

“One Shadow in the Sea,” the third place poem in this age group, is a celebration of a sea turtle coming to shore to lay her eggs. The poem is stately in its rhythm and diction; plus, this writer’s appreciation and respect for nature’s life cycle is clear.

The opening five lines of the poem set the scene for the event. “Under a shining moon / a sea turtle bursts out of the lagoon.” The sea turtle’s “graceful[ness]“ in the water disappears on land and “she starts to totter.” The turtle’s “determination” to lay her eggs overcomes any unsteadiness on land, the verb “bursts,” regarding the turtle’s exit out of the water, is vivid and imaginative and captivates the reader.

The next two sections effectively detail this natural process. The turtle conquers the sand “as she digs herself a nest in which her eggs will stay.” After depositing the eggs, “she swims away. . . / dawn peeks out / and whispers day.” The verbs “peeks” and “whispers” effectively use personification to describe dawn. The last couplet is evocative: “One shadow in a wide, blue sea . . . / she’s gone.”

There is no over-emotional description in “One Shadow in the Sea.” The poem respectfully characterizes the actions of a sea turtle fulfilling the instinctive laying of her eggs as millions of turtles have done before her. The poet does not turn this action into something emotional and over-wrought; instead, he or she wisely makes the turtle’s behavior innate and captivating. Thus, the poem succeeds in a quiet, yet grand way. Congratulations to this inspired poet!

Thank you for the pleasure of reading your work!

Marie Kane, Final Judge
Sarah Mook Poetry Contest, 2018