

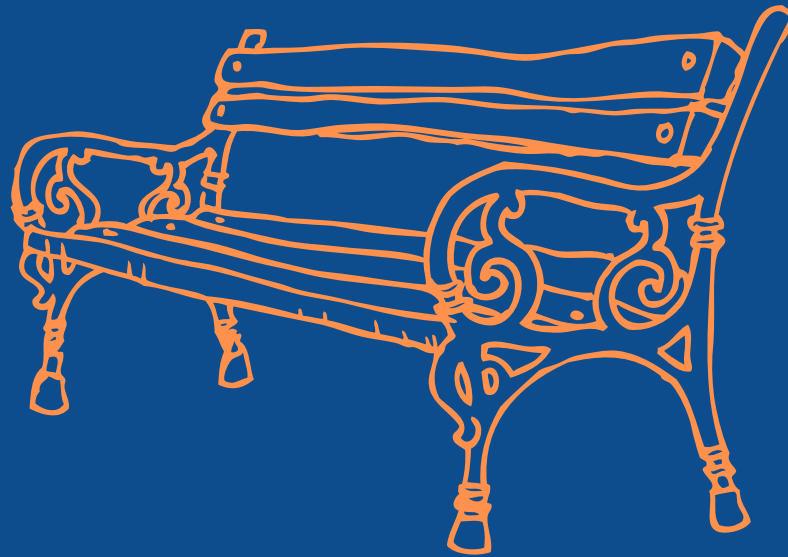


*Eliot Aging In Place
Committee*

THE BENCHES WRITING CONTEST



2021 Winning Entries



Thank you to all the participants!

THE BENCHES WRITING CONTEST

Winner
50+ category
Poem



Sometimes Wishing on A Star by Adele Buchwald

The bench was placed for all to share
With iron arms and wood so fair
Many came to eat and drink
Some to chat and some to think

Sitting close two came at night
The sea was calm, the moon was bright
They held hands and looked out far
Sometimes wishing on a star

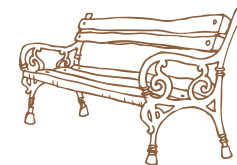
The two came back year after year
They soon brought children held so dear
To sit and watch the gulls fly by
And hear the sea's endless cry

As years went by the bench held on
Many others had come and gone
But now the years had taken hold
The bench was warm, the air was cold

Made of wood and iron strong
Waiting as the day is long
For the ones who need to be
Looking over rocks and sea

The two still came but now alone
Their three children long had grown
Next to his leg a cane did lay
His hair was white and hers was grey

The bench has held them through the years
Through their laughter and through their tears
And even though their time is short,
they still hold hands and look out far
Wishing on a star



THE BENCHES WRITING CONTEST

Winner
19-49 category
Poem

Park Bench by Andrew Ciali

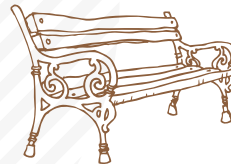
Alone in this world
And yet not truly alone
In the roller coaster of life
You provide a temporary home.

Your presence is grounding
Amidst this crazy world we live in
I sit for a moment
To take it all in.

The trees that stand sentinel
The breeze that dances upon my skin
The sunlight infinitesimal
The song of the birds as they call their kin.

And so the world seems more astounding
And my problems begin to fade
As I observe my surroundings
And bear witness to life's parade.

I am alone in this world
And yet never truly alone
For I have you, park bench
To call my temporary home.



THE BENCHES WRITING CONTEST

Winner
14-18 category
Short Story

Changes by Manu Ritchie



"Which way's Portsmouth?"

The Eliot boat launch attendant lifted her head, gazing at the man who'd spoken with a startled look on her face. He was surprised to find that she was quite young.

Or maybe everyone just looked young to him now.

"Ummm..." the girl quickly put away her book and stood up to approach his car. "O um,

I'm not great with directions, but I think I could probably--"

The man waved her off, laughing. "Nah, nah, I'm just kidding. People used to come here all of the time asking which way Portsmouth was." He frowned through his front windshield. "You should be down there."

The girl followed his gaze to a shack at the bottom of the paved hill leading down to the water. It was smaller than the one she was currently sitting in front of and could use a good coat of paint. "I just go where they put me. I like it up here, though; I can see everything."

"Used to be down there," the man insisted. "I did this job for fifteen years an' I always sat down there. We gotta get you down there."

The girl shrugged, smiling a little.

"Price has gone up, too," the man sighed. "Everything's changing."

Another shrug. "I wouldn't know; I just started."

He started his car again, feeling he had perhaps overstayed his welcome. "Well... I'm just gonna drive 'round the circle. Good luck. Stay warm."

The girl glanced over at the fleece blanket she had crumpled in her collapsible chair. It was June, but this early in the morning, in the shade and next to the water there was a marked chill in the air. "Will do."

"Which way's Dover?"

The man had been pleased to see the girl at the launch once again the following Friday. She was sitting with a computer on her lap this time, but set the device aside when he pulled up. "Do you actually want to know, or...?"

He laughed. "Dover's that way," he said, pointing a thumb to the right. Then he flipped it left. "Portsmouth's that way."

"Dover, Portsmouth," the girl echoed, pointing. "Got it."

continued

"You should be down there," the man sighed. He could remember long hours spent gazing at the sparkling river water, watching boats mosey back and forth. It had been busier then. Cheaper, and busier, and... well. "You know, I was here the day they built that launch."

The girl looked intrigued. "Really?"

"Really, I'm that old." The man snorted. "Well. Have a nice day."

"You too," the girl replied politely.

He leaned out his window a bit, one hand planted on the steering wheel. "When you're seventy-five, any day you see the top of the grass is a good day," he told her, nodding sagely. "Any day you see the top of the grass."

"This isn't my car, you know," the man informed the girl, resting an arm on the edge of his window. He still didn't know her name, but he enjoyed her company, and had started making a habit of stopping to talk each Friday when she worked at the launch. "It's my wife's. Married fifty-six years in two weekends."

"That's a big deal," the girl said, impressed. "How did you two meet?"

"Hmmm." He grinned. "Met in high school. I was the first one to talk to her over at YHS. Came down the hallway and I thought, damn, she's cute. We got married when I was nineteen years old an' have been together ever since. So, I used to have a nice truck. But I was loading it into the river and just got stuck. Next thing I know the whole thing's flipping over. So now I gotta drive this rust bucket."

He patted the dashboard and sighed. He missed his truck. He missed his mornings down at the launch with his thermos of coffee and his radio.

"I come down here every day," he told the girl thoughtfully. "Sit in the car for a bit. Watch the water."

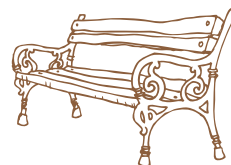
"You know, they've got benches down there now." The girl pointed down the hill. "Maybe you could sit there instead of in the car."

The girl walked down the steep paved hill to find the man sitting on one of the new park benches, arms stretched across the top, one pointing towards Portsmouth, the other towards Dover.

She slipped into the spot next to him and inhaled the distinct river-y scent. "Maybe I should be down here."

The man smiled. "Mm. Maybe I was wrong," he admitted, patting the top of the bench. "Maybe not all the changes going on around here are so bad."

"No," the girl agreed. "Maybe not."



THE BENCHES WRITING CONTEST

Winner
11-13 category
Poem



A Quiet Place by Autumn Baldwin

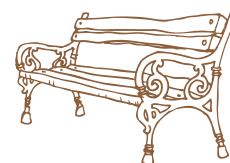
Nestled in a quiet place,
With grass so silky it feels like lace,
There's a simple bench, wood or stone,
A place you can feel is your very own.

Enjoy the rustle of the breeze,
A place to put your mind at ease,
Let your soul wander far,
Guided by a shining star.

A place you can read or simple look,
You won't find this in a book,
A magic you can call your own,
A simple star that has shone.

With sky so blue and oh so clear,
You have nothing to fear,
As you sit on a bench, wood or stone,
There's a quiet place, barely known.

A bench,
A simple, spectacular, quiet bench.



THE BENCHES WRITING CONTEST

Winner
8-10 category
Poem



Bench

by Belle Cormier

A park bench is
Sometimes in memory
Meet your best friend
On a park bench
Take a
Photograph
Birds
Squirrels
Imagine
Inspire a new book
On a park bench
Found around the world
Could be a park bench
A useful park bench could do
So much more
A place to take a break
A peaceful place to do work
Just a single park bench can change the
World
The possibilities are endless
On a park bench

