

SLWP Writes!

2009

Writing Contest

sponsored by

Southeastern Louisiana Writing Project

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SLWP WRITES! CONTEST

Overview

The purpose of this contest was to promote and recognize good writing in Southeastern Louisiana. Over 200 submissions were received for this first *SLWP Writes! Contest*, which took place in Spring 2009. Judging was done by Southeastern Louisiana Writing Project teachers and writers. Determining the winners in each category was difficult due to the large number of strong submissions. Judges looked especially for writing that stood out due to its originality, clarity, language, style, and detail. The contest produced 12 winners, from seven different schools, and 34 honorable mentions.

Winners

Winners Division I:

POETRY

1. Jon Madrid Mitchell, Creekside JHS, 8,
(Milissa Randolph)
2. Jana Lael King, Ponchatoula HS, 9,
(Gretchen Hintz)
3. Maria Hefte, Covington HS, 9,
(Eugenie Martin)

PROSE

1. Courtney Smith, Fontainebleau JHS, 7
(Janice Krantz)
2. Meghan McBride, Slidell HS, 9,
(Jeralyn Spiehler)
3. Whitney Myers, Covington HS, 9,
(Eugenie Martin)

Winners Division II:

POETRY

1. Ischelle Martin, Covington HS, 10,
(Eugenie Martin)
2. Christian Gann, Sumner HS, 11,
(Lynne Vance)
3. Sharnett Comadore, Sumner HS, 12,
(Deana Simmons)

PROSE

1. Winston Taylor Chase, Covington HS, 10,
(Eugenie Martin)
2. Kyle Steele, Walker HS, 12,
(Margaret Westmoreland)
3. Amelia Robert, Covington HS, 11,
(Sonya Willie)

Honorable Mentions:

Honorable Mention submissions are forwarded to the
Louisiana Writes! state contest.

POETRY

Madeleine Boyd, Covington HS, 9,
(Eugenie Martin)

Mallory McKenzie, Covington HS, 9,
(Eugenie Martin)

Maria Hefte, Covington HS, 9,
(Eugenie Martin)

Jerica Stepter, Walker Freshman HS,
(Robin Parrott)

Bri Young, Walker Freshman HS, 9,
(Robin Parrott)

Priestley Faucett, Walker Freshman HS, 9
(Robin Parrott)

Milissa Randolph, Creekside JHS, 8,
(Milissa Randolph)

Kayla Turner, Ponchatoula HS, 11,
(Gretchen Hintz)

Mallory Richardson, Fontainebleau HS, 11,
(Holly Gautier)

Courtney Grundy, Lutcher HS, 12,
(Carly Zeller)

Samuel Lavign, Walker HS, 12,
(Margaret Westmoreland)

Ischelle Martin, Covington HS, 10,
(Eugenie Martin)

Jessica Megan Jannise, Walker HS, 12,
(Margaret Westmoreland)

Tamara Hubert, Walker HS, 12,
(Margaret Westmoreland)

PROSE

Terri Scott, East St. John HS, 11,
(Mrs. Newsome)

Blake Stewart, Sumner MS, 7,
(Nancy Stokes)

Taylor Olivier, Walker Freshman HS, 9,
(Robin Parrott)

Shelby Williams, Sumner MS, 7,
(Nancy Stokes)

Abigail Lafont, Fontainebleau JHS, 7,
(Leina Ball)

Chase Shaheen, Walker Freshman HS, 9,
(Robin Parrott)

Amanda Marcello, Walker HS, 12,
(Margaret Westmoreland)

Josette David, Walker HS, 12,
(Margaret Westmoreland)

Kaleb Saucer, Walker HS, 12,
(Margaret Westmoreland)

Katherine Vyrostek, Walker HS, 12,
(Margaret Westmoreland)

Tamara Hubert, Walker HS, 12,
(Margaret Westmoreland)

Christopher Lee Rogers, Walker HS, 12,
(Margaret Westmoreland)

Linsey Morales, Walker HS, 12,
(Margaret Westmoreland)

Brandi Marine, Walker HS, 12,
(Margaret Westmoreland)

Trenton Sibley, Walker HS, 12,
(Margaret Westmoreland)

Mina Romito, Walker HS, 12,
(Margaret Westmoreland)

David Gray, Walker HS, 12,
(Margaret Westmoreland)

Melissa Knox, Kentwood HS, 11,
(Roslyn Varnado)

Hunter Blades, Sumner HS, 11,
(Lynne Vance)

Rachel Studley, Saint Scholastica Academy, 11,
(Terry O'Mara)

SLWP

Division I: Prose—1st Place Winner

Courtney Smith

Fontainebleau Junior High School, Grade 7

Teacher: Janice Krantz

A Quagmire of Concepts, Thoughts, and Reality

Sometimes, all I can feel is my hand tugging my ear. The world around me becomes numb.

I cannot control this habit. There are a lot of things I cannot control. I am an abnormality in this abyss of a world.

Before that critical moment of 9:47 PM on the day of April 1, 2005, I never noticed the looks random people gave me as I absent-mindedly gazed at the skyscrapers along the horizon of New York City. I never noticed people practically begging me to cease my discussion of the star Asellus Primus, however fascinating I found it to be.

Monday, March 28, 2005, 7:49 AM

As I reported to 10873 6th Avenue at the regular time of 7:49 this lovely morning, I put on my doctor's coat and proceeded to the ninth room in the corridor. With each step being approximately 1.5 feet long, it took exactly sixty paces. I took out my key ring and began to take out Key #6. Normally I'd greet Ms. Julie, also my wife's best friend, at Room 8, the psychology room. This morning, she was not present. My keys clattered on the floor when my hand lost grip on them as I reached toward my ear. I bit my lip to restrain a scream, only unleashing a pained moan of discomfort.

"Evan!!! Stop your whining this instant!!" It was Ms. Gretta, the cruel, impatient, pot-bellied secretary, who was currently boiling mad at me...once again. This was now the 173rd time she's become uncontrollably angry at me.

She waddled/stomped over to me, leaning in close to my face. Her breath was intensely noisome, smelling of onions and Weight Watchers sausage. She looked straight into my eyes. I quickly turned my eyes away, darting from floor to ceiling to walls, anywhere to avoid her biting grey laser-like eyes.

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Just as Ms. Gretta began yelling at me again, Ms. Julie entered.

“Ms. Julie!” I beckoned. “I beg of you...please enter to save me from my perpetual horror!”

“Creep,” Ms. Gretta mumbled under her breath.

Friday, April 1, 2005, 9:47 PM

I scanned the nighttime sky, searching the sky for inhabitants of other planets, possibly similar to E.T. I found my favorite constellations and even my favorite star, Asellus Primus.

“Honey,” my wife Sarah called as she came to stand beside me. “We need to talk.”

My hand immediately began tugging my ear, for this was a dramatic change to my schedule. Sarah made me take my hand away and led me over to the wooden swing.

“I wanted to talk with you about your...uh...behavior. I felt as though I need to tell you this. Julie has been observing you for a while...”

I suddenly wanted to jump in and scream “Why has she been *observing* me?!” but Rule #1 in the book How to Talk to Girls said to never, ever interrupt a woman. I remained silent.

Sarah continued her lecture. “...and she told be that she believes you have Asperger’s Syndrome.”

“I beg your pardon?” I said.

“This is exactly what I mean, Evan.”

With that said, she affectionately messed up my hair (which I immediately straightened again) and went inside.

Forget scratching my ear, I was too stressed to do that. I stood up from the swing, looked up hoping to see E.T. coming, then sank down to my knees and cried.

Sunday, April 3, 2005, 2:27 PM

Sarah told my children the news. They now all wanted to “improve me,” and “make me normal.”

My daughter brought me to the mall to attempt to make me at least not look like an utter abnormality. After trying on a myriad of clothes, the only thing I agreed to was a pair of jeans. She only gave an “inconspicuous” shudder this time,

instead of open criticism. She settled for the jeans. This time, I quietly had a meltdown in the restroom. She never knew.

Wednesday, April 6, 2005, 7:49 AM

“Evan,” Ms. Julie began telling me, “I know how you feel. I was nervous about telling your wife because I had no idea how you would react to it. But I just wanted to let you know that being different is only part of being human. If people don’t want to take the time to find out why you act the way you do, and they don’t want to take the time to find out how amazing and smart and wonderful you really are, then it’s their loss, not yours.” She looked up and stared into my eyes. I held her gaze until she looked away. “You see, you’re not as bad as your family thinks you are.” She smiled at me, a beautiful grin of pearly white teeth and light pink lips. I smiled back. I’ve gotten better at smiling at the right time.

Saturday, April 9, 2005, 10:17 AM

My family pleaded for me to be normal. They forced me to wear those putrid jeans. I tried to be normal, but no matter what I did, I still behaved like a freak, and was treated like one.

I was worthless.

I was miserable.

My life was bare and empty, full of hot air clogging up the scarce pleasures in our great abyss. I felt like I was being pulled, stretched in a thousand directions: guided to being who I am, and being yanked by my ear into behaving like someone normal.

I was clueless.

I was hopeless.

I was trapped. I needed to be myself, not someone else. My name is Evan Joseph Alan and I have Asperger’s. I can’t do anything about it. My misery lingered.

I had to forget my schedule. I needed to escape.

Saturday, April 9, 2005, 11:13 PM

I was unsure if I had the strength to do this. Such a great change would have ripped me apart in seconds. Questions whirled through my mind, dominating my thoughts. What if I did go? How could I take such intense change? No

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more looking for aliens at 9:31 each night. No more lasagna for dinner. No more peanut butter toast and cereal for breakfast. Can I make myself do this?

Of course I can. If a life of constant, perpetual scorns and attempts of improvement from my own family was the type of life I had to live, I didn't want to live with them at all. Ms. Julie was absolutely correct. If people don't want to take the time to find out why I act the way I do, then it is their fault. I knew I could do it, and I knew Ms. Julie would be there to help me. I would go see her one final time before I escaped somewhere else, somewhere better.

I silently left my home, into the nighttime world of New York City. Along the horizon I saw buildings shooting up, stretching upward. I ran away. I ran four blocks over to Ms. Julie's house, tears stinging my eyes, rolling over my lips, and saturating my cheeks with their bitter saltiness. I banged on her door. A few moments later, she answered with a bewildered look on her face. I collapsed into her arms and cried like a baby.

Saturday, April 9, 2005, 2:07 AM

Julie handed me another handkerchief. At this point, it seemed as though there were permanent tear streaks along my cheeks. My wife and daughter had arrived. I was ashamed to let them see me like that, so disheveled, but at this point it didn't matter.

Ms. Julie had called them, pleading for them to come. Despite my desperate begging, she refused to let me leave so abruptly.

When Sarah arrived, she flung herself into a hysteria of apologies and cried to me about how she "can't live without me." It sounded like lyrics to a bad love song. She repeatedly called me "baby," "honey," and "darling." I might have Asperger's, but even I could tell it was no more than sweet-talk in a futile attempt to get me back.

"Sarah," I said, prying her hands off my shoulders. "I'm not normal. I'm not who you want me to be."

"I know, honey, and I love you just the way you are." More sweet-talk. I was dying inside, the voice inside my head

shrieking in pain, but somehow I was just too upset to cry. I looked into her eyes, or tried, but had to look away. I could see the fire in the depths of them, the anger that I left her. Only on the very surface was a tiny layer of false love. I refused to show weakness.

“You don’t love me unless I act like everyone else. I’m *not* everyone else.”

I walked out of the door, ignoring her cries.
I never looked back. §

Division I: Prose— Second Place Winner

Meghan McBride

Slidell High School, Grade 9

Teacher: Jeralyn Spiehler

Madison’s Way

“Detective Powers came to talk to our school today,” Alex told Madison, as they walked out the door. They had been best friends since the 3rd grade, and she sometimes wondered how they had been friends for so long. Madison and Alex headed toward the park.

Madison hated the police. She hated everything that had to do with the police. Her father had died her freshman year. Madison’s father had been the Chief of Police in their small town of Edgewood, Washington. Her was known and beloved by everyone in the town. So it came as a huge shock when he was gunned down late one night. Many suspects had been cross-examined for his murder, but no one knew anything! The investigation stopped after two years. This had greatly upset Madison. She knew the truth. She knew just whose fault it was that her father was dead.

“Alex shut up! I don’t want to hear anything about them,” said Madison angrily, jamming her palms into her eyes.

“I was just going to tell you about the bomb threat that happened at school today while you were absent, sheesh!” Alex said annoyed.

“Fine what happened?” She said just to make her friend feel better. She really had been cranky lately with ACT and exams coming up. It was her senior year in high school, and she was beginning to feel the pressure.

As Alex rattled on about the day’s events, Madison dazed off pondering her father’s partner’s suspicious behavior in the dark alley across the street. It was 6:20 on a Tuesday night; what could he possibly be doing? Madison couldn’t tell Alex or anyone else what she was thinking! If anyone found out what she knew and had planned, it would endanger people she knew and loved.

Madison had a secret, a secret which she had kept for three long years. This secret made her sick with such grief and such hatred that she wasn't herself anymore. She wanted revenge and she would stop at nothing until she got it.

"I'm going home for the night. I'll see you tomorrow at school," Madison interrupted Alex. She got up off the park bench where she had been sitting and headed down the sidewalk.

"What's wrong?" Alex asked.

Madison ignored her friend and continued toward the alleyway. She was curious as to why her father's partner, who was a ver highbrow person, would come to a dirty place like this. Madison was very interested in talking to him. She had only talked to him once and in that very short conversation, she realized that she didn't like him. His name was Ace, and he was nothing but lies, double-talk, and overblown stories that were absolutely pointless. She came to a door that she was positive he had walked into. Before she opened the door, she listened for any noises. She could make out two voices; one was her father's ex-partner's, the other was a voice she wasn't familiar with. They seemed to be in a very heated discussion.

"What are you so nervous about?" said the man.

"Oh nothing, I'm worried about nothing, Jack. What do you think I'm worried about? I mean his daughter knows everything; I'm sure of it," said Ace with a panicked expression on his face.

"So why area you coming to me now three years later? She saw your face that night you left the station. Did you really think they would make you chief if something happened to him? I'm sorry, but I can't help you get out of town, without looking like an accomplice," said Jack.

"I came to you because I'm not going to prison for doing something that needed to be done. He didn't deserve that promotion. I did. So, if you're not going to help me, I'll find someone who will," Ace said, as he pulled out his semi-automatic from his coat pocket.

The smile faded from Jack's lips. "What are you going to do, kill me because I won't help you?" he asked.

"No, I'm going to kill you because you know too much," said Ace. Now it was his turn to smile; he was getting

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his revenge. Jack had cheated, and stole from him too many times.

The next thing she heard was a bang and hurried footsteps. Madison quickly hurried behind the dumpster. As Ace ran out the door, Madison confronted him confident and unafraid. Nothing else mattered now.

“Hi Ace remember me?” she said with an evil grin.

Ace froze in his tracks. He turned around and stared at her. “Yea, I umm, remember you. You’re Frank’s daughter. I’m really sorry you had to hear that. I guess you’ll be joining him and my dear friend Jack soon,” he laughed.

She wanted to laugh and reassure him it wouldn’t be her who would be joining them, but she felt she didn’t even owe him a warning. For three years she had been prepared for this exact moment. It wasn’t what she had under her shirt that was making her feel this way; it was what her father would think of her when she finally saw him that was bothering her.

“You took him from me when he was all I had,” Madison yelled hysterically.

“Don’t worry you’ll be with your dear dead father soon,” Ace laughed.

BANG

He was dead before he even stopped laughing. §

Division I: Prose—Third Place Winner

Whitney Myers

Covington High School, Grade 9

Teacher: Eugenie Martin

Expect the Unexpected

Jane was a 16 year old organ donor from New York, New York, or so that's what her new driver's license stated. Jane would never forget the days she had to ride the bus to school or rely on her mother to get her from A to B. She was free now. Even though these significant opinions streamed across Jane's understanding, she was worried about late night New York. She was ready for her and her best friend Anne to check out the late night music shows The Big Apple had to tender. Jane wasn't the type to do wrong or the type who didn't take responsibility seriously. She was prepared for what was to become of this.

Jane pulls up in her car that looks like Babe Ruth man handled. Jane's stiletto was first to hit ground stepping out of the car. She walked to the bouncer as if they grew up together. Jane could hear the pounding noises of the gun like music whipping through the door to her. She could smell the old phlegm smell of old cigarettes and bad alcohol. Anne was silent. She agreed with her mind to let Jane to do all the talking. Anne had never been decent at persuasion. As Jane walked through the steel door, Anne pushed in front and scurried to the bathroom. Jane, not looking forward to waiting, rushed to the main room of what seemed like an underground room. She looked around to see a variety of humans behaving like savages. She was disturbed by a pounding on her left shoulder. Jane turned quickly to see someone she didn't know standing there. She was perturbed, not saying a thing. He stared at her in mute as well. She stuck out her hand and in confusion. He grasped her hand in a way that made her step back and take a second look.

"I'm sorry, I thought you were someone else", he said.

Jane stared at the blue-eyed brown-haired guy that stand before her. Even though she had never met him, she was in-

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trigued. She didn't know anything else but to smile. He leaned it closer.

"My name is Andrew. What's yours?"

She smiled again, confused on why he wanted to know. She tilted her head to the side studying his body language and the way he was reacting to the oh so loud blaring of the music.

"Jane", she screamed over the crowd.

"My name is Jane."

"Nice to meet you, Jane. I'm sorry for startling you and then not leaving you alone when I had the chance."

"It's quite alright. I enjoy meeting new people now and again," she smiled.

"Do you? I do as well. Will you join me in a drink?"

"I don't drink," she said with power.

"Neither do I, let's leave and have coffee."

"I can't, I have a--"

Jane's eyes darted toward the 17 year old girl who was dancing with someone else. Andrew turned to see what could catch such beautiful eyes. Without dismissing herself, Jane swerved around Andrew in a kind of stomp toward Anne. Anne, who five seconds ago seemed to be in a trance, stood straight up, eyes wide open, glaring at Jane. Anne stuck her short pointer finger up at the guy who was still wiggling like a worm in front of her and strutted towards Jane. Andrew, enticed by what was about to happen, jetted over to listen.

"Anne, I have been waiting for twenty minutes! How could you just blow me off like that?"

"Jane, I'm sorry. I walked out of the bathroom with finding you in mind and this nice gentlemen stopped me," she said smiling and pointing at the over attractive guy standing behind her.

Anne gave Jane a wink and walked back over to the guy. Jane followed.

"I'm going to get coffee, wait here for me."

Anne nodded. Jane walked away and apologized to Andrew then accepted his invitation. They talked about passions, dislikes, family, friends, and the future. After three hours, Jane realized what time it was and she walked out as Andrew patiently followed. Jane returned to the venue only to find that it

was closed and locked. Jane didn't panic. She took out her cell phone and called Anne. No answer. Jane tried a few more times hoping and praying she would answer, but she didn't. By this time, Jane was getting worried. She knew Anne was new to New York, so how far could she go?

Jane searched every club and venue in New York City. She saw no nothing, until she went into a small diner called Cloverfield Diner. She didn't exactly find Anne, but the guy she was with was sitting in a booth with another girl. Jane strutted toward him with arrogance and demanded to know where Anne was. The guy said she mentioned something about going to see another band she had heard about. Jane sat and thought about it. How hard could this be? Anne was her best friend, shouldn't she know her well enough to find her? Jane couldn't think of any band. She turned to Andrew and asked if he knew any local bands that were playing tonight. He didn't say anything but grabbed her and pulled her with him. He nodded his head to the guy Anne was with at the last venue. Andrew stuck her in her own car, not to mention in the passenger seat. He twirled around and sat promptly in the driver's seat. She looked at him with ease and patients. He stared back and stuck his hand out. She put the keys in the middle of his tan palm. As soon as the car was started he changed the radio station to the news of New York City Music. He sat there silently. Jane, unaware of what was going on, stuck her hand on the shift and listened. He looked at her in awe and thought. Out of courage he stuck his hand over hers and put the car in drive. Jane was shocked and immediately jolted her vision to his. He passed the second red light and was sitting in the parking lot of what appeared to be an abandoned building. He gestured her out of the car and took her hand and lead her through the building. She heard faint noises but could smell old cigarettes and watered down beer perfectly. He pulled open the iron door to reveal a band on stage and hundreds of screaming fans. She listened attentively, still searching for Anne. After thirty minutes. Andrew nudged Jane would was staring at her unpainted toes. She turned her attention to the stage. She stared not saying a word. There appeared to be her best friend in white tights and bad stage makeup. Jane muscled her way to the front and grabbed Anne's ankle. Anne looked down and screamed in

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happiness. She hopped off stage and swaggered because she was intoxicated. Jane took one look at her and told Andrew he needed to take her home. Andrew helped Jane haul her out to Jane's car. To their surprise, it wasn't any where to be found. Jane's jaw dropped and so did the lower portion of Anne's body. Andrew suggested they take the bus and look for her car in the morning. Jane, understanding it was five in the morning agreed. Andrew, once they arrived at Jane's house, he lightly laid her upon the couch.

"Thank you so much for all of your help, Andrew. I really appreciate it."

Andrew smiled and stared.

"Andrew, why do you always smile and stare?"

"Because you do," he replied.

She didn't say anything but gave him a hug.

"Jane? Do you mind if I crash here tonight?"

Jane said it was fine but he would have to sleep in her older brother's room. James and Jane were twins but he left home for military school.

Jane was awoken the next morning to find the president of the U.S standing there with authority. She stood up straight and tried fixing her hair.

"Good morning. I'm looking for my son, Andrew. Sources say I can find him here."

"Yes sir. I'll go get him."

Jane ran up the stairs and through her brother's room door screaming. She explained about his father. Andrew jumped up and addressed his father. The president looked at Andrew then at Jane.

"Ms. Jane, I appreciate you letting my son stay here. As for you Andrew, we will discuss this later. "

Jane in disbelief nodded her head. Andrew slipped Jane a piece of paper and left with his father. When they were gone she shut the door and read the paper. It stated:

"Call me. I had a great time! 555-1234"

Jane jumped for joy. She hung the torn piece of paper on her mirror and went back to sleep. §

Division II: Prose—First Place Winner**Winston Taylor Chase**

Covington High School, Grade 10

Teacher: Eugenie Martin

Color

“Purple, deep magenta. that’s the color I need.” I thought to myself as I stared at the blank canvas before me. It was a large canvas, an eight by six to be exact. Just to the right of the canvas was my pile of paint cans. I crouched down and began to go through the paint. “Where is it.” I mumbled to myself as I was going through the different colors. “Ahh there you are.” I said as I grabbed the large can of magenta paint. I quickly snatched my screw driver off the table next to me and opened the can by wedging the tip between the lid and the edge of the can and prying it open. I threw the lid to the ground and casually tossed the screw driver onto the table and slowly immersed my hands in the smooth creamy paint. It was cold but I loved the feeling of the paint on my skin. I moved my fingers around a bit before taking my hands out of the can. I spun around facing the canvas as a cowboy turns to face his opponent in a gun duel. “BANG!” I swung my hand at the canvas, splattering deep purple paint from the top right corner down curving through the center of the painting. I then swung continuously at the painting, re-dipping into the paint only when my hands ran dry. Out of nowhere I had an impulse, which I followed. I picked up the can and simply splashed the canvas with the remainder of the paint, covering a large portion of the left side of the painting. Then I took a seat and stared at the canvas. Colors, patterns, and any other ideas I could imagine flashed onto the canvas before me. What to do next was the question that plagued my mind now.

As time passed, I became tired of the question. I closed my eyes and randomly grabbed a can of paint from the stack. It was a medium tone red color. I roughly swirled the paint round and round in the can. It splashed out onto the floor and my filthy jeans, which were stained with swatches of paint from other creations. I then drew my brush from the paint as if it was

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my sword and jabbed at the canvas like an expert fencer - repeatedly stabbing the painting and watching the red paint run down as though the art work was bleeding. I quickly grabbed a can of yellow paint and using a smaller brush drew circles around the fresh flesh wounds in the canvas. I swirled the brush around each mark of red several times and then played connect the dots with the new circles, as though I was forming a constellation on the canvas - as if I were creating my own Orion in the night sky.

I stepped back and viewed my painting, and began to feel sad. A wave of depressing emotion swept through my body. After getting sick of this emotion, I reached for another can of paint. When I popped the can open and peered at the light lavender color before me I felt better, almost happy. I quickly shoved my closed fists into the paint and moved them around while opening my hands. Then I hopped forward to gain momentum and hurled paint at the canvas thrusting my hands forward with all of the force in my body. It immediately brightened the gloomy monstrosity I had created. My hands were now smearing and splattering paint all over the right side of the painting. They were working on their own, creating a version of light and dark. Of yin and yang. They were balancing the unsteadiness in my creation. Though a strong line was kept between the two colors. A void of nothingness left behind forever separating the light and dark purple. They were to never touch, never to blend. To be sure of this I grabbed my final clean brush and a small jar of black paint and began to fill this void, to permanently separate the light from the dark no matter what. No changes, no exceptions, it was finished. I slowly walked out the of my art studio and into the kitchen and washed my hands. Cleansing them of creation and destruction. I made myself a snack and poured a cold glass of water and went back into my studio. I wandered to the center of the room and sat down. No chair or pillow - just sat there on the concrete floor and gazed at the painting. I took a bite of my sandwich then a sip of water swished and it around in my mouth and swallowed. Here on the floor I thought about the work I had put into my painting, the effort and frenzied emotion. This is where, I realized how sick of it I was. How much I despised the colors I had chosen, how much I detested that infernal black

crack down the middle of the canvas, how I couldn't stand the sunshine yellow rings that plagued the canvas and how the red streaks had taken away from the rest of the painting. This, however, is also when I realized that I wouldn't change a single thing about it. Even though I couldn't stand it, that I still loved it. It was still my creation and for better or worse it lived. I rose to my feet, turned off the lights and left the room. §

Division II: Prose—Second Place Winner

Kyle Steele

Walker High School, Grade 12
Teacher: Margaret Westmoreland

In the Long Run

Breathe in, breathe out. Drip, drop. One foot in front of the other. This is my day by day addiction. Life on the run whether it's a 10 to 12 miler to get away from everything stressful, or a 2 miler to just loosen up. Being a fan is an understatement, but living and breathing every stride of a run I can, is what I love.

When I was a freshman coming into high school I never ran and looked at it as a chore. I joined the track team the second semester and running became a part of me. I've excelled at it into my senior year and plan on keeping it alive throughout college into my adult life. It's become a lifestyle and it's going to stay that way.

I learned where my kind came from in the book Once a Runner:

Distance runners were serene messengers. Gliding along wooded trails and mountain paths, their spiritual ancestors kept their own solitary counsel for long hours while carrying some message the import of which was only one corner of their considerable speculation. They lived within themselves; long ago they did so and they do today.

(Parker 16)

This is how it all started and has since escalated. The Olympics was born and with it came the Olympians we runners look for inspiration. But Olympian or not, we still have the same driving urge to glide and carry our own messages within ourselves from one mile to the next. One day we may be Olympians or legends of our time, but instead of guessing the future, we worry about how we ran yesterday, how we are running today, and what kind of pure pain we will put ourselves through tomorrow.

I'm not the ordinary person who will attend a track or cross country meet once or twice to see some kind of amazing athletic performance. I'm not the viewer who sits in front of the tube and watches the Olympics not knowing who just broke what world record and what country they are from. I come alive in track meets and cross country meets and starve for the competition. I watch the Olympics and know that Keninsa Bekele just broke the 10,000 meter world record and finished his last lap in a fifty three second sprint to bring faith and hope to his country of Ethiopia. I'm not the guy who orders a running magazine to try and look like the guy or girl on the cover but instead I've read every Runner's World magazine I own from front to back and have the original Sports Illustrated with Steve Prefontaine (one of the greatest American runners in history) on the cover hanging on my wall. It goes well with the Prefontaine cloths that tattoo my walls with his spirit and guidance. My oven might be his second biggest fan in the house because when I go to bake some food it digitally displays Pre across the top until it beeps, then says 375, and I throw my buffalo wings in.

On my way to school I throw the lanyard that I've modified with Prefontaine running quotes on. "To give anything less than your best is to sacrifice the gift." Well put Pre. When I finally get to school and step out my truck, I probably smell like the stench that leaks from my two or three pairs of running shoes slipped on and double knotted on the eight to ten miles the day before. They get to ride shotgun on the floorboard and rarely come out. Throughout the day I hassle my teammate Paul and threaten him to watch his back on the next race coming up. "We'll see Kyle. I'm unstoppable." He's a cocky British guy, but he can definitely back it up with his second in state cross country title.

During one of my class periods I'll record the miles and workout splits from the week's training and total up the miles to add to every other week. And then I'll sit and wonder how I'll feel and pull through the afternoon run. Sometimes I put myself in the workout but instead of running with a teammate, I'm taking on Barrett Miller from Catholic, my rival in the mile. This can easily get distracting while I'm trying to pay attention in class. "And that's how you find the frictional force

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against the rock sculpture sliding down a slope.” Before I know it, my palms are sweating and I just missed the newest formula for physics. But that sweat is just a preview for the afternoon, and the thought lingers throughout the day.

I always crave my afternoon run. The pain that comes in a tempo run is like a sterilized needle, and I’m shooting endorphins to get the best high I can ask for. Paul is always there beside me and telling me how much extra he ran yesterday and whether or not he’ll drop some easy 5:50 miles on the track later. “Paul, what time did you do this?” I ask. “Well, I had a lot of homework so I had to go around 8:30,” he replies. He doesn’t know it but his dedication has given me that drive to do extra myself. This is what running can do to me and my running partner. By the end of the run we’re brothers, and that’s how I look at him.

Running doesn’t only bring you closer to people but also yourself and nature. When I just listen and run, I come up with crazy and unique ideas. This is also when I can block out everything negative and with each stride gain something positive.

Being a runner can never go overboard. There is no line between acceptable and out of control behavior except for the starting line on a latex oval or muddy hilly course. But once I step over the starting line and do go out of control and psycho, there is always a finish line that brings me back to a civilized runner. Running filters everything about my life to make me pure whether it’s that short or long run. And the best thing about it is that it’s only a slip on, double knot away. In the long run, I know I’ll always be a runner. §

Works Cited

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Division II: Prose—Third Place Winner

Amelia Roberts

Covington High School, Grade 11

Teacher: Sonya Willie

My Life in a Drawer

Today, I opened up a Pandora's Box of memories. It's something I like to call my "life drawer, the top drawer of my writing desk. It's shallow but wide, and filled with things that, to anyone else, would seem like a miscellaneous hodge-podge of objects. However, to me, these things hold a world of meaning.

The whole drawer smells like the box of rose-scented incense that I received as a Christmas gift from one of my friends in junior high. The incense remains in its box because my parents believe incense to be dangerous, as well as noxious. It keeps me looking forward to the day when I'll have my own home, where I can enjoy incense's olfactory pleasures with no one to tell me to: "Stop it before you burn the house down!"

Birthday cards from years past are also in abundance in the "life drawer". Several of the cards bear images of cats, because those who know me are aware of my life long predilection for the domestic feline. There are even a few that I picked up on occasions other than my birthday. For example, last summer my friend Devin and I were shopping in a Hallmark store when we came across a card that plays the theme from The Twilight Zone when opened. We were so amused that we purchased the card just for fun, and proceeded to spend the day popping it open behind the backs of unsuspecting pedestrians, who were confused, and sometimes even frightened, upon hearing the foreboding tune. To this day, the card remains in my drawer as a memento from that memorable day.

Alongside the cards are various objects with pleasant memories attached to them. There's the pencil bag, given to me by my first grade teacher, which carried my writing utensils to school every day until eighth grade. There's also a pair of plastic, round-rimmed glasses that I picked up at Barnes and Noble on the night when the seventh Harry Potter book was released,

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a pair of maracas I picked up at a Cinco de Mayo party, a knife I found on the ground of the local park while on a walk with two friends, little things that, though they may no longer serve a practical purpose, never fail to bring a smile to my face.

Some of my favorite things in the drawer are the notes and drawings from my friends. In one, my friend Chloe talks about how much she enjoyed the movie we'd gone to see over the weekend, and informs me that auditions for our school's production of Into the Woods will be held later in the day. Another was written just after my friend Molly and I shared a hug in the school's bathroom. Apparently the hug made her day, because she went back to her class and drew me a picture of the event. In a particularly humorous note, my friend Kaytlyn invites me to join her recently established "whistling chorus", a musical group in which songs, rather than being played on instruments and sung, are whistled.

The "life" drawer contains bittersweet memories as well. There's a kind note from a former close friend, with whom I've since fallen out of touch. A little journal where I casually mused about my feeling for a boy who, as it turns out, wasn't interested. Cards from relatives who've since passed away. A picture I drew while overcome with emotion, just after a fight with a friend. While these things make me a little sad, they also go to show that, with the passage of time, things change.

Just like opening Pandora's box, opening this box releases the emotions, experiences, and people who have touched my life. Its contents remind me that people will always enter and exit my life, new connections will be made, old ones will fade away, pains will heal. My collection of objects reminds me that, if I just keep on living, things will always be alright. §

Division I: Poetry—First Place Winner

John Madrid Mitchell

Creekside Junior High School, Grade 8

Teacher: Millisa Randolph

If I Were a Poet

If I were a poet,
I would make the best poem you would ever read.

I would take a piece of 8.5" x 11",
wrap up the world,
present it to you,
and that would be the best poem you would ever read.

And I would fold it into origami.
My paper crane would fly around your brain,
and give you the most towering experience you would ever
gain.
My paper crane would give you so many paper cuts that you
would bleed . . .
my poem,
because it's embedded do deep.

If I were a poet,
your vorpal_sword would shatter to my bullet of
allegory,
context,
exposition,
irony,
hyperbole,
symbolism,
tone,
and every other literary device known to mankind.

My words would be put into mason jars,
for the public to gorge themselves on.
I would sell them as ingredients,
to every five-star restaurant,

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and I would single-handedly become the most famous chef in the world.

And the punctuation marks of my poem would be served in that same restaurant.

That sweet tea that you order would be fluttering with dots and lines and quotations,

and that tea would be the sweetest you would ever taste.

If I were a poet,

my poem would be elected President of the United States,

and my poem would be an independent.

All the world's problems would be solved. . .

with words.

But I'm not a poet. §

Division I: Poetry—Second Place Winner

Jana Lael King

Pontchatoula High School, Grade 9

Teacher: Gretchen Hintz

**Hallway Stories, Scandals, Pranks,
and Controversies**

(CUE THE BELL)

I emerge from the class room
Fresh with knowledge
Heading toward the B wing
People bustling all around
Trying to blend in with what surrounds
This happens a million times a day
But every time it feels the same
People look, people stare
Its only in my head that they care
The lockers laugh at me
Taunting, terrorizing, tormenting
Whisper
Sounds fill my ears
The hushed secretive tones
Like bullets to my confidence
So much goes on
Plans are made
Rumors are spread
People are taunted
The subjection to critics,
I've come to dread
The side glances
Peripheral views
There's always something new judge
Feelings of awkwardness
Walking alone
Searching for anyone that I know
Passing hundreds everyday
I look at my feet
Can't bring myself to meet their eyes

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Pretend not to care
But we all know the insecurity's there
Sideways glances to the windows
Hoping no one notices my half awake stare
Feeling out of place
Wishing I was anywhere but here
If only we could all realize
The silent truth, unspoken
We are all insecure
We are all scared
We are all afraid
But the difference it would make
Too much power in the words
So for another day
I walk alone §

Division I: Poetry—Third Place Winner

Maria Hefte

Covington High School, Grade 9

Teacher: Eugenie Martin

Violet

When the tiered, blue flower grows up amidst the weeds
And the fruit of the purple wisteria bleeds.

When the white starlight speckles the winding breeze
And dandelion wishes whisk over the seas.

I'll be waiting there, in the land of milk and honey
Where daylight wanes and the moon is sunny.

In that vast land, I wait for you
Under the sky painted with blue.

Where sand is as hot as the land on the sun
And blisters the feet of every each one.

Where crickets chirp and cicadas hum
And steadily sing as the beating drum.

When the novel becomes a crumbling sheaf
And sickens in Winter like the sycamore leaf.

When voices crack in splinters shambling
And phantoms walk with footsteps ambling.

I'll be waiting for you in the Valley of Death
Where the land is quiet and the shadows have breath.

In that deep Hell, I'll meet you at once
Under the lamp that burns in its sconce.
Where clouds are as stale as the torrent rain
And the vapors are putrid and prone to stain.

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Where love is a dust buried beneath
And words are without the words to bequeath.

When rarity calls for a refreshing name
And kisses the forehead of He who came.

When crystal music hushes and fades
And time forgets its colors and shades.

He'll be waiting there for she
Who kept him in all honesty.

In him she held his promise to wait
Under a vow her lips could not debate.

Where in her faith she leaves her home
And follows him like the laughing sea-foam.

Where she wears her lace of embroidered eyelet
And meets him in the snows of Violet.

As she rolls like the river, he toils as the sea
And at her mouth is where they'll both be. §

Division II: Poetry—First Place Winner

Ischelle Martin

Covington High School, Grade 10

Teacher: Eugenie Martin

Heliophobia

Every morning, a beautiful beam of
sunlight spills over the windowsill and
splashes onto the floor.
Specs of dust flit in and out of the startling
ray, inviting me to join their dance.
They taunt me. I swing my legs from
under the covers and lightly land on the floor.
My feet lead me towards the sunlight.
Reaching it, I extend my arm until the
tips of my fingers meet the beam,
but they are quickly withdrawn.
In and out of the sunlight,
I twirl my fingers, never leaving them in for too long.
The flecks of dust still play within the light,
unaware that the luminescence could
prove fatal to my frail skin.
I cannot, however, bring myself to
draw the curtains. It is a curse, my affliction,
for it renders me incapable of entering
the golden brilliance of light.
A few minutes spent in the ray of
the sun is enough to raise
my skin in blisters and pain.
I raise my face until my eyes encounter
the fire hanging in the sky.
Just as the flecks of dust taunted me,
the sun teases me, begging me
to step out and enter its radiance, to
bask in the dangerous warmth it emits. §

Division II: Poetry—Second Place Winner

Christian Gann

Sumner High School, Grade 11

Teacher: Lynne Vance

The Enemy Within

It clings to you like wet clothes
Uncomfortable and rubbing you raw
You can't get it out of your head
It's like your favorite song
It eats away at your insides
The demons sit back and laugh as you decay
It strikes at your heart like a poisonous snake
The venom flows through you slowly
It feels like days
It is
Unforgiveness §

Division II: Poetry—Third Place Winner

Sharnett Comadore

Sumner High School, Grade 12

Teacher: Deana Summers

Fire

Like fire, I'll exist to alter
The sight of me
Will grasp the world's attention
I'll leave behind
Scattered ashes
For everyone to know that I made a change
My heat, the world will feel
Without the ability to resist
My existence will be unforgettable
Just like fire, I'll exist to alter §

"SLWP Writes!" Contest

The Southeastern Louisiana Writing Project (SLWP) is proud to announce its first annual *"SLWP Writes!"* writing contest for young authors. The contest is open to students from grades 6 through 12. Teachers are encouraged to submit worthy samples of their students' work, or students may submit directly. Students may submit multiple entries.

Contest guidelines and awards are outlined on the following flyer. Please post this flyer in teachers' lounges and on student bulletin boards.

The Southeastern Louisiana Writing Project is part of the Louisiana Writing Project, a network of five university-based National Writing Project sites. Each site seeks to improve writing instruction by sharing the best practice of the outstanding writing instructors of all disciplines from kindergarten through college. The National Writing Project is a 30-year professional-development initiative based on teachers teaching teachers and is currently active in all 50 states.

The *"SLWP Writes!"* contest is open for entries through May 1, 2009 in all schools in Livingston, Tangipahoa, St. Tammany, St. Helena, Washington, and East St. John parishes as well as at schools in surrounding parishes where SLWP teachers teach. Judging is done by SLWP Writing Project teacher-consultants. Winners will be notified by May 15, 2009 and automatically entered into the "Louisiana Writes" statewide contest, which also presents medals, cash, and an anthology at a gala event at the Louisiana Book Festival in Baton Rouge in the Fall.