

To fight a fight
that feels as if it
has been lost,
hurts

Poems about climate grief

The following poems were made as part of a poetic inquiry research process. Words and phrases were taken from narratives written by research participants, then rearranged into poems by the researcher in order to capture and explore narrative themes. The authors, all young climate organizers, wrote in response to the prompt,

“What does it feel like to be alive in the world right now?”

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Found poem #1: People Who Didn't Listen

In his late 50s

learning / for YEARS,
like many shitty older whites,
that

his / universe
is
the universe.

“there’s just nothing we can
do about it”

but
the clock keeps ticking ticking
we’re all on a boat / on a precipice

we are too far along
again / and
for the thousandth time

makes me feel angry and sad,

the way things are is not the way
they had to be.

Found Poem #2: Stay on the Phone One More Minute

Two years ago I met
melancolía—

goblins, ghouls, BarrickGold

haunt the halls / of
spectacular
fun and profit

We all will die at the end of this river

but

the bell tolls for
the scariest part

I want to do more

I haven't even come close

Found Poem #3: It Might Sound Childish

Yes.

I am alive.
on a precipice.
I didn't ask for this,

been here and not here
for as long as I can remember

the clock is running out,
it's going to run out,

I wish it would.
I did not suffer less when I was worried about other things

Found Poem #4: They Know It's Unfair

Whether we want it or not,
we / play a game

Splendour!
Giant stones!
Progression and growth!

Ignore the world
do whatever you want
What? / the violence?
It is supposed to happen

Other people were crying, and
I couldn't feel anything,
there is no feeling of being alive

More than being scared,
it's hard to imagine a kind world

Found Poem #5: They Can Feel it in Their Gut

I turned off the taps,
watching
smoke curl / bitter / out
the stack
What do you do when

my father,
your father,
the ground,

all / poisoned by
the same men?

In retaliation,

to fight a fight?
to hurt more

...

We came home and
Solidarity,
she / could smell the smoke

in my hair

when she hugged me

Found Poem #6: To Be Alive Right Now

I've lived only eighteen years
and

right as we write,
the world / a buffet in a gas station in Nevada,
is having a heart attack

Economy crashed,
the world collapsing,
money wasn't real

It didn't make sense to use oil
and in retaliation

they still traded it,
even there on the ocean floor

I got so mad / visceral
leaning out of a helicopter with a megaphone, yelling

I guess children don't understand lobbying

We came home and
I couldn't cry for months,

to fight a fight that feels as if it has been lost hurts

Found poem #7. So Why Does It Hurt Still

Here I am,
what was the question?
something bigger than myself?

To be filled with
something so massive

It's a damn hyperobject / grief
Lost things / lapping around my ankles

I thought I was over this and
now / for the thousandth time,
I'm crying
Your shirt / favorite, old
filled with snot. It's my snot
I have so much more to say
Why don't I know the words?

Aist na krishe.
Well-loved song
Well-worn / pages written in French
Dead pets. Friendships

We are connected in more ways than
I know

What have I lost, really?

It never goes away

Found poem #8. Already I Hear the Sound of Water

Two years ago
I learned about rivers,

they do not flow forever

strong and fast
clashing with the rock
spectacular splash

Older people will tell me:

“there’s no stopping it...
you’re just as lost as they are”

But this of course is not true

I did my own research,
there is a way to shift our course

But,
being one single person,
I often get tired

Quarter me and pull me apart,

each one of me will come back
to do what one
of me
couldn’t

Found Poem #9. To You

2021,
my nieces smiling,
or playing

approximately 9 years,
the foundation of the material world
collapsing around you

I held my breath,
reading a little field book,
this was going to be MY job

illustrations with the Latin names,
grouse,
tulip bulbs,
the foothills

I remember reading
to you:

“Little girl,
to be alive in the world right now,

in order to enjoy
the feeling of being alive,

that's what's written in the stars.”

Found poem #10. I Wish We Lived

He would lay beside my little twin bed,

You can live, you can die,
everything will happen
in the end

He would guess what it was
and I didn't believe him

Are we all just

alive / to be / grief?

In his final moments
I held my breath

There's nothing much we can do other than
making things softer, easier

If that's what's written in the stars then so be it,
I've pretty much given up on / them

one fell to the ocean,
nothing more than blurring

I turned off

the stars