



Dear readers,

Last week Pak Matt organized a visit by Pak Ron to educate 2nd graders about snakes. That same day during our English proficiency lessons when children were learning to look for action words and use them into sentences, not surprisingly most children wrote sentences about snakes. What we see, hear and do, influences our life and work!

Here is a lovely poem on Garter snake written by a 13 year old girl in Seattle, USA.

### **Garter Snake**

He is a rope of darkness  
Against rain-streaked grass  
Green scales the colour of ivy  
Slither through my hands with unexpected life

Miniscule eyes of tinfoil and yellow paint  
I imagine a young collage  
Strange shapes and rough edges  
Where the scissors rebelled

In dirty fingers caked with mud  
I grasp the wriggling creature  
Examining the greenish scales  
One by one

The scent of the forest fills my nose  
Wet grass and the sharp tang of mint  
I turn him in my hands  
So small, so delicate, so strange

Innocent garter snake  
Not the sneaky, clever one  
Attached to an evil hunch  
Squirming in my fingers

I see a hint of fear in those shiny eyes  
The spasms of worry that rocket through each scale  
I let go  
The snake slithers back  
Where to—I don't know



Common Garter snake

**2010 Grand Prize Winner - Category III (Grades 7-9) (River of words poetry contest)**

**Julia Christensen, age 13**

**Seattle, Washington**

**Lakeside Middle School**

**Teacher: Alicia Hokanson**

From the last post "Beauty will save the world" and on the note of educating for sustainability - last night I watched a documentary called Fall from freedom narrated by actor Mike Farrell, with compelling music by Alan Hewitt.

Mike Farrell narrates in the film, *"one thing is for certain, as our knowledge, appreciation and understanding for dolphins continues to grow, we can look forward to sustaining their habitats by taking care of their well being. If appreciation and compassion can be developed for them as wild and free creatures in their natural environments by whale watching, books or films, then captivity by its very nature must cease to exist. It is a choice we all need to make"*.

This statement makes so much sense and reinforces the notion that children really need to learn to appreciate their environment first before they set out to solve the world's problems. Just as each unique natural species plays an essential part in the healthy biodiversity of nature, the unique identities of humans contribute to the diversity between and within systems.

**Consider this:** Talking about systems Zenobia Barlow and Michael K. Stone write, "Nature sustains life by creating networks. Our working hypothesis said that applying key concepts of systems thinking will lead to sustainable change in education. This may happen when,

1. Schools function as whole communities
2. Schools express the spirit of systemic reform
3. Schools were committed to teaching ecological knowledge through projects based learning linked to particular places.
4. Schools that desired to integrate their curriculum through school garden, habitat restoration, or work with energy, shelter, or environmental justice programs. (Ecological Literacy).

**References:**

Stone, Michael K. and Zenobia Barlow, eds. *Ecological Literacy: Educating Our Children for a Sustainable World*. 2005. Sierra Club Books. San Francisco.  
Rivers of words website [www.riversofwords.org](http://www.riversofwords.org)

If you would like to write something, please do and email me at [mona@greenschool.org](mailto:mona@greenschool.org)