazine is for you. Read it, share it, and know that your voice matters here.

Here's to many more issues, many more voices, and many more young writers finding their way to the page.

With gratitude,

Seema Parwani

Founder, Next Gen Writers India

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Table of Contents

WINNERS

The Leaf That Didn't Want to Fall (1st Place)	<i>Sanna Karachiwala</i>
If I Had Five Lives (2nd Place)	<i>Tarini Mishra</i>
So What If... (3rd Place)	<i>Saashi Srivastava</i>
Not All Heroes Wear Capes (3rd Place)	<i>Shiv Tijare</i>

MORE VOICES

Stars	<i>Arya Joshi</i>
Peace	<i>Miraya Tyagi</i>
Every Turn Counts	<i>Saphira J Shah</i>
Spring	<i>Meher Dhalla</i>

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

Thank You, Judge
Meet Our Facilitators
What's Next

The Leaf That Didn't Want to Fall

by Sanna Karachiwala, age 14

Down on a branch hung a leaf,
Who was stubborn, scared and full of grief
While all the other leaves danced in autumn's call,
It whispered - "No, I won't yet fall!"
It was too scared to die,
As it watched its other friends fly
It stayed still, with its stubborn pride,
But the wind didn't take its side
The wind swirled around with its grace,
And brushed against the leaf's face
It was too strong, for the leaf to withstand,
With no other choice, it let go its hand
But surprisingly it experienced something,
That was different from its thinking
It realised that sometimes letting go can show,
A strength that staying doesn't know.



If I Had Five Lives

by Tarini Mishra, age 11

If I had five lives,
Like a video game
I used to play.
How would I live and die?
In what different ways?

For the first,
I would fight my fears,
Let go of each and every tear,
Talk back,
Walk away,
Like a girl unafraid.

For the second,
I would follow my first dreams,
Be an author,
Like how a memoir seems.

For the next,
I would love an ideal life,
Settle
Find a 9 to 5
At a job I haven't loved for a while.
Like a consultant,
Because everyone hates consulting.

For my fourth,
I would answer all my questions,
Every single one
Learn all I can,
Like a sponge,
But for knowledge.

For my fifth,
My final life,
I would devote it to those in need,
The homeless,
The helpless,
To give,
To save,
And to feed.

But I don't have five lives.
I only have one.
Only so many years,
Until it is done,
So I'll live like there's no tomorrow,
Because for all I know,
There might not be.



So What If...

by Saashi Srivastava, age 13

People say looks don't matter
But they notice I don't fit into the same dress as
my friend

People say looks don't matter
But their mouths curl with disgust when they
see me

People say looks don't matter
But they still taunt me about how much I eat

People say looks don't matter
But they always have some remark about my
body

I've tried convincing myself looks don't matter
But maybe the truth is that people will always
chatter

Their words aren't going to change how I look
Maybe I don't need to be what they think I
should

So what if my body is bigger than others?
So what if I'm a larger size?
So what if I ate more than others?
So what if they don't think I look right?

My body is big and beautiful
And so am I



Not All Heroes Wear Capes

by Shiv Tijare, age 13

My hero doesn't wear a cape
 My hero doesn't fly
 But every time I watch him
 On my face forms a smile
 My hero is a king
 Who's praises I sing
 For the magic he brings
 My hero is Mo Salah
 Legend says pyramids were built
 For the pharaohs of Egypt
 But I don't trust hieroglyphs
 They were built for Mo Salah
 Defenders pray in front of him
 Goalkeepers are terrified of him
 He weaves past them - they crumble at his whim
 My hero is him, Mo Salah
 In Egypt he took a bus for 9 hours
 To fulfill his dream of playing at Liverpool
 amongst the scousers
 Now he is a football power
 My King Mohammed Salah
 Not just a player not just a hero
 But for proving everyone wrong when
 expectations were zero
 More than a player more than a hero
 My King, Mohammed Salah



Stars

by Arya Joshi, age 10

Every night, I look up at the stars,
With awe in my eyes, I could just stare for hours.

In this world, right or wrong,
Stars bring hope to go on.

Their twinkles create sparkling lights,
It truly is a magical sight.

Stars remind us to enjoy every moment while it lasts,
Also painting pictures of heroes who were strong and fast.



Peace

by Miraya Tyagi, age 11

See, look at this world.
Oh wow, you may think.

So many countries on this planet.
But did you look at the despair?
You and I, yes, we may have different histories.
Of war and violence
Oh, but imagine a world filled with PEACE...

When I say peace, I mean living a life of freedom
and joy
A life without noise, without chaos.
Just living quietly along the countryside.
Oh, wouldn't that be fun?

No more wars for us.
Just peace.
Oh, how I would just love Peace.

These wars just keep on going.
But is there a real reason??
Oh, well I don't think so

On the other hand, how I dream of lasting
Peace...

Yes, I know there is a reason for peace.
And maybe if you join me
I can show you why
How our lives can change with peace.

Peace is happiness.
A life of freedom and joy
Being joyful all day along

No wars, no hatred and no more fear
Just kind voices we can hear
Oh, how I wish we could live in Peace
Just imagine, children playing freely,
No more tension on their innocent faces,
Oh, don't you think if we had peace
We could be a better world.

I don't know if these words will come true,
Yet I am writing because that's all I can do.
I can dream and write and talk and voice,

All we need is Peace
Just Peace!!



Every Turn Counts

by Saphira J Shah, age 14

My mom took a wrong turn today.
The map said to turn left.
She turned right instead.
I laughed, and told her we'd be late,
as I watched the map find another route.

Funny, isn't it?
the GPS panics every time we leave the path,
yet life never seems to.

It made me wonder
how many "wrong turns"
have silently become the best stories we tell.
The best memories we have.

Maybe the friend you almost never met was
waiting in the longer line.
Maybe the job you didn't get, made room for the
one you were meant to love.
Maybe the train you missed started the story
you'll tell your child one day.

We spend so much of life trying to get back on
track.
but what if
we were never lost?



Spring

by Meher Dhalla, age 11

Green sprouts pierce the snow,
A mild breeze starts to blow.
As waking buds burst into bloom,
Their colours drive away feelings of gloom

As spring arrives,
Joy fills our lives.
Birds sing beneath the sunlight,
As grass turns to green from white.



GRATITUDE

Thank You, Judge

Every poem in this issue was read closely, carefully, and with real generosity. Thank you for giving your time and expertise to our young writers.

Nisha Relwani Gupta

An English Language, Literature and Drama educator who brought a discerning eye for craft and emotion to every single entry.

IN HER WORDS

The standard of entries in this poetry competition was outstanding. The creativity, originality, and depth of thought made judging incredibly difficult. The poems explored powerful themes, from body image and the influence of idols to identity, self-discovery, and personal growth, with maturity and heartfelt expression.

Congratulations to our top three winners on this well-deserved achievement. To everyone who entered, thank you for sharing your voice and creativity. Please continue to pursue your passion for poetry and creative writing. Poetry is a powerful way to express ourselves, connect with others, and make sense of the world around us.

- Nisha Gupta

Visit us at www.nextgenwriters.in

OUR PEOPLE

Meet Our Facilitators

Beyond competitions, Next Gen Writers India runs genre-based workshops led by experienced writers and educators, helping young writers sharpen their craft across poetry, fiction, and more.

Hurraïn Sheikh

Genre Facilitator - Poetry & Fiction

An educator with over eight years in IB education and a certified Trinity College London trainer, holding a Master's in Literature. She runs novel study book clubs, writing workshops, and speech and drama sessions in poetry, fantasy, historical fiction, flash fiction, satire and humour.

Priya Narayan

Educator & Creative-Writing Coach

An educator, professional storyteller, creative-writing coach and clinical psychologist with more than two decades of experience, working with writers of every age across genres from thriller and mythology to non-fiction.

If you're an educator, writer, or storyteller interested in facilitating a workshop with us, or a parent curious to know more, we'd love to hear from you.

REACH OUT TO SEEMA

75066 43639

seema@nextgenwriters.in | @nextgenwritersindia

What's Next

Coming Soon: Letters That Matter

Our next competition invites young writers to put pen to paper in the oldest and most personal form there is: the letter. Write to a friend, a future self, a stranger, anyone at all. Age-appropriate prompts and word limits for both age groups. Details and submission dates coming soon on our Instagram and website.

HOW TO SUBMIT

Follow @nextgenwritersindia on Instagram for the announcement and submission link.

Or email your entry directly to seema@nextgenwriters.in.

It's free to enter, and open to writers ages 10 to 14 from anywhere in India.

Every child has a story worth telling.