

Yard Art

A Collection of Children's Poetry

Sarah Franklin Thompson
Illustrated by Bree Stallings

Yard Art is an illustrated collection of twenty-five children's poems for little and big kids alike to pick through and enjoy like pieces of art displayed in the front yard.

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This original poetry collection will delight even the most reluctant young readers with fun-filled humor and eye-catching illustrations. While reading the poems "Yard Art" and "Sledding," kids can "gawp and gape" and "google and oogle" like yard onlookers—or discover the silliest ways to sled without snow.

In "Front Talk," young readers will see what happens when they talk back to their mama before she can even issue an order! And "Ike's Motorbike" introduces a crazy motorcycle that all kids would want to ride—but might give them a stomachache instead!



Missing Goat Press



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Yard Art

I love my friend Jen, but she's clearly insane,
Which you'll see when you spy her side yard.
Instead of trimmed grass and neat rows
of green plants,
What you'll see is a bit avant-garde.

It looks like tornadoes blew right past her house
Or the dump took a trip into town.
It looks like a landfill took over her yard
'Cause the lawn guy was never around.



"My yard is a showcase of art!" says my friend,
"And allow me to further explain.
Feel free to make fun of my work, my dear friend,
Since my future will only find fame!"

"I strive to be known as a famous arteest,"
Says my friend as she climbs a gold stool,
"By spying some gemstones when you might
see rocks
Or a scepter while you see a tool."

"It isn't the paint or the type of the house,
Or the flowers that set it apart;
It's yards full of treasures and trinkets galore—
All arranged into beautiful art!"

"I started by leaving my bike in the rain,
Since I hated to put it away.
My bike formed a statue of breathtaking rust
So of course, my new prize had to stay.

"I made a blockade by just using some boards,
For the boys who attacked my domain.
I struggled with throwing my fortress away
And decided to let it remain.

"I added my balls and my bats and my hoops,
For new colors and shapes with a flair.
I hope that you notice the textures and hues,
And the frescos I painted with care."

Sure, people do stop and they gawp
and they gape,
And they linger to google and oogle—
At shovels and shells and old shoes and toy ships,
At the bike parts and Barbies and bugles.

"I'm happy to give you my signature now,
And I happen to have a pen handy;
I own lots of paper in multiple shades,
Though they're damp and a little bit sandy."

Jen sits on her stool like a queen on her throne,
And she seems so assured of her calling.
I start to consider if I could be wrong
About waste I assumed was appalling.

So maybe she *would* climb to fame one bright day
As the girl who changed trash into art.
And maybe there's beauty in objects we toss
And Jen's yard is the place where we start.

Oops!

They tell me to shoot for the stars,
And I did, but instead I hit Mars.
It blew in a blast that burned bright,
And now it's not dark when it's night!





Ike's Motorbike

I don't like Ike,
I don't like Ike;
He rides a crazy motorbike.

Ike's motorbike has hot-dog rims;
The wheels are hot-dog buns.
It has a soft marshmallow seat
That bounces when it runs.

His motorbike has pancake brakes—
The finest ever made.
The foot pegs are black licorice;
It runs on lemonade.

I don't like Ike,
I don't like Ike;
He rides a crazy motorbike.

His muffler shoots out ice-cream cones
For every holiday;
The pipes leave trails of gummy bears
And chunks of Milky Way.

My stomach growls, I hate to say;
I want to take a bite—
To eat some Twizzler handlebars,
A curvy, sweet delight.

I don't like Ike,
I don't like Ike;
He rides a crazy motorbike.

His bike drives up and down my street;
I watch him from inside.
I'm filled with rage and jealousy—
Why can't I have a ride?

But then I see Ike slowing down;
He yells for me to come.
I climb on back, then hold on tight;
He offers me some gum.

I quite like Ike,
I quite like Ike;
He rides a crazy motorbike.



Sledding

Just so you know, you can sled without snow

On some grass that resides on a hill.

All that you need is a polished behind,

Plus a head like a rock, for a thrill.

Just so you know, you can sled without snow

On some mud that remains on a slope.

All that you need is a pair of closed eyes,

Plus a prayer that's sent to the pope.

Just so you know, you can sled without snow

On volcanoes with blankets of lava.

All that you need is an icy rear end,

Plus a mug for some really hot java.

Front Talk

My mama has rules that are set into stone;
“No back talk!” she’d firmly command.
But I know the holes that are hidden in laws
And “front talk” she never did ban.

Before Mama told me that I should get down,
I already told her, “No, ma’am!”
Before she had asked me what sandwich I’d like,
I already told her, “No ham!”

Before Mama asked me to wash before lunch,
I already told her, “I did!”
Before she had said I must play with mean Sam,
I told her a “no”—then I hid.

Then Mama inquired if I wanted dirt pie,
With worms and grass piled in a mess.
She heaped it real high on my plate with a *splloosh*
Since I had just told her a “yes”!

I picked up a spoon that was
d

r

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n

g

with mud

And worms squirming onto the floor.
I learned that my loophole had holes of its own;
My front talk now stays at the door!





Poem

You're reading words
Your eyes are moving
The gremlin in your mind is grooving
He says keep reading what's been penned
But get ready—now stop.
It's the end.

Appropriate Jake

They all love Appropriate Jake;
That boy never makes a mistake.

But as soon as you turn,
You'll quickly discern
His facade of perfection is fake.

Appropriate Jake has a knack
Of taking when you turn your back.

He is dreadfully slick;
You don't see the nick,
And you never suspect he's a hack!

I know he seems charming and kind;
Fake virtue will make people blind.

So you won't see it's he
When missing a ski

And your orange is now just a rind.

I'm thinking that Jake couldn't face
His bedroom with all the blank space.

Though he wasn't the type,
He started to swipe
And to pilfer and loot in each place.

I'm sure that he took my red coat
And the Alps are now missing a goat.
Yes, he's stolen a pig,
George Washington's wig,
And poor Camelot's missing its moat.

This might just sound really insane,
But no one can seem to find Spain!
And Jake's dad has no pants,
That hill has no ants,
And it looks like Lake Erie's been drained!

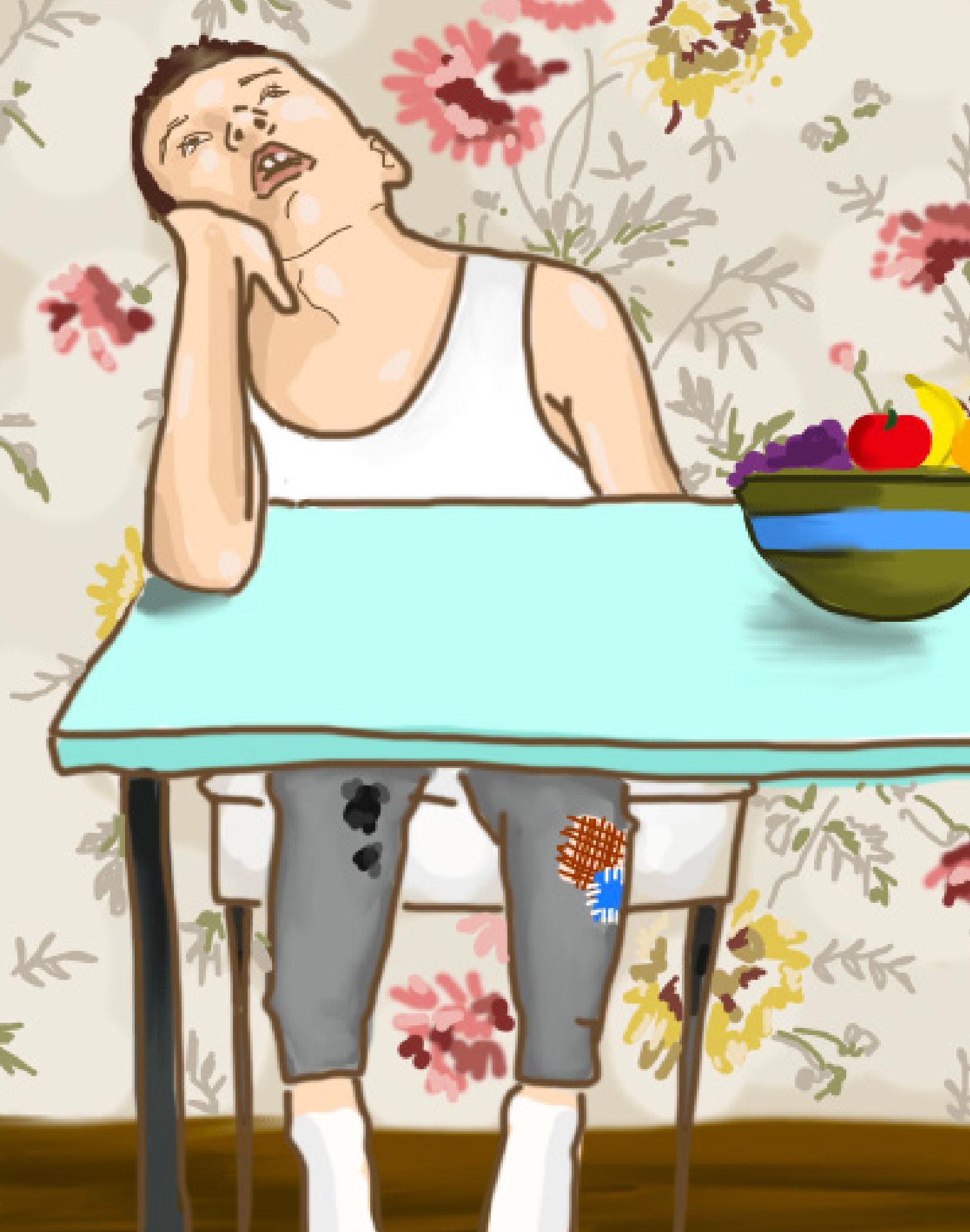
My grandma thinks Jake is genteel
Because he says thanks for each meal.
Now she's missing her teeth
And can't chew her beef,
Yet she still does not think that Jake steals!

If skies go all black when it's late,
You'll probably guess the stars' fate.
But we're all left to fume
Till Jake's out of room,
So let's hope it is swift for our sake!



Oops!

They say it's a blessing disguised,
Like when you get fruit and not fries.
Or when your new pens just explode,
On old pants that your grandma had sewed.





Watery Guy

Watery guy, watery guy,
Lookin' at me with his watery eyes.

His skin doesn't have wrinkles, they're ripples,
And he doesn't quite sit, he slides.
His fingers don't grasp, they trickle;
His feet don't take steps, they glide.

His teeth are cold, cold ice cubes
That melt when he eats hot soup,
And then they run down the front of his face . . .
So his chin has a bit of a droop.

He doesn't lie back, he pours,
And he doesn't quite stand, he puddles.
He can't really shout, but he roars;
He can't purse his lips, so he funnels.
His eyes can be murky or shiny,
But I'd rather they actually twinkle,
'Cause the drops that come out are quite briny,
Even if only a sprinkle.

Detachable Head

“Our boy is so sweet; he’s a kindhearted son!”
Henry’s mother and father once said.
They watched their dear boy fold his hands while he prayed
Right before the good boy went to bed.

“I’ll bet you he asks for world peace!” said his dad.
“Or that babies will not need to cry!”
“That children will never get hurt,” said his mom,
“And they won’t have a reason to sigh!”

Their boy moved his lips as he closed his blue eyes;
It was nothing like they had just said.
What Henry would pray for with all of his heart
Was a splendid detachable head.

He’d toss it right up at the back of a line,
So he’d see how much longer to go.
He’d have no more need to bend down quite so far
When he told his small sister hello.

When wet, Henry’s head could sit out on the porch,
His blonde hair getting dry in the breeze;
For trips to his aunt’s, Henry’s head could stay home,
Thus avoiding her burnt mac and cheese.

When evening drew near and his dad liked to say,
“My dear boy, all good things have to end,”
He’d leave out his head at the end of the couch,
So that he could still watch *Super Friends*.

When Henry was banned at his dinner each night
From escaping the dining-room chair,
His body could stay while his head rolled around,
And his sister would shout, “It’s not fair!”

Each night Henry knelt
While he thought of his wish,
Never saying his prayer aloud;
His parents were sure they knew
Henry’s pure thoughts
And continued to feel very proud.





Trolls

A troll controls my backpack
So that he can hitch a ride.
He should be guarding bridges,
But he says he's occupied.

My troll demands a pittance
Every time I crack the top.
My back will break from pennies
If this troll won't ever stop.

He eats my pens and pencils
Like my school supplies are snacks.
He dines on work for math class;
All that work I won't get back!

He tears the strings from string cheese
When he breaks into my lunch.
He likes to drain my thermos
Of hot soup or icy punch.

He's got to leave my book bag;
I won't change my mind a smidge.
Rude trolls are not for backpacks . . .

Do you maybe have a bridge?

The Mama Police

The Mama Police, they're a-comin'

So consider the words that you say.

The Mama Police, they're a-comin'

And will take your mean mama away.

They know that she made you eat spinach—

Every morsel that covered your plate.

And nights when you stayed at a friend's house,

She insisted you couldn't stay late.

The Mama Police, they're a-comin'

So examine the words that you say.

The Mama Police, they're a-comin'

And will take your poor mama away.

The Mama Police don't take kindly

To those mamas who won't make all sweets.

Your breakfast, your lunch, and your dinner

Should be donuts and cookies for weeks.

The Mama Police, they're a-comin'

So be careful of who you betray.

The Mama Police, they're a-comin'

If you're lucky, your mama can stay!





How to Comb a Kid's Hair

What's the best way to comb a kid's hair?
Should it be dry or wet?
Should it be sprayed with a fireman's hose
To get rid of the dirty-kid sweat?

Could it be smoothed with an iron that's hot
While drinking a pink lemonade?
Then it won't look like your dear father says—
Like it's combed with a bursting grenade.

Could it be dipped in the Erie Canal,
Then dried on a big roller coaster?
Or taken direct from a dunk in the pond
To be cooked in an old-fashioned toaster?

What's the best way to comb a kid's hair?
I've tried all the options, I swear.
I've given up hope for taming your locks;
I'm shaving them off in despair!

Oops!

They told me the ball's in my court,
But what can I do if I'm short?
I dodged through tall legs like they wished
In seconds I promptly got squished.



A Broken Poem

There was a man called Midas,
And the way the story's told,
Everything the old guy touched
It turned to solid gold.

My fingers hold some magic
Like that old gray gilded bloke;
Everything I ever touch
Gets spilled or even broke.

I reach across the table
Just to get a bit of salt;
The shaker falls, the pepper too—
I know it's not my fault.

It's magic in my fingers,
And I know you must feel jealous.
Not everyone can have these hands
That are so overzealous.



I'm not allowed in paint stores,
And a china shop—no way.
But call me if you need some help
Creating disarray.

Invite me home for dinner
When the menu is despised;
The food will fly off plates so fast
You'll swear it's motorized!

Just tell your teacher sorry
That your homework's now confetti;
You left it in the hands of one
With fingers like a yeti!

I cannot lift a finger,
Not to sweep or make my bed;
To clean or clear or pick up clothes
Could end in someone dead!

That's how the cookie crumbles,
And they do when I'm about;
My magic fingers are the best—
Of that there is no doubt.



Leopard Seal

A leopard seal has lots of spots
And whiskers that are gray.
With teeth so sharp, they'll chew through rocks—
You'll need to stay away.

Oh no they don't!
How would you know?
'Cause I know more than you!
You think just 'cause you spoke some words
They always will be true?

A leopard seal has lots of dots
And whiskers that are white.
With jaws as strong as iron traps,
They have a deadly bite!

Oh no they don't!
How would you know?
'Cause I am really smart!
You think just 'cause you talk a lot
I'll have a change of heart?

A leopard seal eats lot of fish,
Then toast and apricots,
With tea and cream and sugar cubes
And lots of tater tots!

Oh no they don't!
How would you know?
'Cause I am never wrong.
You think just 'cause you think out loud
We all should go along?

A leopard seal eats lots of krill,
Then bread and jellied fruits,
With chai and milk and nutmeg spice
And spuds with salt to boot.

Enough, you two, you drive me nuts!
I wish you'd hear your feuds.
From where I stand, it sounds a lot
Like scatty attitudes!

A leopard seal—it has no ears,
And good thing it's that way.
'Cause then she does not have to hear
This driveling display!

Not Lookin'

A man walkin' by,
But I'm lookin' at my phone
Purrin' cat with one eye,
But I'm lookin' at my phone
Rainin' from the sky,
But I'm lookin' at my phone
Want some birthday cake?
But I'm lookin' at my phone
Steppin' on a snake,
But I'm lookin' at my phone
Phone fallin' in a lake,
But I'm lookin' at my phone
As it's sinkin' down low,
But I'm lookin' at my phone
Like a tor-pe-do!

I'm not lookin' at my phone!





A Real Sword

I hope it's fine with you, Mom,
And my wish won't be ignored;
With all the choices out there,
I'd just rather have a sword.

The kind that's made of metal,
One that's pointy on the top—
Not made of bendy plastic
Or the tail end of a mop.

And while I'm glad to have a stick
For when I'm in a pinch,
A real sword made of metal
Makes the bad guy truly flinch.

I'll walk in Zorro's footsteps,
Fighting instances of crime.
I'll even guard my brothers
Though I hate it when they whine.

I'll follow safety guidelines
By not swinging it around.
Unless you need protection,
I won't bring it into town.

I know you're really worried
That I'll take the sword inside,
But fights with thieves and robbers
Mean I need a sword nearby.

I can't accept that broomstick;
It would really hurt my pride.
A knight in shining armor
Needs a sword that's bona fide!

Tell Me

If white hair is older than gray hair,
And gray hair is older than brown,
Then what hair is older than pink with blue dots
Like the hair I just saw on that clown?

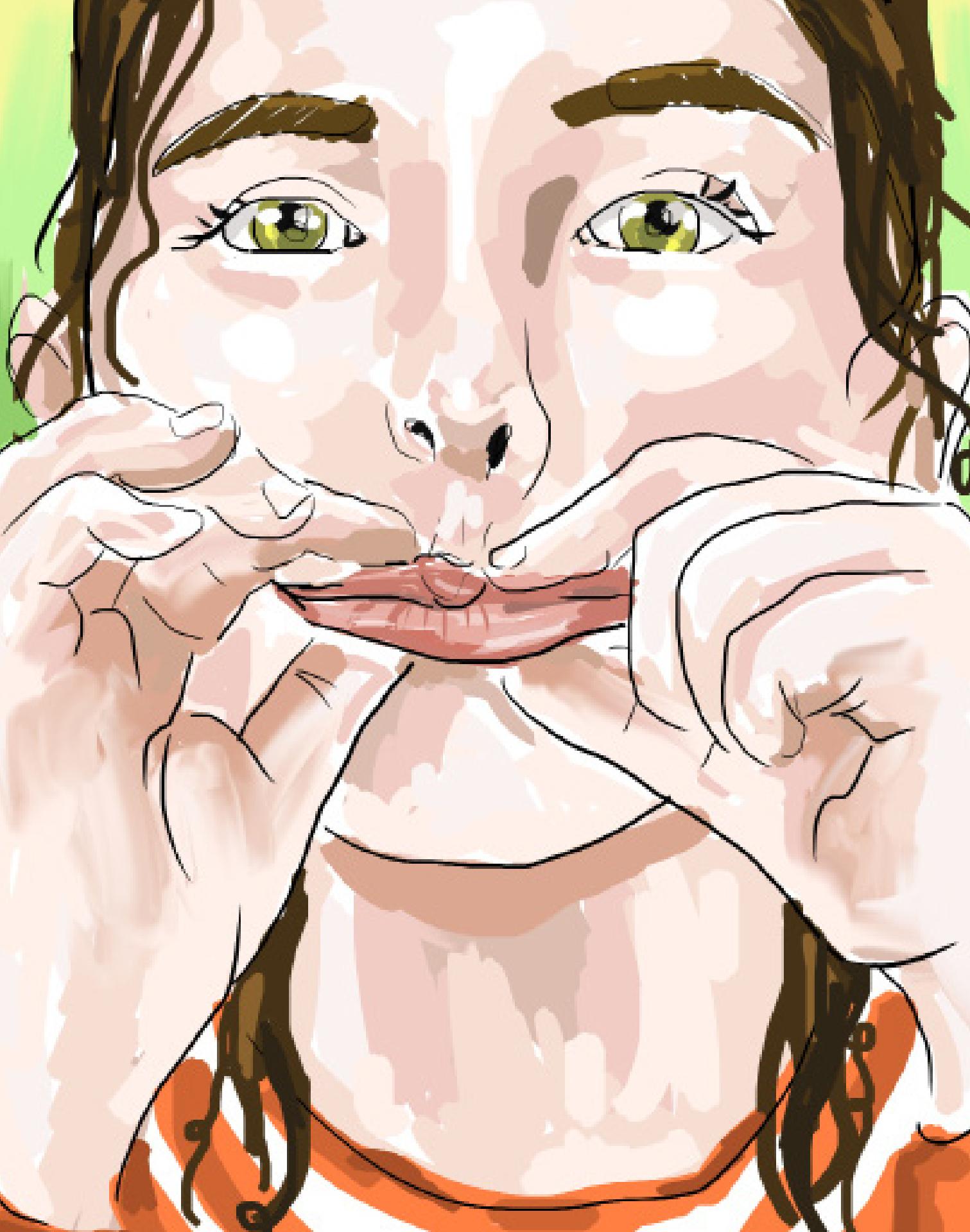
If white teeth are better than yellow,
And yellow are better than gray,
Than how 'bout when teeth are all brown with white bits
After eating a large Milky Way?

If black shoes are nicer than gym shoes,
And gym shoes are nicer than beach,
Then what shoes are nicer than ones made from tires,
or the fuzz off the top of a peach?

If black eyes hurt more than pink ones,
And pink eyes hurt more than bright yellow,
Then what eyes would hurt more than white with red stripes
Like the eyes I just saw on that fellow?

If I'm not supposed to walk on the grass, then where?
If I see something funny, why can't I stare?
Is that lady with an eye patch a pirate?
Why are you telling me to be quiet?





Oops!

They say to keep silence like gold,
But mouths just don't do what they're told.
The words from my mouth never cease;
Now no one can find any peace.
(And quiet!)

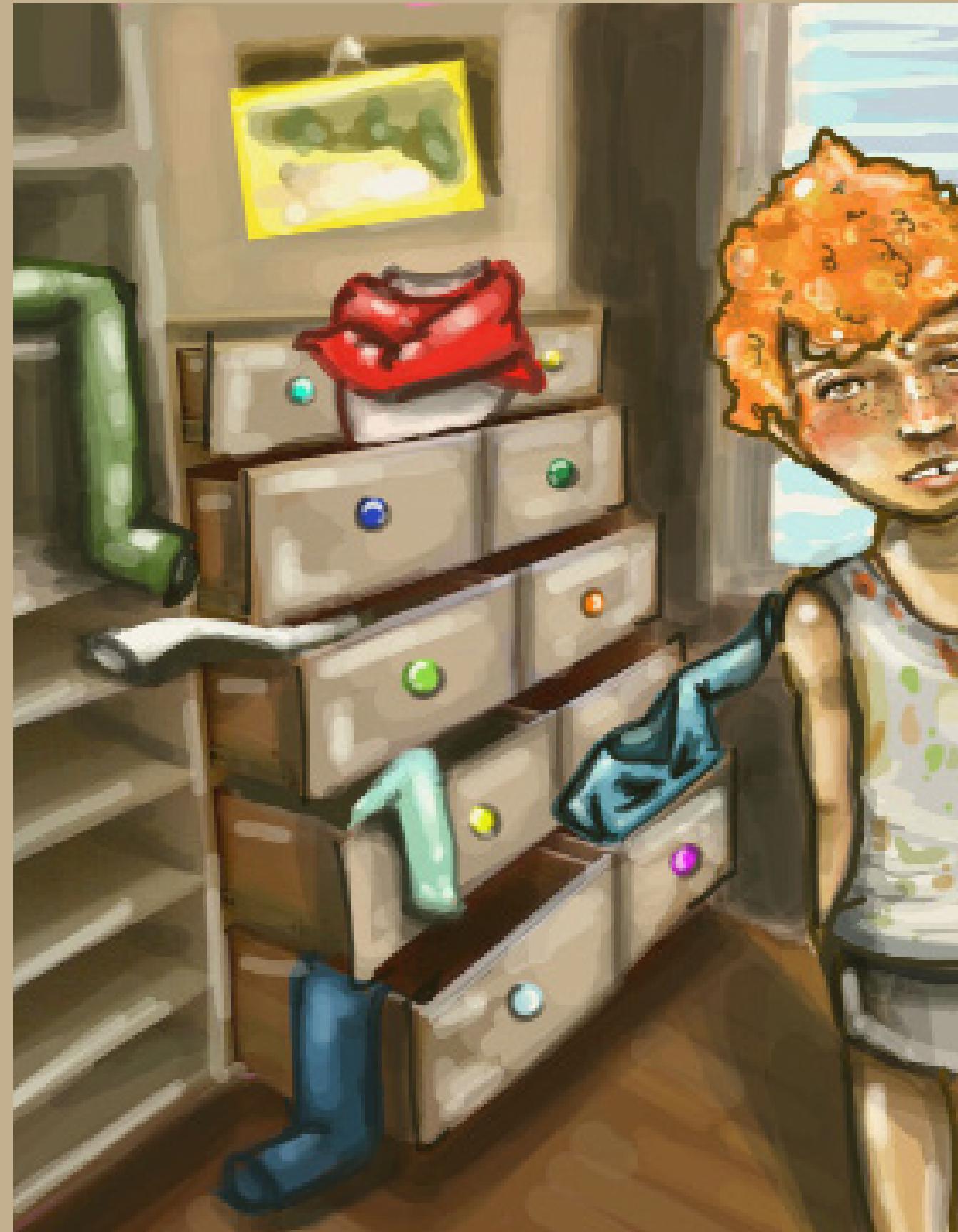
I Want a Different One

You always are saying, "I *won't* wear that one!"
While tossing the shirt far away.
But what if the shirts that you favored the most
Refused to wear *you* one more day?

"I'd like a nice boy who's not covered in dirt,"
Your shirt would call out from your bin.
"A boy who won't smear me with ketchup at all—
A boy who thinks stains are a sin."

The crumpled-up shirt from the closet perked up.
"Hey, you!" it would probably shout.
"Your head is too big for this shirt, can't you see?
You stretch my nice collar right out!"

And what if the shirts you detest went on strike
Along with the shirts you like best?
Revenge would be sweet for those shirts you reject
Each day when it's time to get dressed.



"I'd rather go live at the secondhand store!"
The shirt you called "icky" would cry.
"I'll find a new boy who appreciates me;
I'll relish the waving goodbye."

"I formerly pitied those shirts not once worn,"
Sighed Superman shirt from the drawer.
"I'm fading from red into pink from neglect;
I'm going to fly out the door!"

You'll stand in your room in just shorts and some socks
So chilled and so awkwardly bare;
I know that you'll wish that you spared one more thought
For shirts that you never will wear.

Inside Voice

When I'm talking inside, I'm amazing,
With the smartest and best things to say,
But when talking outside, I go crazy,
And the best I can do is to bray!





Honorable Mention

When Annie crossed the finish line,
No fans declared they cared,
'Cause all the others crossed it first
And not a soul was there.

With pull-ups on the monkey bars,
She only got halfway.
And running on the track a mile
Would take her half the day.

While playing on the soccer team,
She couldn't really boast—
She sometimes got a goal (or two!)
But never scored the most.

When Annie tried to flip, she flopped,
And kickball made her fall.
When Annie tried to dive last month,
She made a cannonball.

She never seemed to win the gold,
A trophy, or a prize,
For skiing, skating, volleyball,
Or eating more french fries.

But Annie didn't mind that much
On any given day
Because she got to run and jump
And shoot and scoot and play.

So if you've never been the best,
She'd tell you it's okay.
Just promise that you'll close your eyes
When Annie takes ballet.

I Won't Go!

I won't go to the circus,
Though it's coming into town;
I won't go to the circus,
Where I'll see the angry clown!

There's no way he'll be happy
Getting bopped with that old shoe,
Or squirted with a flower,
Though it's what a clown must do.

I won't go to the circus,
Though it's coming into town;
I won't go to the circus,
Where I'll see the angry clown!

He'll ride a bike so tiny,
Round and round the circus ring,
Afraid the vicious lions
Want to shred him into string.

I won't go to the circus,
Though it's coming into town;
I won't go to the circus,
Where I'll see the angry clown!

He'll have to walk the tightrope,
Full of fear that he may fall,
Or fly above the circus
As a human cannonball.

Wait! What's that you say?
The circus might be going away?

I WILL go to the circus,
Since it's coming in to town;
I WILL go to the circus,
Where I'll see the angry clown!





Oops!

They say make a long story short,
But my tale needs a longer retort.
On pages and pages it goes,
Till I'm buried in heaps of long prose.

Yard Art

is a collection of art I've left out in my proverbial yard.

The poem "Yard Art" is dedicated to my friend Jennie B. Her yard is not even close to a junk pile, but she has always believed in my writing and, most importantly, always let me know it. "Ike's Motorbike" was written in honor of my uncle Ike, a funny, kind, and wonderful person with a perpetual twinkle in his eye.

"Detachable Head" was based on the nightly serial my sister and I used to make up as kids—though our original version was about a kid who keeps losing his detachable butt. In one episode, someone found it and used it in a project hung up in the school hallway. A detachable head seemed fun too. The rest of the poems came from random thoughts or inspiration put on paper.

It's important to me to acknowledge that
Shel Silverstein deeply impacted my poetry writing.
A Light in the Attic forever cemented my love of poems as a child.

Now you go and put your own art out in the yard!

