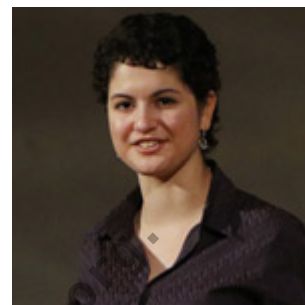


2018 Poetry Out Loud Winner Natalie Schimek

This year, Florida's Poetry Out Loud state champion is Natalie Schimek of Sarasota. Natalie is a senior at Pineview School for the Gifted and plans to attend Florida State University in the fall. April 23-25, Natalie will travel to Washington DC and represent Florida at the national finals of Poetry Out Loud and compete for the top prize of a \$20,000 scholarship.



In addition to reciting great works of poetry, Natalie also writes them. Here is one of her recent pieces:

Career Path to Salvation, or, Am I Doing This Right?

I used to want to tell stories. To create something of
nothing, but
I don't think I can. I don't think I have enough me in me to
give.

But—

I have sat under the shower,
watched the water spit towards me and wondered how you
turn the frayed edge of a towel into a map of the universe.
How you made your name in pink cotton candy skywriting
and projected it through a bullhorn.

Taught to hold a bottle with only six fingers. Taught to
pull the trigger with only six fingers.

I wanna know about undented soap and razors rusted
from years of disuse. About the splatter on white tile you
make with only your breath and less than six fingers.

I wanna know about lightning bolts on thighs, about the

neurotransmitter stabbed into your hip so when you don't
have enough, you still have some.

I wanna know sharp pain.

Teach me, please, to make something of nothing. To
turn me into beautiful, I into symphony, into garden.

I wanna say how you became the giving tree, but I'm
not sure how to tell them that you are what the world does
to good things. I am certain that one day, someone will
tell the story of you in the frayed edge of a towel, and I am
certain that someone cannot be me.

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