

2026 Georgia River of Words

<https://projectwet.georgia.gov/ga-river-words>

projectwet@dnr.ga.gov



2026 Art: National Grand Prize Winner

Category III:

- **Zoe Chen**, Grade 6, *My Home Was in River*, Yan Art Studio, Alpharetta, Teacher: Yan Chen

2026 Art: Georgia National Finalists

Category I:

- **Keira Lin**, Grade 2, *A Stream Just Like a Dream*, SKA Academy of Art & Design, Duluth, Teacher: Leng Chang

Category II:

- **Keeley Tsai**, Grade 5, *Where Leaves Become Words*, Duluth

Category III:

- **Huixi Li**, Grade 8, *Sailing on Dark Seas*, Suwanee
- **Maia Cottman**, Grade 8, *Shining Across the Page*, The Paideia School, Atlanta, Teacher: Mary Beth Garrett

Category IV:

- **Marqus Johnson**, Grade 10, *Unique Changes*, Rockdale County High School, Conyers, Teacher: Tara Thieleke
- **Sophia Lin**, Grade 11, *A Prance of the Plume*, SKA Academy of Art & Design, Duluth, Teacher: Leng Chang

2026 Art: Georgia State Winners

Category I

Theodore Baade, PreK, *Melting Moments*, Pike County UGA Extension, Meansville, Teacher: Brooklyn Wassel

Avery Grace Lawrence, Kindergarten, *A Big Meal Before a Long Nap*, Whigham School, Whigham, Teacher: Ashley Maxwell

Haoning Lin, Kindergarten, *Beside the Blue Stream*, Duluth

Jaxon Griswold, Grade 1, *Turtle on Sand*, West Jackson Elementary School, Hoschton, Teacher: Jennifer Berkowitz

Jiayu Shi, Grade 1, *Childhood Reflected in Autumn Waters*, Buford

Ellie Wang, Grade 1, *The Secret Party Under the Ice*, Johns Creek

Keira Lin, Grade 2, *A Stream Just Like a Dream*, SKA Academy of Art & Design, Duluth, Teacher: Leng Chang

Suraj Nair Thappeta, Grade 2, *Crab Walk*, Casa Montessori, Marietta, Teacher: Theresa Dean

Category II

Zara Bhatia, Grade 3, *Untitled*, Cliff Valley School, Atlanta, Teacher: Kristi Petty & Jon-Erik Montgomery

Tevin Speights, Jr., Grade 3, *Wood Stork in the Wetlands*, Morningside Elementary School, Atlanta, Teacher: Holly Acton

Noah Starobin, Grade 3, *Endangered Snapping Turtle*, Morningside Elementary School, Atlanta, Teacher: Holly Acton

Sofia Yun Yu, Grade 3, *Listening to the River*, Johns Creek

Camila Juarez, Grade 4, *The Love is in Nature*, Lakeview Academy, Milledgeville, Teacher: Rosie Lowndes

Stella Liu, Grade 4, *An Unlikely Bond*, Atlanta International Art Academy, Suwanee, Teacher: Hua Huang

Zoe Rose, Grade 4, *Ducks in the Marsh*, Grovetown

Keeley Tsai, Grade 5, *Where Leaves Become Words*, Duluth

Category III

Zoe Chen, Grade 6, *My Home Was in the River*, Yan Art Studio, Alpharetta, Teacher: Yan Chen

Kya Toney, Grade 7, *The Rusty Blackbird*, General Ray Davis Middle School, Stockbridge, Teacher: Katy King

Maia Cottman, Grade 8, *Shining Across the Page*, The Paideia School, Atlanta, Teacher: Mary Beth Garrett

Amy Deng, Grade 8, *Dewy Waters*, C&H Art Studio, Duluth, Teacher: Chin-Cheng Hung

Huixi Li, Grade 8, *Sailing on Dark Seas*, Suwanee

Chloe Medbery, Grade 8, *Spider's Web*, General Ray Davis Middle School, Stockbridge, Teacher: Katy King

Emmy Rados, Grade 8, *The Alligator's Eye*, Homeschool, Quitman, Teacher: Lindsay Walker

Joshua Wu, Grade 8, *Flight Over Fright*, SKA Academy of Art & Design, Duluth, Teacher: Leng Chang

Category IV

Phoenix Adams, Grade 10, *Floating*, Adams Homeschool Academy, Bainbridge, Teacher: Tiffany Adams

Phoenix Adams, Grade 10, *Snapshots of Survival*, Adams Homeschool Academy, Bainbridge, Teacher: Tiffany Adams

Marqus Johnson, Grade 10, *Unique Changes*, Rockdale County High School, Conyers, Teacher: Tara Thieleke

Alexandra Huynh, Grade 11, *Primal*, Atlanta

Xuanxuan Li, Grade 11, *Where the World Folds*, Atlanta

Sophia Lin, Grade 11, *A Prance of the Plume*, SKA Academy of Art & Design, Duluth, Teacher: Leng Chang

Jaden Addison, Grade 12, *Wolf Creek*, Cairo

Ethan Ching, Grade 12, *One World Woven*, SKA Academy of Art & Design, Duluth, Teacher: Leng Chang

2026 Georgia Dragonfly Art Award

Clementina Pascavage, Grade 4, *Under the Sea*, Springmont School, Atlanta, Teacher: Lexi Paladino

2026 Poetry: Georgia National Finalists

Category I:

- **Bellamy Dunn**, Kindergarten, *The Pond*, Chula
- **Sandy Spadafore**, Grade 1, *Sandy Beach*, Atlanta
- **Olive Holycross**, Grade 2, *Water Flows Water Goes*, Atlanta

Category II:

- **Siva Narayan**, Grade 5, *World Wide Web Ecosystems*, Marietta
- **Mallory Shemwell**, Grade 5, *Stories*, Leesburg

Category III:

- **Muhammad Shahbaz**, Grade 6, *When the Heat Breaks*, ILM Academy, Roswell, Teacher: Fabiha Khalid
- **Elif Seker**, Grade 8, *Structural Pruning*, Cumming

Category IV:

- **Olivia Wang**, Grade 9, *How to Balance a Chemical Equation*, Atlanta

- **Sumayyah Hicks**, Grade 11, *The Land that Made Us*, Savannah

2026 Poetry: Georgia State Winners

Category I

Snow Adams, Kindergarten, *My Pet Jellyfish*, Homeschool, Bainbridge, Teacher: Tiffany Adams

Bellamy Dunn, Kindergarten, *The Pond*, Chula

Sandy Spadafore, Grade 1, *Sandy Beach*, Atlanta

Arrow Adams, Grade 2, *Hammer*, Adams Homeschool Academy, Bainbridge, Teacher: Tiffany Adams

Raylan Hall, Grade 2, *Aquatic*, Pike County UGA Extension, Meansville, Teacher: Brooklyne Wassel

Olive Holycross, Grade 2, *Water Flows Water Goes*, Atlanta

Category II

Saliha Hussain, Grade 3, *The Earth is Thirsty*, ILM Academy, Alpharetta, Teacher: Alayah Ansar

Leela Gupta, Grade 4, *Lion of the Wind*, Sandy Springs

Ariel Jandrlich, Grade 5, *Sad Waters*, Matt Elementary School, Cumming, Teacher: Corey Lostetter

Siva Narayan, Grade 5, *World Wide Web Ecosystems*, Marietta

Priya Owian, Grade 5, *Reading*, ILM Academy, Roswell, Teacher: Fabiha Khalid

Mallory Shemwell, Grade 5, *Stories*, Leesburg

Category III

Eli Hall, Grade 6, *Wildlife in the Wetlands*, Valdosta

Muhammad Shahbaz, Grade 6, *When the Heat Breaks*, ILM Academy, Roswell, Teacher: Fabiha Khalid

Bayan Alrawi, Grade 7, *The Season of Pollen*, ILM Academy, Roswell, Teacher: Amana Malik

Jordan Bowman, Grade 8, *The Water Wheel*, The Paideia School, Atlanta, Teacher: Tom Painting

Norah Lawley, Grade 8, *The Cold Truth*, The Paideia School, Atlanta, Teacher: Tom Painting

Elif Seker, Grade 8, *Structural Pruning*, Cumming

Category IV

Layla Towns, Grade 9, *Morning Loosens its Blue Ribbon From the Sky*, Rockdale Magnet School for Science & Technology, Conyers, Teacher: Cherie Ullo

Olivia Wang, Grade 9, *How to Balance a Chemical Equation*, Atlanta

Sumayyah Hicks, Grade 11, *The Land that Made Us*, Savannah

Alexandra Huynh, Grade 11, *Grounded*, Atlanta

Lexi Markham, Grade 11, *We Were Pompeii*, Atlanta

Bevena Williams, Grade 12, *Sunlight*, Saint Marys