

*SLWP Writes!
2012*

Prose:

*Hailey Fauchez - Skyscraper
Destiny Gaudet - A Ribbon
Tristan Harding - El Paso
Liah Johnson - Free
Jessica Pittman - Story Keeper
Kristen Roussel - Good Ole Gilbert*

Poetry:

*Meg Denny - They Were Us
Catie Dunlap - A Compilation of
Ridiculous Poems
Meredith Faulkner - Halcyon
Judy La - Buffet: Eat Nothing
Jon Mitchell - The Clock in the Clouds
Lindsey Potter - The Corner of 5th
and Main
Jenna Schmidt - Freedom*



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Cover art by Mik Kastner

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 young authors (grades 6-12) who demonstrated creative ingenuity through prose and poetry in the Southeast Louisiana region. In the spring of 2012, the SLWP received over 150 submissions to our Fourth Annual *SLWP Writes! Contest*. Writing Project teachers and writers read meticulously through submissions and selected 13 winners and 15 honorable mentions based on originality, clarity, language, style, and detail. All 28 award-winning pieces were forwarded to the *Louisiana Writes!* state contest, and the top 13 pieces were included in this anthology.

SLWP would like to give a special thanks to all the students who poured their hearts into their words, to the teachers who encouraged their students to submit to this contest, and to the judges who spent many long hours reading, deliberating, and determining the winning submissions.

For more information about Southeast Louisiana Writing Project writing contests or summer workshops for teachers, please visit our website:

<http://www.selu.edu/acad_research/programs/slpw/>

Winners

Division I Prose (Grades 6-9)

1. "Free" by Liah Johnson, Ponchatoula High School, 9
(Jessica Kastner)
2. "El Paso" by Tristan Harding, Slidell High School, 9
(Jeralyn Spiehler)
3. "A Ribbon" by Destiny Gaudet, Assumption High School, 9
(Michelle Russo)

Division I Poetry (Grades 6-9)

1. "A Compilation of Ridiculous Poems" by Catie Dunlap, Dunlap Academy, 9
(April Dunlap)
2. "Freedom" by Jenna Schmidt, Little Oak Middle School, 6
(Sabrina Audibert)
3. "Buffet: Eat Nothing" by Judy La, St. Tammany Jr. High, 8
(Angie Beach)

Division II Prose (Grades 10-12)

1. "Skyscraper" by Hailey Fauchaux, Lutcher High School, 12
(Carly Zeller)
2. "Story Keeper" by Jessica Pittman, Covington High School, 10
(Eugenie Martin)
3. "Good Ole Gilbert" by Kristen Roussel, Lutcher High School, 12
(Carly Zeller)

Division II Poetry (Grades 10-12)

1. "The Clock in the Clouds" by Jon Mitchell, Pearl River High School, 11
(Karen Maceira)
2. "Halcyon" by Meredith Faulkner, Fontainebleau High School, 11
(Ellen Steigman)
3. "They Were Us" by Meg Denny, Fontainebleau High School, 10
(Shelly Easterling)
"The Corner of 5th and Main" by Lindsey Potter, Covington High School, 10
(Eugenie Martin)

Honorable Mentions

Prose

Division I: Grades 6-9

“The Koi” by Sara DeRouen, Slidell High School, 9
(Jeralyn Spiehler)

“The Path” by KiAnna Dickey, St. Tammany Jr. High School, 6
(Angie Beach)

“How I Got to the Railroad” by Torrie Douglas, St. Tammany Jr. High School, 7
(Angie Beach)

Division II: Grades 10-12

“Rebellion” by Ben Detiveaux, Sumner High School, 11
(Lynne Vance)

“Real Heroes Don’t Wear Tights” by Katherine Ketelsen, Covington High School, 12
(Eugenie Martin)

“Shells” by Raley Pellittieri, Ponchatoula High School, 11
(Lisa Thompson)

“Patriot” by Dillon Sullivan, Ponchatoula High School, 10
(Gretchen Hintz)

Poetry

Division I: Grades 6-9

“Easter Chicks” by Catie Dunlap, Dunlap Academy, 9
(April Dunlap)

“Sleep” by Noah Glass, St. Tammany Jr. High, 6
(Angie Beach)

“War and Peace” by Derek Guo, Little Oak Middle School, 6
(Sabrina Audibert)

“Universal Perspective” by Patrick Price, St. Tammany Jr. High School, 8
(Angie Beach)

Division II: Grades 10-12

“Only Time Can Tell” by Emily Ezell, Ponchatoula High School, 10
(Gretchen Hintz)

“Mercy” by Andrew J. Labit, Loranger High School, 10
(Jane Terrace)

“Softer Rains” by Taylor Mrosk, Fontainebleau High School, 11
(Ellen Steigman)

“I AM FROM” by Daniel Steele, Walker High School, 10
(Jessica Colbenson)

Division I: Prose—First Place Winner

Liab Johnson

Ponchatoula High School, Grade 9

Teacher: Jessica Kastner

Free

I hear voices all around- piercing voices. They all believe what was said. No one wants to hear my side, to know the truth. What have I done to deserve your hostility? I read the words written and as they seeped into my mind, the part of me that holds strength broke into a million tiny particles. Not a drop of confidence or self- esteem is left. As I stand on the ledge between peace and a harsh reality, burning tears slide down my face. Everything is a blurry haze. Breathing deeply to steady myself, I try to recall better times.

Summers spent at grandma's house, playing dress up with my cousins, or the time mom threw me a surprise birthday party. All these things I remember, and all these things I loved. Yet, as hard as I try to make them, they won't fill the void in my heart that's specially marked "Acceptance". I'd give almost anything to once again experience that.

Suddenly a chilly breeze sends the world into a frenzy. Leaves of auburn, crimson, and olive fly away. The older couple walking hand in hand stops to tuck themselves into their scarves and coats. Murky water underneath the bridge sways back and forth, crashing over jagged pieces of rock. A dark, ominous sky clears its throat, perhaps in preparation for a serenade. I continue to stand idle. Of course no one notices. Who has eyes for the plain Jane leaned over a railing? They don't know that she's holding onto it for stability. Nor can they imagine that she's hunched over to keep from physically falling apart. People can look, but never really see.

It is at the arrival of that exact revelation that I decide. No more lies. There will be no more smirks as I walk through the hallway. He won't call me by that name anymore. She will not push me into the cold, hard lockers again. Gone are the days I sit alone in the cafeteria listening to their laughter and glee. I have run out of ways to cope.

Turning to face the wind, I absorb the beauty of nature. I'm certain I will miss it most. My heartbreaks at the realization that my friend, the Sun, chose to stay home today. Oh well. I'm sure it's for the best, as I have no more time to dwell on it. A flock of birds arrive just then. They sing me a mourning song, for they are somber. A tiny smile makes its way across my lips, it falters, then disappears as quickly as it came. The creatures of flight move on. I turn to survey the trees. Sturdy, ancient giants full of wisdom and secrets. If only I were one.

All too soon my farewells are finished. How unfortunate that I have little to part with. Slowly, I walk the worn path to my grand finale. A few untidy shrubs stick out. I chuckle to myself, thinking that they must be trying to stop me. I resume my saunter, merely brushing them aside. The clouds of a distressed heaven churn as thunder roars. Past the broken beer bottles and beyond trampled anthills I travel. Resentment accompanies a steadily forming fog. Not to be deterred, I carry on.

After a while, my stage can be seen. It rests in all its glory like a mighty fist. The azure sea around it performs a dance to an impressive musical score, courtesy of lightning. I take this time to pretend that I am a queen. Lifting my head high, I stride to my awaiting throne. Mounds of luxurious velvet and delicate lace fan out behind me. The finest jewels- rubies, sapphires, diamonds, and pearls- grace my neck, ears, and wrists. Atop my head sits a mighty golden crown. For once, I am beautiful. I am regal... majestic...supreme.

Stairs carved into the side of the massive bluff ascend, leading me closer to a sure fate. I shiver with anticipation, for I know my kingdom is almost near enough to touch. Just before climbing the last step I peek back over my shoulder. "Goodbye," I mumble. Then I complete my trek. A high comes over me. It is my moment to shine. In my mind, the restlessness of anxious subjects can be heard. Smiling, I picture a thick curtain being opened as I reveal myself to an audience so fondly awaiting my presence. Now, I am accepted.

I bow deeply, cheeks flushed from such attention. The others- the cruel ones- would never treat me this way. They'd snort and hit me where it hurts with an ugly remark. The simple fact that they would no longer

be able to do those things planted in me such a fine contentment. I straightened and found the edge of the precipice. I focused only on the vast sea before my eyes. My mind cleared and my body relaxed. "On three." I said inwardly. Rocking ever so slightly, I began the countdown. One. Gusts of cutting wind blew into my face. Two. Sheets of hard rain started to fall. It soaked me to the bone, ruining my lovely cloak. Three.

Gasping, I flung my body over the incline and experienced the art of falling. It seemed to go on for a lifetime. Taking a chance, I opened my eyes only to regret it. At that instant I met pens and needles. I felt frozen ten times over. Yet, I was still alive. How could this be? By now I should probably be dead. Suddenly a powerful force unlike any other I'd ever encountered yanked me backwards. Then, there I was, back on the bluff. The unseen force still held me captive. There was nothing I could do but lie back and wait for it to release me. When it finally did, I was too exhausted for any other activity but sleep. I curled into a tight ball as the sounds of a constantly moving world lulled me into a black slumber.

Division I: Prose—Second Place Winner

Tristan Harding

Slidell High School, Grade 9

Teacher: Jeralyn Spiehler

El Paso

In El Paso, there is no crow to exclaim the beginning of the day. You can tell when the day has begun, not only when the light shines through the dusty windows, but when the heat sets in. An average summer's day in El Paso can range from 95 to 112 degrees Fahrenheit. Dust blows through the dirty streets like water being released from a dam. The summers are always the worst, but it is also the growing season. Cattle flourish on the grasses supported by the Rio Grande to the south, and the locals survive off the whiskey they find in their local saloon.

Last Friday, however, I woke not to the heat but instead to the excited sound of stagecoaches riding their way through the streets of El Paso, Texas. This was nothing new, in fact, at this point it was routine to have the supply and mail coaches distribute their Friday morning deliveries. I hoped that I would find something written to me, even though I knew wouldn't, but I still raced to get myself ready for the day. I rushed out the back door to get some water from the fickle pump. I wasted no time, washing only my face before I put on a vest over my collard shirt. I was meticulous not to miss any buttons on my vest. I grabbed my wide-brimmed hat and jumped out the door. I came to a stop outside and then carried on in a more casual manner. Outside, the heat of the day had set in. It would soon be, though, so I knew I had much to look forward to.

By this time the town was alive and ready for business. The town's shops were ready to serve travelers and hear news of the world outside El Paso. I had some time before I had to open shop, though. On my way to the coaches I was greeted by the shouts of several Mexicans bantering about who owes whom money and who was to pay the debt first in a long chain of debt and excuses. Everyone in the town spoke English, but the majority of us also understood, or at least had a basic knowledge of the Spanish the Hispanic settlers from south of the Rio Grande brought in. The horses they were standing next to carried rough blankets and several canteens that made odd fluid chimes as the horses shook. Strapped to the top of the horses' backs were thick, leather saddles, laden with ammunition for lever-actions on their owner's backs. El Paso was undoubtedly as dangerous as the rest of the major towns in the west.

I received nothing written from the mail coach, yet again. But I did not go empty handed. The new strings I had ordered for my guitar had finally arrived. I had spent four months wages of working at the Saloon for these. Now, I would be able to join alongside the pianist and make double what I would have sweeping, picking up broken shot glasses from men who were too drunk to even hold their glasses, and the occasional bullet casings from fights that broke out over the local women. The local women were always wandering about in their fluffy dresses, carrying umbrellas for shade, gossiping about who was at mass last Sunday and predicting who would show up next weekend. But night, however, drew in a different side of people here. At night, they dance and let themselves go.

As I quickly removed the corroded strings from the neck of the guitar I felt into the package at the same time, and pulled out the six new ones. They certainly made my guitar look better, but I had an urge to find out the sound. I did a quick strum, and the sound that emanated from the soundboard was a magnificent symphony of noise. I ran once again out of my door not even caring to lock it, and across the dusty road. I vaulted over the small gate leading into the entrance of the saloon, and sat next to the piano. After we played lively songs like a true mariachi band I thought to myself, "It's going to be a crazy night!"

Division I: Prose—Third Place Winner

Destiny Gaudet

Assumption High School, Grade 9

Teacher: Michelle Russo

A Ribbon

A Children's Story

I lay in a new white basket filled with make-up and hair clips. The basket sat high on an antique dresser. It was a sunny day when a woman with long blonde hair, swaying back and forth, entered the room and picked me up; we left the room and entered the kitchen. I smelled bacon crisping in the frying pan on a black stove top, and then saw a little girl looking out the window. She also had long blonde hair, but hers was pulled back in a tight ponytail. The woman called out the little girl's name, "Annabelle?" The little girl turned around. "Come here," the woman declared in a soft, sweet voice. After Annabelle approached the woman, she turned with her back facing her. Then the woman tied me around Annabelle's ponytail, she grabbed her backpack, and we headed out the door. Annabelle walked to the end of the driveway and came to a sudden stop as a huge yellow bus approached us; we climbed right aboard. I swayed back and forth in the wind that was coming from an open window; it felt marvelous against my soft blue fabric. The bus came to a stop and, Annabelle ran to the door of an enormous building that read "Welcome to Elementary School." As we entered the building, it seemed colder and it was filled with hundreds of petite boys and girls. An older woman grabbed a microphone and gave an extremely long speech; it must have lasted at least two hours. Afterwards, the teachers began to call out names. Annabelle's name was soon called; she arose and attended the line. After everyone's name had been called, they walked in an orderly fashion into a classroom. I love the way I swing back and forth every time Annabelle moves. She was assigned a seat in the first desk on the third row; it was right in the middle of the room. Everyone was dressed so nice; although I thought Annabelle looked the best, maybe it was because she had me wrapped around her long blonde ponytail. Every child took turns introducing themselves to one another.

A few hours went by and it was time for recess. Annabelle ran to the playground and headed straight for the merry-go-round. She jumped right on while a teacher pushed her as well as three other girls. It went around and around; the thrill was amazing! I started to feel myself slip off Annabelle's ponytail little by little. Suddenly, after one more spin, I flew off and the wind carried me to a huge oak tree where I landed right underneath. A few minutes went by and I heard a bell ring followed by all of the children running inside. Hours went by, although it felt like days; I would have rathered it back in the store waiting for weeks for someone to buy me. At least there I was in air-conditioning, and there were always things going on around me. I watched the children as they got back on the huge yellow buses to go home. It had become dark, and I became frightened. It sounded like bugs and frogs were surrounding me. I felt a drop of something cold and wetland on me and in a matter of seconds it was storming. I was surprised that I had not yet flown away.

After about thirty minutes the weather died down, and I was very relieved. The night went by pretty fast even though I was lying in a small puddle and could not sleep. I watched the sunrise, and it was so beautiful. I became overly excited when I saw that huge yellow bus coming around the corner. Annabelle walked down the steps; she looked sad. Her sadness soon turned to pure happiness when she saw me. Annabelle ran over to me, picked me up, and held me close. She took me to the restroom to clean me up and then put me in her backpack. I sat in her backpack all day thinking to myself that as amazing and unique as this adventure was I hope that I would never have to experience the feelings of loneliness and fear of the unknowing ever again.

Division I: Poetry—First Place Winner

Catie Dunlap

Dunlap Academy, Grade 9

Teacher: April Dunlap

A Compilation of Ridiculous Poems

Ode to a Pen

O lovely pen,
You write with ease,
You have no dust to cause a sneeze.
Unlike your rival,
The wooden pencil,
Which really stinks as writing utensil.
O, lovely pen,
In many a color,
You never really get any duller.
Unlike your rival,
The pencil lead,
Whose point always is too soon dead.
O, lovely pen,
Whether fountain or feather,
You write so well in any weather.
Unlike your rival,
The pencil plain,
Whose eraser hardens in the rain.
O lovely pen,
Thou art tried and true,
In ink of black or red, or blue.
Unlike your rival,
Who has no ink,
I'm sure you agree that pencils stink!

Bouncing Balls

Made of rubber, and skillfully done,
Bouncy balls are so much fun!
They bounce and bound all through the air
And give my mother quite a scare

Moms think balls are not so fun
And when our extra work was done
She made us stay inside our rooms
Hey—next time we'll try WATER BALLOONS!

Southern Favorites

Breaking through the flaky skin
To reveal the juicy meat within
I could not go vegetarian
Simply because of FRIED CHICKEN!
And there's its partner, potato fries,
The peeler cut out all the "eyes."
The crust does not serve to disguise
This crunchy wholesome spud surprise.

Division I: Poetry—Second Place Winner

Jenna Schmidt

Little Oak Middle School, Grade 6

Teacher: Sabrina Audibert

Freedom

“Flyin’ to freedom by firelight
Glinty, shinin’ dots of white
Sittin’ ‘cross da plain we call night

Arms flappin’ hard across the sky
Some of them yellin’ “Goodie-bye, Goodie-bye”
I couldn’t believe it, the sight in my eye

Dozens in da air, flyin’ not by wings
By African magic in the world them folks sing
Happiness, it’s what them folks bring

Division I: Poetry—Third Place Winner

Judy La

St. Tammany Jr. High School, Grade 8

Teacher: Angie Beach

Buffet: Eat Nothing

One single number.
Out of all of the infinity
Could allow the world to change
Allow the world to spin
Let the rich
Be rich
Let the poor
Earn more
Protect a man's name
And not take aim
Let us be fair
Which I know is rare
Common Sense
Do not tense
This world so bold and newsworthy
We need to pay a subscription
One toll to pass, one number
Not different for one another
So let us agree
And not be hungry
On one thing, equality
Not sanity
Everyone wanted this
I must remind, I must persist
Equality and its glory
Let us start another story
Let us at least think
Before black ink
Compromise, do not look at sides
Is it right to fight
To do as we have, to be "right"
Let us be logical
Let us be equal

Division II: Prose—First Place Winner

Hailey Fauchoux

Lutcher High School, Grade 12

Teacher: Carly Zeller

Skyscraper

Skies are crying, I am watching

The 15-year-old girl stands there hopeless and with no faith as she gets ready to take her last breathe. She doesn't understand why they do it. Why they are so cruel and hate her so much. She's done and has no other way out.

Catching teardrops in my hands

With tears streaming down her face, she takes one last look around at her last memorable surroundings. What will her family say when they find her corpse hanging from above? Nothing was their fault. She hid the pain on the inside and manipulated the good people around her into believing she was fine.

Do you have to make me feel like there's nothing left of me

Her family never saw the pain behind her green eyes. They didn't know how bad it was at school. Her classmates called her pig and told her that their dog was prettier than her. They bullied her so much they made her hate herself. She didn't feel like she had a purpose. She wasn't worth life because all she was ugly and fat.

Would it make you feel better to watch me while I bleed

The students made her feel as though the world would be a much better place without her in it. Her pain is glory to them. They don't understand how they make her feel and enough is enough.

I awaken and untangle you from me

As she stands there ready to inhale her last gasp of air, she sees a six-word reminder written on her math notebook by her best friend. The reminder says stay strong because you are beautiful. She reconsiders this action because she knows there is truth to that saying. She is worth life, she is beautiful, and she has purpose. She forgets every negative comment they told her, and she gains self-respect and strength. She's not going to let them get to her anymore.

Go on and try to tear me down

Let them call her names, fat and ugly she is better than them. She knows her true beauty lies within. Helping others, being kind, being happy that's what life is about and she can offer that to the world. Her looks to others are not more important than that.

I will be rising from the ground like a skyscraper

She gains the strength that she has been thirsting of her whole life. She sees the light and knows there is a better way to solve this issue. She has a new meaning to life and her life for the first time, precious because she is strong.

Division II: Prose—Second Place Winner

Jessica Pittman

Covington High School, Grade 10

Teacher: Eugenie Martin

Story Keeper

One

That's last call for my little bar, the last chance to order alcohol. Most people left at least a few hours ago because that's when another bar four blocks over opened. People like to rotate; music, crowd energy, type of alcohol, faces. I'm usually first on the list, I open at five, quitting time for the office park and most of the businesses near here. Bored corporate employees equal business.

Two

The number of guys who made a marriage proposal in here tonight. One was completely serious, they were regulars and this is where they met two years ago. Rob even asked me to put the ring in her drink. It was kind of funny actually; he got down on one knee and held her drink up to her. Of course Sandra said yes, why wouldn't she? I thought that they would have gotten engaged long before now.

The other guy was so far gone that he asked the T-shirt mannequin to, and I quote "Buy your cow, instead of getting the milk for free". That man, I swear has no manners at all he is crude, rude, and socially unacceptable. He then slow-danced by himself while holding the mannequin like an actual girl. When he went to leave he tried to take her with him and refused to believe she wasn't real. But he passed out after I put him in time out.

Three

Girls who threw up. In the same bathroom stall. At the same time. Holding each other's hair back. I had no idea what to say to that one. I went to school with them and they have been best friends the entire time I've known them. They do everything together. Finally one of them was able to tell me one of their addresses, she said that she didn't know whose it actually was and I believe her. I called a taxi for them and paid the cabbie extra to make sure all three got in the door.

Four

How many guys, in a drunken stupor tried to start fights and wound up hitting themselves. The first one was funny. The ones after that got progressively less funny and more annoying the later it got and the more they drank. The last was just exasperating and sad, the guy he was trying to provoke never even turned around.

Fights aren't anything unusual, but on any other day there is at least one good punch before it turns into a hurricane of flailing arms stomping feet insults and sometimes blood. I get the police department to loan me a guy every night to help breakup the fights. The first two were more serious and were arrested, but the second two weren't really a hazard only annoying so they were just kicked out.

Five

Girls tried to table dance. I say tried not because it's against the rules but because they all tried to do it on one table. Two weren't coordinated enough to climb up on to the table. One stage dived off into her sober boyfriends waiting arms, he did not look happy. One, I think, forgot to dance and ended up just singing and taking shots. The last just flat couldn't dance I thought, but she looked like she was having fun so we just left her there until she got tired.

Six

Couples broke up.

Seven

Couples got together. Some switched partners, and others decided that they actually did still like each other. One girl in particular felt really bad about slapping her boyfriend when she over reacted to a slip of the tongue. For the record, he said they should have pedophiles at her little sister's birthday party, he meant petit fours.

Just so you know, even though it is seven couples I'm not talking about fourteen people. It's only thirteen. One girl decided that she liked two guys and is dating both, without the other knowing.

Eight

People close the bar every night. It's usually the same ones. There is Fuzzy the server/waiter/bouncer and me the bartender. Would you believe that I don't know what Fuzzy's real name is? Without him I don't think I could keep this place up and running.

Dan, who just got his own apartment six months ago. It is within walking distance, even drunk. He is on summer break and is going to college to become a chemical engineer.

Sarah, who sits night after night drinking water and watching the amber liquid move as she swirls her one shot of scotch. She is a single mom and both of her kids are adults now. She says her house is too big for one person and that it is too quiet. She downs the scotch right before we leave to go home.

Demy and Emily, my roommate and her best friend who are the town gossips and just talk about whose done what, when, and where. They drink fruity drinks that don't have much alcohol in them so they never get more than buzzed. If you need dirt on anyone, just go to these girls and ask, they will give it to you.

Jack, the resident crazy sailor that has never sailed any farther than Captain Morgan could take him. When he was young, he was into drugs and one day he got a bad batch that fried his brain a little. He is nowhere near as crazy as he acts. I think that he figures that the crazier he acts the more people will leave him be.

And finally Ashley. She is my best friend; she will sit at the bar and do her work from college or grade papers. She will drink nothing but Sprite. We will talk whenever there is a break in customers and if we ever get extremely busy, she will hop over the bar and help mix drinks with me. She used to be a tricks bartender right after high school; it is fun to watch her.

Nine

Years that this place has been open. Nine unforgettable years of strange actions fun patrons and insane stories. I wouldn't change it or the people in it for the world.

Division II: Prose—Third Place Winner

Kristen Roussel

Lutcher High School, 12

Teacher: Carly Zeller

Good Ole Gilbert

Gilbert Roussel, or as I like to call him “Pawpaw Zeke,” has been working in his fruit and vegetable garden for years. Everyday he rides his white dinosaur dodge truck to his garden that is just down the road from his house. He wears his baggy, light colored blue jeans held up by suspenders strapped over his bleach stained shirt. He makes sure his cantaloupe and strawberries are good and ready to take to his children.

Sometimes he rides his rusty old tractor to his garden with the ripped up umbrella on top so he doesn’t increase his chances of getting skin cancer. After trying so hard to cover his bald head with the eight strands of hair he has left, he gives up and throws on a dirty Lutcher Bulldog cap instead. Let’s not forget his oh so cool fishing sunglasses, which he seems to be more proud of than his 17 grandchildren.

“Did you know that with those sunglasses you can see through the water instead of on top?”

He may be a grandpa in his 70’s, but he has the heart of a 29 year-old, literally, from his heart transplant. Sometimes it’s like his mind is still in the 50s when “we went to school barefoot and the phones didn’t talk.” If it wasn’t for his passion for guitar, gardens, and fishing, he’d be the most boring man I know, but he’ll always be old-fashioned, hard working, Pawpaw Zeke.

Division II: Poetry—First Place Winner

Jon Mitchell

Pearl River High School, Grade 11

Teacher: Karen Maccira

The Clock in the Clouds

I scarcely need a lonely cloud
to picture Al Roker working 'round
Syracuse, first in the mailroom, then
as weatherman. "That's what's going on
around the country," he says. I
divide my attention: a cup of
coffee, which I've made far too
dark and far, far, too strong
to be enjoyed, and the newspaper.
I wonder just how many cups
of coffee it takes to make
a journalist run—cups that would
need to be made far too
dark and far, far too strong
to be enjoyed. Still, America's rainmaker
smiled enough in spite of it.
I'm reading about the Yankees, thinking
that maybe Roker was more of
a Mets fan like me. I
love home Mets games—the way
the apple is folded underneath the
rotunda waiting for a homerun. There's
a short article in the finance
section: a small group of millionaires
is funding a company to mine
minerals from asteroids. I'm sure coffee
would be of help to the
project. It's always nighttime for astronauts,
so they're always fighting sleep, but
I think that they're actually content
to stay awake for such long
hours, looking back on the clouds
they've left behind. I go back
to the sports section and a
close-up of a baseball player, his
face cheery, almost cheeky, in spite
of striking out. When I drink
hot coffee, I close my eyes,
a habit that the astronauts likely
could not indulge in for fear
that they risk falling asleep on
the job and ruining a payload
of minerals. I think of Al
Roker and the New York Mets.
I think of clouds on a
tiny blue marble—how a world
deprived of love and wonder eventually
shatters. I think of the dugouts
of America, each of which is
a resting place like some plush

bed on a spaceship where astronauts
can finally surrender to ceramic night.

I take another sip of coffee
and close my eyes. I want
to learn to think like
a weatherman does—to not
take time for granted
before time decides to
take me for
granted, instead.

Division II: Poetry—Second Place Winner

Meredith Faulkner

Fontainebleau High School, Grade 11

Teacher: Ellen Steigman

Halcyon

beyond the black sea of doubts and fears
lies a cozy town made of buttery sunshine
and wicker chairs. the men of the town flash
avuncular smiles and on every street corner
lies a warm café, wherein
I've finally learned to like coffee. mugs give
kisses shaped like the moon to
any willing notebook and every color is a
curious phenomenon. here, adventure lies within
unfound love
 unborn children
 unwritten stories
and an eraser on paper
sounds like the crowing of a rooster before dawn,
because in my future, writing never lies

Division II: Poetry—Third Place Winner

Meg Denny

Fontainebleau High School, Grade 10

Teacher: Shelly Easterling

They Were Us

How foolish they claimed
We were with our minds.
"Wait, what minds," they asked.
"What minds belonged to the young?"
"None, of course," one spoke
Another proposed, "one-half."
"Maybe one-fourth," said the man in the front.
"Or even two-eighths," from the lady in red.

The bandied about
Debating our sense,
And slowly I opened the door.
Unseen, I remained in the dark,
But truthfully I wish I was heard.

I saw myself screaming,
Asking what gave them the right.
Did they not once feel as us?

But instead, I turned.
I took her hand.
And with no last looks,
We ran.

Division II: Poetry—Third Place Winner

Lindsey Potter

Covington High School, Grade 10

Teacher: Eugenie Martin

The Corner of 5th and Main

These are the lives of lonely people

It persists, what can we say?
When told to leave, it pleads to stay
The perfect person, imperfect time
The room is filled with empty sighs and wine

She sits there, alone
Finger tracing the edge of the glass
Thinking of the boy
The boy from the train

He sits there, surrounded
Beautiful women everywhere
His mind wanders back
Back to the girl from the train

These are the lives of lonely people

Minds full of thought
Full of one another
Replaying conversations
Like they had just happened

Coffee.

They talked about coffee
How there was this one shop
Right on the corner
Of 5th and Main

Run.

They ran as fast as they could
He searched frantically for her
She searched frantically for him
Defeated, they waited for a cab
They will return tomorrow
And the next day
And the next

He gets in his car
She gets her cab

Love at second sight