

Milwaukee Public Museum

Poetry Competition 2017-2018

Theme: “10 at MPM”

To celebrate the tenth anniversary of Milwaukee Public Museum’s Student Poetry Competition, the theme for 2017-2018 is “10 at MPM.” The theme focuses on ten iconic exhibits that highlight the Museum, its collections, and mission, and celebrate its legacy as one of the region’s most treasured cultural institutions.

One of the most renowned institutions of natural and human history in the world, the Museum was chartered in 1882 and opened to the public in 1884. With 150,000 square feet of exhibit space and three floors of exhibits, it is the largest natural history museum in Wisconsin.

Its current collection contains approximately four million objects. Permanent exhibits are featured on three and a half floors of exhibit area, with additional space for traveling and temporary exhibits. Exhibits cover a wide geographical range including Africa, Asia, Europe, the Arctic, South and Middle America, the Pacific Islands, and the Costa Rican Rainforest. Other exhibits focus on Native Americans, paleontology, ancient civilizations, and include the beloved *Streets of Old Milwaukee* gallery.

While any of the Museum’s many fascinating exhibits could easily qualify as signature, representative features of the institution, we have chosen the following ten due to their consistent popularity with our visitors, and their potential to inspire rich poetic interpretation.

1. The Hebior Mammoth (Ground floor—atrium)



Found less than 30 miles from the Museum on a farm in Kenosha County, the Hebior Mammoth is among a group of important finds that help date the early presence of humans in North America. Eighty-five percent of the mammoth's bones were found at the excavation site—quite a rarity—and there were visible butchering marks apparent on some of them. These, and the presence of stone tools at the site, indicate the presence of humans. Carbon dating of the

bones places the mammoth's death at 14,500 years ago, proving that humans occupied this area at least 1,000 years earlier than previously thought.

2. Humpback Whale Skeleton (Ground floor to 1st floor, suspended above the Grand Staircase)



This is not a model—it's a real humpback whale skeleton, and it's one of the first things visitors see as they climb the Grand Staircase to the first floor. The whale, a male, was discovered off the Maine coast in the 1880s, and brought to the Museum in 1902. Humpbacks may reach a maximum length of 55 feet. Young humpbacks,

known as calves, are born in a tropical environment after 11-12 months gestation.

Humpback whales can "sing," and their vocal patterns are specific to separate populations of whales. They feed on krill and small schooling fish, and can "concentrate" their food, creating a bubble curtain by swimming in a circle beneath the water's surface.

3. The Streets of Old Milwaukee (1st floor)



Originally opened in 1965, The *Streets of Old Milwaukee* exhibit has long been one of the top favorites of the Museum's visitors. This model Milwaukee neighborhood replicates the sights and sounds of the city's busy streets during the period of roughly 1890 to 1917. It's one of the first walk-through dioramas in the world, transporting visitors back to a fall evening in Milwaukee around the turn of the century. Materials used in constructing the buildings were largely taken from sections of Milwaukee's historic downtown, which were being razed to make room for urban renewal and freeway construction. Highlights include Granny's House, the Pasttime Nickelodeon Theater, the general store, Haymarket candy shop, the Watson House, and a life-sized replica streetcar, a recent addition which makes for a dramatic entrance into the world of old Milwaukee.

4. The Puelicher Butterfly Vivarium (1st floor)



Home to several species of tropical butterflies, the Butterfly Vivarium is one of the most colorful and lively of the Museum's immersive exhibits. To keep its residents happy, the Vivarium features a waterfall and rainforest plants, and is kept warm and moist year-round with temperatures commonly in the 80s. One of nature's best

indicators of the health of an environment, butterflies can teach us a great deal about ecosystems and change in the natural world.

5. The Hell Creek Diorama (1st floor, *Third Planet* exhibit)



Possibly one of the scariest exhibits in the Museum, this diorama (an exhibit depicting a life-like scene) depicts a ferocious—and very hungry—T. Rex devouring a triceratops. This takes place about 60 million years ago, just after the impact of the asteroid that shook the earth, triggering the extinction of the non-avian

dinosaurs. In the background, dark clouds are boiling up as smoke, dust, and debris from the asteroid impact begin to block out the sun.

6. The Native American Pow Wow (2nd floor, elevator lobby)



This treasured exhibit depicts the Grand Entry ceremony at a typical Wisconsin Pow Wow. The 37 life-sized figures are dressed in colorful, traditional dance regalia and move on a large turntable accompanied by the sounds of American Indian music. The figures are based on life casts of Indian people representing the state's seven tribes. The Milwaukee area Indian community dedicated hundreds of hours to the creation of the Pow Wow regalia, as well as the drum used in the exhibit.

7. Crow Indian Bison Hunt diorama & rattlesnake button (2nd floor)

The Bison Hunt diorama is a world-famous example of what is known as the “Milwaukee style” of exhibit. It portrays Native American Crow warriors hunting buffalo in a dynamic scene integrating landscape, people, and animals in an intense display of emotion as both humans and beasts fight, moment by moment, to survive. Of course, a visit to the Bison Hunt diorama wouldn't be complete without taking a moment to press the rattlesnake button, getting him to rattle his tail in warning.



8. The Maasai Lion Hunt (3rd floor, Africa gallery)



Another of the Museum’s lively and evocative dioramas features Maasai warriors of Africa pitted in a life or death confrontation with a lion on the plains of Ethiopia. The lion, potential enemy of all African herdsman, preys on the cattle of the Maasai. Protected only by their thick shields made of antelope or zebra skins, Maasai

warriors kill lions with long spears and short defensive swords. Much prestige attends the successful hunter, especially the one who throws the first spear.

9. Mummies (3rd floor, *Crossroads of Civilization*)



The Museum's two Egyptian mummies, Djed-Hor and Padi-Heru, have been part of its collection since 1887. Outside of Chicago, MPM is the only institution in this part of the country exhibiting Egyptian mummies. The mummies were priests in the same temple in Akhmim, Egypt -- though they wouldn't have known one another. Djed-

Hor is believed to have died around 600 BCE, while Padi-Heru was likely mummified in approximately 250 BCE, 350 later. CT scan imagery now allows visitors to peer beneath the bandages and inside these two fascinating ancient artifacts.

10. The Japanese House and Garden



One of the most serene and contemplative exhibits in the entire Museum, the Japanese House and Garden depicts a peaceful evening scene of two women playing the card game of "100 Poets." Strolling the stone pathways of this timeless sanctuary, visitors are

transported to a unique culture on the other side of the world. The garden invokes the consciousness—and contemplation—of nature on a human scale. Stones, plants, and fountains comprise this tranquil, meditative environment and strengthen its evocation of the natural world.



We heartily encourage students to visit the Museum and tour these renowned exhibits for inspiration in writing their poems. However, it is not necessary for students to visit the Museum in order to participate in the competition. Students may also be inspired by the exhibit photographs featured above.

Kohl's Thank You Thursday is a great time to visit! ALL visitors receive FREE access to the permanent exhibits of MPM on the first Thursday of every month, and we stay open until 8 p.m.

More details about some of these exhibitions can be found on-line at: www.mpm.edu

Contest details

Theme: “10 at MPM”

Deadline: April 27, 2018

Who is eligible: The competition is open to all Wisconsin students in grades 3-12. Submissions will be accepted from these grades ONLY.

Criteria: Entries will be judged on creativity, originality, imagery, artistic quality, and sense of poetic expression.

Reading: Winners will be invited to read their poems at the Museum on Saturday, May 19th, 2018 as part of the 2018 Wisconsin Museums Week.

Awards: Each winner will receive a one-year family membership to the Museum. A certificate of achievement will be awarded at the reading. Winning poems will be published on the Museum’s website.

Teacher prizes: Each teacher of a winning student will receive one (1) free Family 4-Pack to the Museum.

Submission Details

- All submissions must be word-processed. Single-spaced text is acceptable.
- Poems may not exceed 30 lines.
- All submissions must show the student’s name and grade level at the top right corner of the page. The name of the school and the moderating teacher’s name, email address, and school phone number must appear at the top-right corner of the page.
- Each poem must have a title.
- Poetry must be the original work of the student and may not have been previously published anywhere.
- Please avoid: decorative fonts, illustrations, and colored paper, which make submissions more difficult to read.
- NOTE: Each poem should connect with the theme, “10 at MPM” (the ten signature exhibits listed above). Poems not focusing on one of these exhibits will not be considered.

- We are sorry, but we cannot return original entries or comment on submissions.
- Teachers will be notified by e-mail or phone if their students have won.

How to Enter

- **Submit your students’ work electronically** through the following link:
<https://www.mpm.edu/plan-visit/educators/poetry-competition>
All poems must be grouped into a single PDF or Word document, with one poem per page. Please be sure your contact information and grade level appears in the top right-hand corner of each page.
- **Please do not send email submissions.**
- All submissions must be received by April 27, 2018. Submissions received after this date will not be considered.
- **Submissions by regular mail** are also accepted.
Mail them to:

**MPM Poetry Competition
c/o Richard Hedderman
Education Section
800 W. Wells Street
Milwaukee, WI 53233-1478**

*For more information, contact Richard Hedderman at (414) 278-2718 or
hedderman@mpm.edu*

Poetry Competition Judges

Richard Hedderman—MPM Poetry Competition Coordinator/Lead Judge

Richard Hedderman is currently the Education Programs Coordinator at the Milwaukee Public Museum. He graduated from the University of San Francisco with a B.A. in English Literature and Theatre, and earned a M.A. in Creative Writing from the University of New Hampshire where he studied with U.S. Poet Laureate, Charles Simic. He was a three-time Poetry Fellow with the New York State Writers Institute under the direction of John Montague, and his poetry has appeared in several national and international

journals. Publications include poems in *The Chautauqua Literary Journal*, *South Dakota Review*, *Eclipse*, *Kentucky Review*, *Rattle*, *Cutbank*, *Verse Wisconsin*, *Steam Ticket*, *Front Range Review*, *Kestrel* and *Midwest Quarterly Review*. He has been a guest poet at the Library of Congress for the *Poetry at Noon* series, and a finalist for the Ashland Poetry Prize. His poem series based on *Beowulf* appeared in the Welsh language literary journal *Skald*, and his poetry has been collected in *The Anthology of New England Writers* and *In a Fine Frenzy: Poets Respond to Shakespeare* (University of Iowa Press). He is the author of a collection of poetry, *The Discovery of Heaven* (Parallel Press.)

Al Muchka—Judge

Al Muchka has been on staff in the Milwaukee Public Museum History Section since 1991 and is currently the Associate Curator of American History. He earned a Master of Arts degree in American History/Public History and a Certificate in Museum Studies from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. He is a life-long resident of Milwaukee County, residing in West Allis and serving on the West Allis Public Library Board. Research emphasis focuses on issues of local history and the development of communities and businesses of southeast Wisconsin through 1860 and upper Great Lakes industries from the fur trade to iron mining and shipping and government institutions through the early 20th century. Al has also developed and built a variety of programs and exhibits for small historical societies and civic groups in the Milwaukee area. He is also an instructor in Museum Studies in the combined Milwaukee Public Museum/UW-Milwaukee Museum Studies Program.

Chris Rundblad—Judge

A former English major, Chris holds degrees from the University of Michigan and the University of Wisconsin. She currently guides visitors as a docent in the MPM Geology hall and helps write the “rhymes” for the museum’s Clue Crew Case Sheets. After years as an English teacher and librarian, she finds that she finally has exactly the qualifications needed for the most important position of all in the language arts: a knowledgeable and enthusiastic appreciator.