

SLWP Writes! 2013

Poetry

"Junia's Song" by Chloe Dana Ashford
"The Worst Poem Ever" by Brandon Yao
"A Retold Story" by Caitlin Weid
"Jingles in the Dark" by Alex Gracen Hendon
"For the Love of a Prince" by Catherine Dunlap
"Afterbirth" by Alexander Zinsel

Fiction

"The Virus" by Christian Flick
"Empty" by Callie Waldrop
"Love is in the Air" by Angelle Williams
"Rain" by Adam Cannon, St. Pauls High School
"Stuffs" by Clebert Etheredge
"The Phobias" by Hannah Selg

Non-Fiction

"My Heart's Answer" by William Kory Jenkins
"Happy" by Zoe Killeen
"Our Place in Nature" by Kennedy Halphen
"Inspirational Fires" by Cameron Harmeyer
"The Life and Times of a Chronic Procrastinator" by
Owen Langston
"A City by the River" by Patrick McCarroll



SLWP Writes!

2013

Writing Contest Sponsored by
Southeastern Louisiana Writing Project
Dr. Richard Louth, Director
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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 fiction, nonfiction, and poetry in the Southeast Louisiana region. In the spring of 2013, the SLWP received over 200 submissions to our Fifth Annual *SLWP Writes! Contest*. Writing Project teachers and writers read meticulously through submissions and selected 18 winners and 20 honorable mentions based on originality, clarity, language, style, and detail. Please note that SLWP Writes! does not revise the winning entries in order to keep the integrity of the works.

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, to the judges who spent many long hours reading, deliberating, and determining the winning submissions, and to Dr. Richard Louth for organizing and supporting this project.

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

http://www.selu.edu/acad_research/programs/slwp/

SLWP Writes! 2013 Winners

Division I Poetry (Grades 6-9)

Winners:

1st Place: "Junia's Song" by Chloe Dana Ashford, Holden High School
(Robin Coxe-Harris & Nancy Martin)

2nd Place: "The Worst Poem Ever" by Brandon Yao, St. Tammany Jr. High School
(Angie Beach)

3rd Place: "A Retold Story" by Caitlin Weid, Fontainebleau Jr. High School
(Janice Krantz)

Honorable Mentions:

"Ode to Band" by Kennedy Halphen, North Corbin Jr. High School
(Carolyn Bankston)

"Dream of a Perfect Doughnut" by Jonathan Moore, St. Tammany Jr. High School
(Angie Beach)

"Life as I Discover-Fighting Instinct" by Halle Mahfouz, North Corbin Jr. High School
(Carolyn Bankston)

"When I Think of Covington" by Madison Metevier, Pitcher Jr. High School
(Katherine Agena)

"You" by Saad Chaudhary, St. Tammany Jr. High School
(Angie Beach)

"Letting Your Guard Down" by Evangelyn Prestenback, St. Tammany Jr. High School
(Angie Beach)

Division II Poetry (Grades 10-12)

Winners:

1st Place: "Jingles in the Dark" by Alex Gracen Hendon, Fontainebleau High School/NOCCA (Lara Naughton & Shelly Easterling)

2nd Place: "For the Love of a Prince" by Catherine Dunlap, Dunlap Academy
(April Dunlap)

3rd Place: "Afterbirth" by Alexander Zinsel, St. Paul's School
(Brad Guillory)

Honorable Mentions:

"Seeing Versus Not" by Meg Denny, Fontainebleau High School
(Patricia Vicknair)

"A Day of Prayer" by Meredith Faulkner, Fontainebleau High School
(Gayle Berard)

"What I Think in School" by Marti Latino, Fontainebleau High School
(Colleen Hildebrand)

"Evergreen" by Trista Galivan, Franklinton High School
(Elizabeth Helton)

Division I Fiction (Grades 6-9)

Winners:

1st Place: "The Virus" by Christian Flick, St. Paul's School
(Brother Ray Bulliard)

2nd Place: "Empty" by Callie Waldrop, Pitcher Junior High School
(Katherine Agena)

3rd Place: "Love is in the Air" by Angelle Williams, St. Amant High School
(Brandy Foret)

Honorable Mentions:

"Flips and Tumbles" by Marley Bogran, Fontainebleau Jr. High School
(Janice Krantz)

"She Never Left . . ." by Caitlin Weid, Fontainebleau Jr. High School
Janice Krantz

"The End and Beginning of Mankind" by Torrie Douglas, St. Tammany Jr. High School
(Angie Beach)

Division II Fiction (Grades 10-12)

Winners:

1st Place: "Rain" by Adam Cannon, St. Pauls High School
(Brad Guillory)

2nd Place: "Stuffs" by Clebert Etheredge, Covington High School
(Eugenie Martin)

3rd Place: "The Phobia" by Hannah Selg, Slidell High School
(Brant Osborn)

Honorable Mentions:

"The Sight" by Benjamin Detiveaux, Jewel M. Sumner High School
(Deana Simmons)

"Truth in Smoke" by Jaden Gillespie, Covington High School
(Eugenie Martin)

"The Break Room" by Baylee Montague, Slidell High School
(Brant Osborn)

Division I Non-Fiction (Grades 6-9)

Winners:

1st Place: "My Heart's Answer" by William Kory Jenkins, Covington High School
(Eugenie Martin)

2nd Place: "Happy" by Zoe Killeen, Covington High School
(Eugenie Martin)

3rd Place: "Our Place in Nature" by Kennedy Halphen, North Corbin Jr. High School
(Carolyn Bankston)

Honorable Mention:

"Learning Sucks (But Only Without Good Teachers)" by Katie Monette, Covington High School
(Eugenie Martin)

Division II Non-Fiction (Grades 10-12)

Winners:

1st Place: "Inspirational Fires" by Cameron Harmeyer, Covington High School
(Eugenie Martin)

2nd Place: "The Life and Times of a Chronic Procrastinator" by Owen Langston, Covington High School
(Eugenie Martin)

3rd Place: "A City by the River" by Patrick McCarroll, Litcher High School
(Carly Zeller)

Honorable Mentions:

"Fortune Reconsidered" by Nathaniel Martin, Covington High School
(Eugenie Martin)

"At the Change of Seasons" by Catherine Dunlap, Dunlap Academy
(April Dunlap)

"The Hero We Need" by Andrew Cove, Covington High School
(Eugenie Martin)

Division I: Poetry—First Place Winner

Chloe Dana Ashford

Holden High School

Teachers: Robin Coxe-Harris & Nancy Martin

Junia's Song

She waited beneath, for hours and hours,
days upon weeks, months upon years,
Humming her Song, and counting out flowers ...
Blossoms and buds and tears upon tears.

The sickness had taken her just as she'd wakened,
from the slumber of children, the easiest time.
The Fates meant no malice, they were not mistaken,
Still Junia felt forgiveness hard to find.

The land was a dark one, of brimstone and onyx,
filled with the ones who were there but still gone.
Some were loving, but oftentimes they were demonic.
Each bleak moment felt like an aeon.

She was waiting for something—she did not know what.
You see her departure had clouded her mind.
She sat by the Styx watching boat after boat,
filled with souls who wept for those they'd left behind.

Finally, one day, in the cool months of autumn,
Junia looked up into a familiar face.
It had been such a long time. She'd almost forgotten,
the warmth of her beloved's embrace.

"Weep no more, Junia," said the well-known stranger,
"I have come to be with you at last."
She put the Styx at her back, with no fear of danger,
and into the black waves she cast,

a handful of lotuses, drenched in her sorrow,
and her sempiternal regret.
For the first time in decades, Junia feared not tomorrow,
for the first time, she could forget.

Division I: Poetry—Second Place Winner

Brandon Yao

St. Tammany Jr. High School
Teacher: Angie Beach

The Worst Poem Ever

Roses are red
Sharks go poop
Waiter! There's a fly in my soup
I should've been watching
When I swatted
Because it flew down
Right into the goop
Now it's infected
All affected
How can I eat this soup?

Now it just sits there, mocking me
I guess I'll go pee
In the bathroom with a man staring
He holds my herring
But this is too weird
He has a long beard
Now I leave
With my herring in his possession

At my home
I see the ticking of the hooting owl
It was raining cows and sheeps
The Sheeps annoyed me
I milked the cows to get milk
All of a sudden
Animals spontaneously spawned
Deers, Mooses, Platypusi, Gooses
My house was more crowded than the Ark
They broke everything and the kitchen sink
I had no place to go

So
I went to a shelter
With nothing but my name
And the clothes on my body
And asked for some soup
I waited patiently
And to my luck
Guess what was in the soup
Yes, that's right
Three Blind Mice
What were the chances?

Division I: Poetry—Third Place Winner

Caitlin Weid

Fontainebleau Jr. High School

Teacher: Janice Krantz

A Retold Story

“And because the story has been told so often, it has taken root in every man’s mind. And, as with all retold tales that are in people’s hearts, there are only good and bad things and black and white things and good and evil and nowhere in between anywhere.”

-John Steinbeck

In every heart there is a
Story
Every story has an
Evil
But, for every evil there is a
Good
For every good and bad there is a
White
And for every good and bad there is a
Black
Every story is in a
Heart
Every heart has a
Story
Every story is firmly
Rooted

Division II: Poetry—First Place Winner

Alex Gracen Hendon

Fontainebleau High School and New Orleans Center for Creative Arts
Teachers: Lara Naughton and Shelly Easterling

Jingles in the Dark

You sputter your mouth dry
speaking of words red like
the dribble that fell
from your brother's lips
the night they beat him with chains.
Your lips are cracked and clothes hang heavy.

Aren't you tired yet?

Speaking words that they
will forget
the moment they turn
the corner.

While still on your knees
you look up to clean feet.

Your brother's were dirty
when you found him. Ripped
and bruised from rocks as he fled
away from men who jingled
in the dark.

Aren't you tired yet?

They speak of it in the bar
downtown.
Hushed whispers
of white robes and beer,
earning red chains,
a bottle for a plea in the night.

Aren't you tired yet?
Of running from hoods sharp
and pointed to your heart.
They sharpened them on your brothers,
but when your brothers screamed you turned
off your lights and hid behind screen door.

Now your knees scraping against pavement
feel the same as your hand against the screen porch.

Division II: Poetry—Second Place Winner

Catherine Dunlap

Dunlap Academy

Teacher: April Dunlap

For the Love of a Prince

The Lovely Mayden and the Knight

or

A Tale of Love

In Iambic Tetrameter

Hark! Once upon a time there was
A wealthy prince, so it was told
His looks were fine, his hair of gold
This prince, he took himself to town
But liked it not, so then he tried
Meand'ring down the countryside
As he was passing meadow-field
He froze, as tho' untimely dead
Alas! I'm smitten! Oh! he said.
Her face was round, her lips sweet pink
She perchéd, graceful, on a rock
the sight of her the prince did shock
He was in love—that much is true
But when approached, this fair young lass
Just stared—so modest!—at the grass
Our hero, mad with lovers' zeal
The maiden tried to please with speech
But nought he said put her in reach.
She would not speak, tho' how he tried!
Persuaded, begg'd, and even wept
Yet all was vain, as though she slept.
This prince of course, so dashing, fair
Decided not to linger long
Where (least to her) he did but wrong
Away he rode, with this in mind:
That maidens, in their foolish reason
Refused him, 'cause 'twas dragon season!
She thinks I'm coward! With great dismay
Ah well...I'll shew her to be wrong
Let us be off! Don't tarry long!
A hundred miles yet west of hence
Liveth a dragon, clad in mail
Who is renown'd in song and tale
I'll slay it! Yet with but one mind
That my true love may look on me
With eyes of fondness, fav'rably!
What our poor prince happened to miss
Was on his journey before dusk
He'd spied nought, save a mollusc!
Why yes, indeed—she did not speak

Because snails can't—and also this
 Explains th'lack of coquettishness
 For snails, we know, are rather slow,
 Desiring neither home nor board
 (their shells house them—gifts from the Lord)
 They have no need of princes, kings
 So thus attempts to woo a snail
 Are more than likely bound to fail
 Alas! Our hero saw this not!
 So up he rode through mountain, gorge
 To face the dragon, Mr. George—
 A great and fearsome beast George was,
 With evil glare and fiery glance
 That dared the bravest knight advance
 For he was all dismay that day
 When walked he up—and walked he down
 There was no dragon to be found!
 He sadly wept for his sweet love
 Oh! How on earth to win her now,
 If failed he his heroic vow?
 For what dear maid would love a knight
 Who could not yet a dragon slay?
 Oh lackaday, Oh lackaday!
 In great despair he turned and went
 Across the barren plains to roam
 For Mr. George was not at home
 Then, looking up at great wing-flap
 The prince the dragon does espy!
 To arms! To arms! he's heard to cry
 Meanwhile, his love upon a rock
 Had finished chewing—took respite
 'Fore sliming out into the night
 A glorious battle, and glorious won!
 How Mr. George congratulated
 Him on knights discombobulated
 Alas, our prince among the slain
 Will look no more on love's fair shell
 His dying, George did not ignell
 It took the dragon two great flames
 To slay this brave young kingly son
 While most knights needed only one
 And so he died; how sad it is!
 Our grief's too great for any poem
 Of valour, as we now know'em
 Oh! what a shame it is, indeed
 That handsome face, in silver mail
 Be dragon-slain, to win a snail.

Division II: Poetry—Third Place Winner

Alexander Zinsel

St. Paul's School

Teacher: Brad Guillory

Afterbirth

Chemicals flow through the tubes buried in my brain,
Eyes dilate as the circuits close and open, sending shivers down my back and through my veins,
Riding the nicotine high well into the night behind the old supermarket where they sell cheap liquor.

This is the existence of a living-the-lifer, a fast-laner, a follower of the die-young-stay-pretty.

But pretty I am not, and time moves mockingly slow

Here in the dark, in the cold, in the alleyway behind the store I used to work at.

I watch the pretty girls with their emerald eyes and promising futures,

And lap up spare change like a ragged cat,

The man from the restaurant next door yells at me to go, but

If I could leave I would have done it long before

This is an ode to the dead, the dying, the lingerers,

Scratched with a broken pencil into a wet brick wall,

Smoking cheap cigarettes and drinking strong whiskey,

Behind the store where I met my lover and my demon

Division I: Fiction—First Place Winner

Christian Flick

St. Paul's School

Teacher: Brother Ray Bulliard

The Virus

Darkness covered the room like a black sheet. One light, a small candle clutched in a man's hand, glowed dimly in the corner like a firefly trapped in a jar. The man's diseased body shook and twitched as he sobbed, "I am not a monster. I am not a monster. I am not a monster." His tears burned his red, beady eyes like acid. He looked down at something barely visible, but unmistakable, a dead body. The man wished he had died instead, but he knew he could not. His virus would never allow him that luxury. Instead, his scarred, splotchy, pale skin looked as if it had not seen the sun in years, and all of the man's hair had fallen out in tufts leaving him with a bald head which constantly pounded and throbbed. To make it worse, his body ached and creaked when he moved like rusty hinges. He placed the candle in the pale, red eyed corpse's hands and waited. Tires screeched nearby and the man knew the police had found him. He made no effort to run, he just sat and waited. Faint footsteps pounded down the hall, but suddenly they stopped. The door caved in, coming right off its hinges and a fist found its way to the back of the man's head forcing consciousness to slip away.

The beams of lights jolted him awake burning his scarlet eyes. They tried to adjust to the rays, leaving him temporarily blinded. The concrete room felt like a freezer and instantly gave him goose bumps. The man sat completely still in a metal chair, bolted to the ground near a table with one thing on it, his candle. It still burned strong, its flame dancing back and forth in a frenzy of yellow heat. The police had searched him leaving him with nothing except an orange jumpsuit which read Willow County Jail across his back. Footsteps slowly clicked in the back of the room making their way towards him. Gradually his sadness built with each click of the detective's heels until the interrogator seated herself directly across from him. He took note of a small silver nametag pinned to her jacket with two black words on it, Detective Moria.

"Please leave. I don't want to have to kill you too," he murmured quietly.

She just stared at him in confusion, not knowing whether that should have evoked fear or sympathy. "So Mr. Williams," she began.

"Not Mr. Williams," he retorted making it very obvious this hurt him, "That's my family's name; I don't even deserve it."

"Anyway, Mr. Williams," Detective Moria retorted.

Williams abruptly jumped up in his chair with a look of pure hatred upon his face, but the restraints yanked him back into his seat. He calmed himself and the look of anger slowly dispersed from his face.

"Why did you kill that man?" she asked nonchalantly, just going through a routine interrogation.

"I had to save him," Mr. Williams mumbled. "What was his name?"

He did not even know his victim's name. Now the detective became puzzled. "What do you mean save him?" she questioned seeming very interested.

“I’m contagious,” he warned, “There is nothing I can do about it. Please leave before it’s too late for you also. You don’t want to be like me.”

Williams looked terrible, but that had to have taken years to develop. Nothing will happen to me she thought. “Ha ha funny joke. Now why don’t you just...”

“I’m serious. Please it happens fast,” Mr. Williams pleaded quietly.

“Well, I am sure I won’t catch your cold,” the detective said plainly.

“Please! I do not want to hurt anyone else. I am miserable and I can’t even die to escape it. I don’t want anyone to live like I have to. Please, leave,” he begged in a depressed, detached voice.

Suddenly, it all made sense to the detective. Williams killed out of mercy.

“You could become infected in...” he cut himself short. Mr. Williams stared into her eyes and saw one color: red. Williams looked at her hair and it had already thinned slightly. Finally, he glanced at her hand and saw one more symptom, a pale spot on her palm the size of a golf ball. Williams had done it again. His heart sank and he knew what he must do, save Moria. No one deserved to have his fate forced upon them. He would not even wish it on his worst enemy. The disease offered misery and nothing else; no one warranted that, not even Williams. He forcefully ripped his arms upward and kicked his feet forward using all of his strength, and broke free of the restraints. Adrenaline pumped through his veins as he made his way towards Moria. Williams cocked his fist and delivered one forceful blow to her temple with a crack. Life instantly drained from her blue eyes as the detective fell to the cold, hard, concrete floor. She landed with a soft thud completely lifeless. Williams’ breathing became heavy. He quickly grasped the candle, looking at it as a beacon of hope and sat it next to Moria, its flame still burned bright and steady as she once had. Williams finally lowered himself down next to her weeping and repeating one sentence over and over again, “I’m not a monster. I’m not a monster. I’m not a monster.”

Division I: Fiction—Second Place Winner

Callie Waldrop

Pitcher Jr. High School
Teacher: Katherine Agena

Empty

Each day is automatic, the exact same as the last; wake up. Go to school. The bell rings. It's time for English. Your writing is too unorthodox; it may offend someone. Change it immediately. We're writing autobiographies today. Mine is empty; my life is blank. Bell rings; time for science. There are several different types of doctors: orthopedists, pediatricians, pathologists. If someone performed an autopsy on me, cut my lifeless body open and searched inside, all they would find is emptiness. Yet that emptiness would be filled; filled with facts and facts and facts, useless facts filling me to the brim, pouring out of my brain, my mouth, my eyes. The bell rings once again. It's time for math. Equations, substitutions, addition, fractions, combinations, linear, non-linear, polynomials, subtraction, multiplication, division, lines, points, ordered pairs, graphs, tables, grade-school level, algebra I, algebra II, geometry, trigonometry, I can't fit anymore math in my brain. Are we really going to use any of this later? "Yes," the pedagogue yells. "Math follows you everywhere." The siren blares. I am a maniac. Time for social studies. Time to memorize types of government. Aristocracy, autocracy, bureaucracy, democracy, so on and so on. America, home of the brave and the land of the free, everyone is welcome here. Everyone is welcome here except for people who look different than us, people who think different from us, and people who believe differently than us. Anyone who isn't from America is a terrorist, don't believe anything they say, they're evil. The bell rings once. Two times. Three times. Four times. It never stops. A headache blossoms in my head. I breathe in. I can't breathe out. I break down and scream, please help me. Please let me leave this place, I can't take it anymore.

The Dictator comes on the loudspeaker. The foreign language of the free-willed is unknown to me. I am called to the office. When I arrive, I am brought to a small room. This room is too small. Too dark. It smells weird in here; is it poison, or just air? Either way, I must fight it.

I feel myself slipping away. I can no longer see. I can no longer feel. I no longer have free-will.

I had a wonderful time at school today! In English, we got to write autobiographies, the teacher said my writing was perfect! Then in math, we learned about substitutions, which I know we'll use in real life! In social studies, we learned about different governments. I sure am proud to be American, where everyone is welcome! School is such a wonderful place!

Division I: Fiction—Third Place Winner

Angelle Williams

St. Amant High School

Teacher: Brandy Foret

Love is in the Air

It was one of those perfect summer days. The sand wasn't too hot nor was the water too cold. The sun didn't shine down with heat stroke inducing temperatures, and it wasn't so cloudy that you couldn't get a tan. It was a day where you would stop and smell the roses, a day to appreciate Mother Nature and all she had to offer.

Charlotte sighs as the sun kisses her face, its rays warming her entire being. She closes her eyes, melting in utter relaxation as she basks in its glow. It was so soothing, it felt like it was making all of her worries disappear. It just felt so good...

The chuckle to her left breaks her out of her heat-educed daze. She jumps, her eyes springing open from shock. She didn't even realize that she began to doze off.

Following the sound, she sees her best friend, Carter, grinning at her, the pure happiness that was on his face made a smile tug at her lips as well. He throws his head back as he also let the sun fall onto his form, making his tan seem even more golden.

Charlotte blushes at the scene, but couldn't make herself turn away. It was so weird, seeing her best friend grow from a small kid obsessed with Ninja Turtles and Batman, to this...this man before her. It seems like only yesterday they were swinging, eating ice cream and running through the sprinklers. But now they were in high school and those days of childhood youth seemed a whole lifetime ago.

Her blush grows as she continues to look him over. No, she couldn't even see a hint of that boy anymore. Now...now it was like he was a complete stranger. He wasn't the pale, goofy haircut, always cracking jokes little boy anymore. Now he was-for lack of a better word-hot and it kind of scares her that she notices.

The feeling she gets when she looks at him, when he smiles that secret smile meant only for her, makes her melt inside. A blush will sweep over her cheeks, her hands will get sweaty, and her heart will skip a beat. It's like he's her own personal sun, warming her from the inside out with just a look, a smile, or a touch. She doesn't understand what's changed, but it was obvious that something did. Why was she feeling this way towards him? Could it possibly be that she was in love with her best friend?

Love. The word makes her want to sigh with happiness and cringe with fear at the same time. It was a word that holds so much, and yet, feels so empty to her. She has never been in love before, but from what the rest of society shows her, it's a pretty amazing thing to be in. However, it was a double-edged sword. It can bring you the greatest of joys or the worst of pains. That's what causes her so much fear. She doesn't want to feel the pain of heartache, especially if that heartbreak was from someone so important to her. It would be like losing a boyfriend and a best friend all at once.

She looks back at him from the corner of her eye, smiling as she sees him completely and utterly relaxed with the biggest smile on his face, and she knew she couldn't deny it any longer. She was in love with her best friend. How could she not be? He was the kindest, sweetest, most amazing person she's ever met, and she's known him practically her entire life. She's surprised she hadn't figured it out before.

However, was it worth losing that friendship over such a gamble?

As if sensing her eyes on him, Carter turns his head to look at her, flashing her his secret smile, and her heart lurched into her throat. Looking into his deep brown eyes, Charlotte wants to tell him so badly, that the words are right on her lips. He leans in, as if knowing the importance of her words. Her mouth opens without her consent, tongue ready to spill the one secret she barely allows even herself to acknowledge, when his iPhone suddenly rang, shattering the moment. She doesn't know if her heart drops in relief or disappointment.

Carter mutters something under his breath, shooting her an apologetic look, before picking it up and answering. She watches as a smile spreads across his face, and she knows instantly who it was. It has to be his girlfriend, Rosaland.

She curses herself; of course, how could she have forgotten about his girlfriend, the girl he was in love with? God she was so stupid! He would never return her feelings, not when he had the most perfect girl already.

Feeling a sudden, overwhelming sadness within her, Charlotte gets up, mumbling something about getting a drink, hoping he would buy her excuse. He did, waving her off, and that hurt even more. It seems she isn't really needed in his life. She isn't the only girl that can make him smile anymore. She needed to accept that, as her aching heart was telling her so strongly. She knew love wasn't worth the pain; she hadn't even told him and her heart was already in an agony that she couldn't describe.

What she didn't know was that, as she walks sadly away, fighting back the tears that were on the verge of falling, Carter's eyes never strayed from her fading figure, watching her walk across the beach until she was no longer in sight.

"I'm sorry, Rosaland." he said, cutting the girl off mid story. He feels a twinge of guilt for doing so, but he feels a much larger feeling of pain as he recalls the way his best friend walked with hunched shoulders, alone and bracing herself against the strong ocean winds.

"I can't... I can't do this anymore." he paused, taking in a breath for courage as he uttered the words he never allowed himself to say aloud.

" I-I'm in love with someone else."

There was a tense silence from her end and he winced, knowing that she had to be angry with him. She's asked him a hundred times over if there was something going on between Charlotte and himself and he always answered with a firm no; however, inside the deepest corners of his heart, he wasn't so sure. He knew their relationship was different. He didn't feel the same way he did for Charlotte as he did for his other female friends. He didn't even feel so strongly for his girlfriend, a fact that has made him feel guilty and try to ignore what he felt.

However, as he saw her today, laughing and smiling with the glow of the sun always on her, he couldn't deny his feelings any longer. They swept over him in a giant flood, refusing to stay ignored. So over come with his feelings, he almost allowed himself to kiss her like he was so tempted to do. Thank god Rosaland called and snapped him out of it before he did.

He didn't want to be one of those guys, the ones who cheat on the one he should stay faithful to. He also never wanted to hurt her, but as he watched Charlotte walk away from him, he knew he couldn't

continue with the way things were now. He didn't want Rosaland, and if he was completely honest with himself, he never really did. It was her, has always been her, and will always be her. He isn't going to let himself hold back anymore. He's going to tell her now, before he loses his nerve completely.

He mutters one last apology into the phone as he stands up, before ending the call and taking off running down the beach. He searches up and down the shore for her, but it seems that the people around him, the sun, and even his own hair are determined to make this difficult for him. He didn't stop, though. His feet kept pounding on the wet sand to the same fast rhythm of his heart banging in his chest.

He searched that beach for what felt like hours, looking up and down the sandy path for just a trace of her, but it was all for not. Panic began to bloom in his chest, and he had a twisted sense of foreboding when ever he thought back to the last time he saw her. It hurt him to know that he let her walk away when she looked so dejected and alone.

As he jumped into his truck and peeled out of the now very empty parking lot, only one thought ran through his mind.

“Don't worry, Lottie. I'm not letting you go again.”

He felt the promise echo through his very soul as he raced to the one who he never should have let walk away.

Division II: Fiction—First Place Winner

Adam Cannon

St. Paul's High School

Teacher: Brad Guillory

Rain

The door stood still. Nobody closed it, nobody opened it. It just stood there half open. It was raining, and rain poured into the house, leaving small puddles on the depressions in the floor. I watched it seep in the house in small zigzags, gradually making its way to where I sat. I couldn't bring myself to get up, to walk over there and close the door, so I just watched. "She could have closed the door," I thought, "she never closed the door before, but she could have closed it today, or tonight, or whichever one it is. It's raining, after all." If I had the will to do something, it couldn't have been important enough to remember what it was, because I was still sitting here. I'd never noticed before, but the rain made this house wondrous. The patter on the roof created a lulling feeling that told me that I didn't need to feel anything now; I could place myself anywhere in this house and lie listening to the sound of random things happening. In a way, I guess it was its own form of perfect. I felt cold, the room felt cold, and I couldn't do anything about it. If she had closed the door, I could at least sit here, lying against the wall contentedly.

I think I know why people around me do the things that they do, I don't understand how, though. How they go about doing what they do without questioning everything, without solving everything, without fixing everything. What compels them to do nothing, when everything is wrong? The pictures on the wall of the university I taught at weren't straight- those were wrong. The students there didn't understand anything I told them- they were wrong. The other professors would talk through their classes, letting students sit anywhere they wanted, that was wrong. Nobody seemed to mind that everything was so horrible; they looked at me and couldn't understand why it bothered me so. These same people couldn't understand how I was more successful than them, how I was better than them.

There was one of them who understood what I knew, and one day she came to my office and helped me, helped me fix everything that was wrong with it, helped me make everything perfect. When everything was perfect for the time being, she'd sit there on the floor, listening to the night outside. It was strange; she just sat there listening and smiling, but she had helped me, so I joined her and I sat there too, listening to the unorthodox symphony of the night. She worked at the university, not in the same field as I, but she was somewhat prominent in her field. I never had noticed her, but she never had been truly worthy of notice until that day. Every night at ten she would stand up from where she had sat, tell me it was time for her to go, and leave. She wasn't the only one who visited me during that time; another less pleasant woman, claiming to be her psychological supervisor, would pass by my office on occasion. She had arranged our meeting; apparently we were "similar cases," and were "socially compatible."

I understood I would not meet another person like her in my life, and I wanted to make sure that she would want to continue visiting me, but I didn't know how to do that. I couldn't chain her up to a wall: that would be wrong. There was no way to realistically trick her to continue visiting me- she thought like me, after all. I sat all of that day, wondering how I could hook her into visiting me, up until the point where she walked in. She seemed somewhat excited and nervous, like she had something to say, but could never make up her mind. She left that day without closing the door, without looking back. The next day she acted similar to the day before, so I asked what she was thinking. She closed her eyes, took a deep breath, and asked me if I would like to join her for dinner.

I told her "Yes, I would love to." It was perfect; actually, somehow I had managed to get her to

not only visit me in my office but also outside of the university. She had invited me out and by the time it was over we had ended up in my house, the clouds outside foreshadowing the storm to come. It was all hard to remember what had happened after the drinks but I had said something about her studies, how one of her research papers was wrong. She stood there for a moment, her head tilted downwards. I could see her hands had begun to curl into tiny little fists.

She was whispering, repeating the same thing over again; she was saying, "I'm not wrong. I'm not. I'm not. I'm not." She was crying now and shaking a little- I felt sad. She was still wrong, my own mind was made up, I would explain to her what was wrong and she could fix it. I began to tell her how she had messed up, but by then she wasn't listening- she was whispering something else now. I could pick up only a few words about things that made no sense, mere gibberish, until I saw something in her eyes that told me why she had snapped. Somehow I set her off and this night was going to end badly, I could tell. After all, she was just like me. She continued screaming the horrid language of wretched beings forgone sanity as she pulled a gun out of her purse, aimed it at my chest, and shot me. She ran out the door along with her mind, and just as the first drops began to fall- the wind blew the door open.

The door stood still. Nobody closed it, nobody opened it. It just stood there half open. It was raining, and rain poured into the house, leaving small puddles on the depressions in the floor. I watched it seep in the house in small zigzags, gradually making its way to where I sat, closer to the pool of blood that had surrounded me. I couldn't get up, walk over there and close the door, so I just watched. "She could have closed the door," I thought, "she never closed the door before, but she could have closed it today, or tonight, or whichever one it is. It's raining, after all." I'd never noticed before, but the rain made this house wondrous. The patter on the roof created a lulling, comforting feeling that told me that I didn't need to feel anything now; I could place myself anywhere in this house and lie listening to the sound of random, wrong things happening. In a way, I guess the wrong things were their own form of perfect. I felt cold, the room felt cold, and I couldn't do anything about it. If she had closed the door, I could at least sit here, lying against the wall, dying contentedly.

Division II: Fiction—Second Place Winner

Clebert Etheredge

Covington High School

Teacher: Eugenie Martin

Stuffs

In the world of stuff, there is a lot of stuff. Things, items, all just stuff, feelings, emotions, thoughts, stuff. But this stuff makes up reality, what is real; it is all just stuff, anything can be stuff. But this is not the matter here at all, what does the relativity of stuff have to do with anything?

I once thought to myself that reality was important, but reality is just relative. I guess that is just what happens when one is stuck away from it. So I sit here today, to tell you a story, my story, part of my story.

As a child, life just happened, things happened, stuff happened. I could say my childhood was rather normal, but what really is normal? Living in a suburb with a dog and a cat and everyone getting along? Let me restate this, my childhood was moderately normal. This change being due that everyone did not get along, in fact, we all hated each other, and by we, I mean my family.

As a child, I loved fairytales, they always had the greatest of endings; good over evil, victory was always assumed. I see now how they provide a false image of this reality that is so important. I always felt sorry for the poor dragon that was killed by that prince, it is just the dragon's nature to take away the princess, bartering is always an option sir noble knightly sir.

My brother was the favorite, indefinitely. The incontrovertibility of this state was so easily seen. Preposterous is the level. These words I use to describe this one may not think are correct, but, this is my story, and my connotations are what define these words, at least, they are somewhat close to the denotation, hopefully. My brother is 5 years older than me.

My mother, oh my mother, greatly enjoyed my brother. She thought he was, one may say, better. My father simply put, enjoyed being alone, staying to himself, he was never around.

Years past, I ended up going to college. "Fairytales, what a great concept," I said one day to myself, and I realized, they really were a great concept. Anything can happen, so one day I decided to begin digging a hole. I found digging relaxing, a good time to be with myself, when it came to me, the truth; the great serendipity.

It was the holidays now, and everyone was home, I went out for my usual digging, I had a handsome hole going on around by about this time. My brother was here, married with two kids now, keeping up his role as favorite. He came out to tell me dinner was ready. Indeed it was, I flapped my wings, and things took their course.

By this time I could indeed see that my transformation was complete, I was the dragon, and I could not let the prince get away with the princess. The great use of having digging as your favorite hobby is that you can easily get away with digging multiple graves, but I had different plans.

I waddled, as dragons do, to the house. The princess was there to open the door; I gobbled her up; no more princess. I could easily say human tastes great. With my deed complete, I happily flew away in peace.

I flew far away to an island where I lived, and where I am now, enjoying life; life without a reality. With all the stuff said and done, it was stuff in the past, unimportant.

“Woah!” I awake, and that was the last time I went to the dentist.

Division II: Fiction—Third Place Winner

Hannah Selg

Slidell High School

Teacher: Brant Osborn

The Phobia

Nausea was all I was capable of feeling as I was forced to sit still and watch the horror unravel before my frightened eyes. They took me to the circus, thinking I'd have fun like all the other kids, but I was a little different than those kids. They laughed as the barbaric creatures with the abnormally sized feet and obnoxiously large red noses rampaged through the audience; I grew pale with fear. The scent of elephant feces stung my nose, entering my weary and aching brain. All I wanted was to go home and leave this madhouse.

The people seated behind us were intoxicated and threw peanut shells flying through the air, gently landing in my hair and tangling. The noise of the clustered and overly vibrant tent defiled my sanity. I needed to leave. The animals were stirring up the dust and dirt, and it penetrated my eyes, drying them out and giving me reason to cry. I heard the drunks behind me howling stupidly. I wished they would stop. They frightened me.

I stared at my feet, hoping they would somehow be a safe place to look, that maybe they would offer me some comfort. I realized that it was pathetic to turn to something as simple as my beaten pink shoes to give me advice on what to do.

I felt the hot pulses of fear drum through my shaking limbs when I heard the music. I'll never forget the sound. The tiny toy orchestra, distorted and diluted and out of tune in all of its madness. The horns and cheap trumpets were creating the dissonance for the mere fun of it all, just to see me cower. The bass drum rattled and echoed, as if the hollow middle was filled with liquid. Liquid...the blood of the victims of this horrible place. Rattling...thumping...drumming. Then the snares joined in and rattled some more, a cadence of the nausea and luridness of the situation. Flutes swirled up and down in a flat chromatic scale, sending feverish chills to the surface of my pale face.

Then along came the evil ringmaster, his eye makeup menacing on his tan face, his black curly hair streaming down his forehead, stopping just above his shoulders. Most of his teeth were misplaced and he was lacking height, perched on his platform and laughing wildly and relentlessly, announcing the horrendous manor for which he was responsible. Why would he be proud of the collection of insane people floating from strings and flying to rings suspended in midair? Why would he be proud of the psychopaths that wandered around the tent dressed like fools and terrorized the crowd? Why?

I peered around me, just to see if everyone else was as scared as I was. Everyone was laughing, pointing, smiling and throwing popcorn and peanut shells. Everyone appeared to be happy. It made me sick. The smell of the popcorn and beer, the noise, all the laughter was blasting. I suddenly tuned in to the dynamic madness of it all. How was this considered fun by any means? Why was I the only one with any sense around here? Was I the only one unable to be corrupted by the sick games this gathering played, or was I the oddball as usual?

I waited for the other kids to get scared. I waited for somebody to tell me that it was going to be okay. No one got scared. No one told me it was going to be okay. I continued to grow pale and weak and dizzy. I looked to my parents who seemed to be enjoying themselves, but weren't elated in any way. I was relieved to see that they were indifferent to the madness. They weren't cowardly as I was, but they weren't absorbed like the rest of the audience. I wanted to tell them it was time to go home but I couldn't.

No words would exit my mouth. My voice was as frightened as I was.

The ringmaster shouted and swiveled eerily, waving a torch through the air as a daring man with a death wish swallowed knives and swords of various lengths. Weights were suspended from his lower eyelids by hooks, and he swung them around in a circular motion, undaunted by the fact that metal hooks were digging into sensitive flesh. I grew queasier still, astonished that my stomach hadn't given up on me already. My esophagus shrank with the knowledge of my fear. I stared in one place. I stared straight down, fighting the nausea.

I jumped violently as my mom put her hand on my shoulder, shouting above the noise to ask if I was okay and state the obvious fact that I looked pale. *Thanks for asking now*, I thought. I couldn't even shake my head. I looked up at her with sullen eyes and she looked concerned. She asked if I wanted to leave and I instantly stood up. I fell.

The world swirled around me in colors and hurtful noises and odors. My head was pounding with a migraine. I managed to stand up and catch my balance when I heard everyone around me laughing. I thought they were laughing at me until I realized that something was behind me. I swallowed very carefully and decided to turn around when I knew I shouldn't.

His round red nose was inches from my face. His polka-dotted bowtie and vest were frighteningly out of place on such a menacing creature. The vibrant oil makeup was caked onto his skin and he reeked of alcohol. I tried to scramble away but I was too frightened to move. I had discovered a new condition within me, a virus of fear that had been latent, waiting to sprout.

"Why ya so eager to leave, sweetheart?" he asked sarcastically with a vicious laugh that resembled a howl.

It was an unearthly sound that branded itself into my memory. He persisted to laugh, an insane guffaw. He took my cold, little hands and tried to make me dance, but I became sick. My stomach let me down. I gagged and threw up. The clown looked angry, drunk, cannibalistic...so hostile. I wanted to run, but I fell again. The warm darkness took me into its arms and I accepted residency into unconsciousness. It was beautiful and full of relief. I had escaped the evil clown.

I woke up in the hospital. My dad was there in the chair next to the bed. He saw that I was awake and he told me that I had passed out, but I had stayed under for longer than expected. I had become dehydrated and wouldn't wake up. But I was healthier now and could go home tomorrow. It was a relief to know I wasn't in danger anymore. The creepy people couldn't get me anymore, and I'd never have to see them again. It was raining outside and it was a soothing sound. It was nighttime even though it felt like morning. I felt shaky from the medicine they gave me, and I was too aware of the needle attached to my arm. I soon began to relax. I felt the medicine starting to kick in again, and everything around me began to change somehow. Everything looked different.

I was close to being lulled into slumber by the gentle static of the rain when there was a knock at the door. I opened my eyes to see a man in a lab coat walk in. I froze with fear when I looked up and saw his oil-stained face and large red nose. His eyes were laden with remains of eye makeup that looked hostile, and he smelled heavily of alcohol. I tried to get up as the panic bloomed. I tried to scramble away when I heard his voice.

"Why ya so eager to leave, sweetheart?"

My heart jumped and I went under again, defeated by fear, and embraced by the blackness of sleep.

Division I: Non-Fiction—First Place Winner

William Kory Jenkins

Covington High School

Teacher: Eugenie Martin

My Heart's Answer

On a test we were posed a question, "Why do we enjoy epics such as the Odyssey even though they were written so long ago?"

My heart immediately cried out an answer, but I hushed it, and scrawled a mediocre answer, for fear of embarrassment of throwing raw emotions upon the paper, but still my heart cried out.

So here it is—the answer that was meant to be immortalized in ink.

In life, we are all characters like the great Odysseus. Our lives are self-told, and self-defined epics. Each day in our lives brings us to a new great journey, like Odysseus venturing to a new island. We are faced with evils and challenges. On a daily basis we all have to battle our own Goggle Eyes. We gain strength some days, only to lose our newly acquired self-confidence in a great earth-shaking battle the next. Sometimes we are forced with facing two evils, having to succumb to the lesser, watching as parts of ourselves are pulled away and tossed upon the rocky shore, only to be devoured like Odysseus' men. We enjoy epics, not only because of the presentation of the tale, but but because we see ourselves, and our struggles, in them. We hope, day to day, for a divine intervention from the gods to reverse our fate or to prevent ourselves from traveling down our self-destructive paths. Sometimes, life feels like even the great divines have turned us into their nemesis, like Poseidon had a great feud with Odysseus, and some days, it's like we're walking in the presence of the great grey-eyed Athena, and she projects her magic fog that envelopes us, and keeps us from harm.

Every day is a new adventure, and like an epic, our lives are the most fantastic journeys that we will ever endure. You are your own Odysseus, and your epic is yours to write.

Division I: Non-Fiction—Second Place Winner

Zoe Killeen

Covington High School
Teacher: Eugenie Martin

Happy

What do you want to be when you grow up? That’s a question that was asked to me since before I can remember. I never really knew until recently. I’m not just going to answer that question though, I am going to start from the beginning of my realization about the future.

I took forty-two, fifty milligram Prozac pills. I’m not going to sugar coat it for you or anything. I attempted suicide.

I passed out, and I woke up in the emergency room. Machines were beeping all around me, and I was hooked up to quite a few of them. I had to drink three Styrofoam cups full of dark, black charcoal. It tasted like crap, and I’m pretty sure I threw up *all* of my insides. My mom left me alone there, in the emergency room, where I was being watched by two large policemen. The gown they put me in was a bright red color, so that they could identify me as a “high risk” patient. I was only high risk to myself, mind you. All I could think about were ways to hurt myself with what I had, and why what I did hadn’t worked. Anyway, the gown was short-sleeved, so everyone could see the red, sore gashes on my right wrist. Unfamiliar faces stared at the cuts and didn’t bother to look away, like most people usually did. My nurse cleaned them with hydrogen peroxide, and they burned like hell. She asked me why I didn’t tell anyone how I was feeling. You know, it’s hard to tell someone you love that you want to die. It’s hard to tell them that you have had that suicide note sitting in the drawer of your desk for ten months with the date “Monday, April 1st, 2012”, describing in detail the story of your depression and why you were doing the things you did. It’s not like it was a special day or anything, just April Fool’s. I wanted to tell my mom, or my best friend, but I couldn’t. They would only be disappointed in me. They would think I was stupid for trying something like this, something so selfish. I even saw my best friend that morning, and she was excited and she looked beautiful. How could I tell her that this was the last time she’d see me? I couldn’t. It was physically hard to even get the words out. So, I stayed in the ER from three in the afternoon until around midnight. Then an ambulance came and got me. I had to ride a pretty long way to get to the other hospital. The mental hospital, that is. They checked all of my bags and cut all the strings off of my clothing and let me take a shower. To be honest, I cried myself to sleep that night. The bed was hard and the pillows were squeaky and I only had a measly sheet.

When I woke up, I didn’t know what to do. I got dressed and went to the dining room, where I saw a lot of teenagers. Teenagers with *scars*. Just like the ones I had covering my entire body, and my heart- just like the ones I had been putting on my wrists and thighs and forearms and my whole body since sixth grade. I didn’t feel so alone anymore. I felt welcome and interested and sad, but hopeful. Hopeful because maybe, there really were people out there who hurt like me. Maybe there were people who had been raped and done drugs and hurt themselves to have control and struggled with eating disorders and lost their soul mates. Perhaps there were people who took everything to heart and felt the weight of the world heavier than many of the others. When you’re a self-harmer, you constantly look for scars or cuts on everyone around you. You don’t want to be alone. You want to have other people like you; friends like you, even though you don’t want them to cut. You worry about how one day you’ll have to undress in front of someone you really love and they’ll see the scars. You wonder: who could love this mutilated body? Personally, I believe that every scar, self-harm or not, has a story. I fall in love with a little bit of every person when they tell me their stories. I don’t think people around me feel that way when they see my scars. I think they feel mad and disgusted and freaked out. I remember the first time my

best friend saw my cuts. I was fixing my skirt in class and I was wearing shorts underneath, but they slipped up and she saw the strategically-placed incisions. I remember the look she gave me. It was scared and innocent and upset and confused and I'm almost positive that the fear in *my* eyes was more than words could ever compensate for. That's the same look the nurse gave me when she searched my body and found all of my scars, my secrets, and my stories.

I didn't eat my breakfast, and then a lot of doctors poked and prodded me with a lot of needles and shots, and I swear, they must have taken half of the blood out of my body. I had seen that much blood before, so it didn't shock me. One of the nurses stuck the needle in wrong and gave me a giant bruise over my vein. I'm kind of in love with the idea of bruises, so this interested me. A bruise is basically when your blood comes out of your vessels and pools up under your top layers of skin. Just like my depression would come out and mess up my skin. After they were done basically "draining" me, we had morning community. It's a group where you introduce yourself. I was the newest patient, so I went first.

"Introduce yourself and say why you're here, please."

"Hi. My name is Emma and I'm here for a suicide attempt and self-harm."

"What did you do?" asked the leader of the group. I gulped.

"I overdosed." I replied nervously.

"Why?" she asked. "What made you get that low?"

"Too much to talk about. I was raped in the first grade, I started self-harming when I was in sixth grade, have drug addiction problems, and I have issues with my sexuality. Also, my best friend died last year. I don't deserve to be happy, or alive." She looked at me funny.

"Raise your hand if you want to be happy." she said. Everyone in the room, with the exception of me, raised their hands. "I don't understand. You don't want to be happy? Then why are you here? And don't say you were forced because this little stunt you pulled was a cry for help. To get better, you *need* to *want* to be happy. Don't you think your friend would have wanted you to be happy? I do. You want to be strong and real and a good girl, but you're so bogged down by this grief that you can't even enjoy your life. Now I'll ask again, who wants to be happy?" Along with everyone else I raised my hand.

I learned two really big things that day. First of all, I can't live in constant grief. My friend wouldn't want that. I can remember him without torturing myself every day. I need to live my life, but not forget him. Although it hurts being without him, I can honor his memory through everyday my actions. Also, I realized that happiness is not just something that you are born with, and it's not something a medicine can give you either. I want to drive around and smile and not feel guilty and read and sing and hang out with my friends and just be in the moment. I don't want to live off memories and the past. The road to happiness is a lifelong journey, and we all have to work for it every day. Am I happy? At the moment, yes, but I won't always be happy. That's unrealistic.

So I'll pose my question again. What do you want to be when you grow up?

I *want* to be happy.

Division I: Non-Fiction—Third Place Winner

Kennedy Halphen

North Corbin Jr. High School

Teacher: Carolyn Bankston

Our Place in Nature

I don't really think we have a place in nature. We cut the earth's lungs for wood, and we steal from it daily. We may have been put on this earth to protect and preserve it, but all we have really done to the earth is break it, attack it, steal from it, and destroy everything on it. Sometimes we don't even recognize nature. We take the earth's food, its water, its everything. But the earth sees us as small, tiny, almost microscopic to the universe.

We need to give the earth something back. We need to try to preserve the earth, help it breathe. Sometimes we think we are helping the earth by planting trees and making reserves. All we're really doing is reversing a fraction of what we've destroyed. The trees we planted will be cut down one day. The reserve will become an outlet mall. We aren't really doing anything. I think it might be time to change. The earth may be alive: the trees its lungs, the water its blood, the land its body, the core its heart. But here we are pouring oil into its blood, cutting its lungs, building on its body, trying to penetrate its heart.

We are a virus.

The only antidote may be ourselves.

Division II: Non-Fiction—First Place Winner

Cameron Harmeyer

Covington High School

Teacher: Eugenie Martin

Inspirational Fires

At some point in one's life, one might see, hear, or read something that hits two stones together in the mind and starts a fire. I have had these stones several times. They are called inspiration and are the most important pieces of a revolution. Sometimes it'll be an author or playwright, a movie, or possibly even a video game that spawns this inspiration and sets forth a chain of events that could change the world for the worse or, more likely, the better.

When one sits down to read a book, he or she hopes it does something for them and isn't just a waste of their scarce time. Sometimes, it is a pretty good book that was interesting to read, but other times, it will make them think about life and the future, mainly what they can do to improve it. A book I read that did this for me was Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*. The story was very compelling and made me think. What would life be like if the majority of people were still just as bigoted and prejudiced as in the story? It made me look at what's going on in the world and how not far off from that we actually are. I read that a few years ago, but even now I look at life that way, mainly at the Westburro Baptist Church, which is a church based in Kansas who is known for protesting military funerals for the inane reason of the military accepting homosexual men and women. I sincerely wish there was some way to re-educate those poor souls and make them realize the errors of their ways. But when I look at that "church", I also look at those who oppose it in the form of counter protests. This helps me realize how much good there is to defeat the evil, reminding me of Atticus Finch and his heroic, emotional journey to save the unfortunate Tom Robinson's life and family. There may be a large force such as the Westburro Baptist Church that seeks to spread hatred and despair, but even one person can make a difference and counter that negativity. And once one person starts, others follow suit. That one book helped me realize that one person can make a difference, and if that person should fail, he or she would leave a lasting impression in the hearts of the enemy.

Movies are some of the greatest inspirational tools in this day and age. It seems the majority of people watch more movies than read books. While this may arguably not be the best thing for our species, it is great that there are some movies that can spark inspiration in the mind. When I was younger, I watched the movie *Meet the Robinsons* and was left in awe when it finished. Not only was it an amazing story, but there also were some ideas that it left in my head.

The first and most obvious for me is the setting: a technological paradise in the future. I have always loved Science Fiction, and I wanted to create robots when I grew up, but this movie helped me realize that there is so much more than just robots in the possible future. After seeing this movie, I wanted to actually create the future, flying cars, jetpacks, time machines, the whole shabang. Who better to trust than yourself, and I trust myself to create that future to the greatest of my abilities.

The other idea engraved in my cerebral cortex was the one phrase that was preached constantly throughout the entire movie. "Keep moving forward." It didn't touch me immediately, but after a few years of maturing, I finally realize the depth behind that phrase. Why look back at the past when you have an entire future ahead of you? Time isn't a hiking trail you can just turn around and look at what you missed. It is more of a game like *Temple Run*. You cannot go back for those coins. You have got to keep moving forward. Falling behind will only get you eaten by a gorilla.

The most recent of my personal inspirations is from the video game *Bioshock Infinite* in which the

player controls the actions of a man named Booker Dewitt who is trying to go to a floating city of bigots to "bring [your employers] the girl and wipe away the [gambling] debt." Not long after the player rescues her, it is revealed she can bend the very fabric of time and space by opening tears in the multiverse. This may sound crazy, but that is what inspired me. The insanity of it all made me want to know what I don't and discover the mysteries of the universe. This game helped fuel my thirst for knowledge by showing me that there could be more to this world than what we know as humans. I want to learn everything this world has to offer in knowledge, and if there is such thing as interdimensional travel, maybe I can learn somewhere else as well. This one game created an infinite number of questions in my mind that I intend to answer before I die.

The second idea that inspired me was the ending in which the player finds out that Booker and the antagonist are actually the same person, but they branched off at a crucial decision of whether to be baptized or not. This is very deep in the sense that it shows how every decision we make is crucial to what happens to us in the future. No decision is small because if one chooses one over the other, that is the path we take. As *Meet the Robinsons* taught me, there is no turning back. All you can do is keep moving forward.

Inspiration is the core of all innovation and revolution. Without it, we would still be banging rocks against cave walls to see what sound it makes. We decided at some point to take that rock and use it for something else. Our choices define us, so we must keep moving forward.

Division II: Non-Fiction—Second Place Winner

Owen Langston

Covington High School

Teacher: Eugenie Martin

The Life and Times of a Chronic Procrastinator

Procrastination is not a virtue. Far from it, actually: it results in shoddy work and is even associated with Sloth, one of the Seven Deadly Sins. You know, those things that are a straight shot down to the place with world's worst tourism department. Of course, when it's a day before a project is due, I probably don't care what's due tomorrow; after all, that's like five whole hours from now. I can do it in second hour, the teacher will never notice. At least, that's what it seems like at seven o'clock Sunday night. In reality, I've just wasted all six months that I've been given on Facetube and Twitterbook.

It starts out so innocently: "Oh, I've got six months to do this. I can just put it aside while I finish this book," I might say, and it's true: six months is a long way away, and I almost definitely have time to finish the book. Two months later, I've written down "Um..." on a piece of paper and called it brainstorming. I can finish it later; I still have four months. Soon enough, four months turns to two. Months become weeks; weeks become days. Days become hours, and when it turns out that the project is due in fifteen minutes and the current progress is "Um...", then I know: procrastination has struck again. Trembling in fear, I explain how I had so much work for other classes that excuses made excuses that got stuck in traffic on their way to excusing me, and as such were not able to excuse my lack of work. The teacher is not excused.

Of course it doesn't always turn out that bad, but procrastination still permeates everything I do, such as: "Man, I really need to pay my dues for the band trip; they're weeks late,"; "I should probably start working on college applications since I'm about to graduate," or "That guy's bleeding to death; it might be a good idea to call 911, but I really need to eat this ice cream before it melts." Maybe the last two aren't perfect examples, but at the time of this writing I still need to pay for the band trip, thereby qualifying it as a very good example. It should be noted that though none of the examples listed above are schoolwork-related, schoolwork is where my procrastination is most prominent, such as that civics assignment from March that I have yet to turn in. I should probably get on that, but I can do it later.

There are those who argue that procrastination isn't always a bad thing, which may or may not be true, but I agree somewhat: if something is put off until inspiration strikes, the work will almost definitely be better. In my freshman year, there was some project I had due that was given to the class at least a month before. What else could have happened other than the slow inching forth of the due date until it was upon me? I'm not sure, but in any case, I found myself with one day to do a project when inspiration struck. I didn't have to do something shoddy for the finished product! I could make a giant deck of cards; that simply could not fail! On that note, I got an oversized roll of paper, a large cardboard box and a regular sized deck for reference. Seven hours later I stepped away from the table with an ache in my back, a red Sharpie in my hand, and a finished product in front of me. Needless to say, I got an "A" on the project, and the teacher still has it on display in her classroom. Anyway, I need to go. Second hour just ended and this needs to be printed.

Division II: Non-Fiction—Third Place Winner

Patrick McCarroll

Lutcher High School

Teacher: Carly Zeller

A City by the River

Walking beside the river, birds scattering about, tourists compiling in line for the delicacy that is beignets. Horses neighing, stomping in the streets. A man bound to a wheelchair comes rolling by. The sound of everyday conversations of hundreds of people flies through the muggy air. A man in a violet purple pimp suit begins to eyeball the beautiful young women passing by. The beautiful sound of the homeless men and women playing music is enough to sooth the soul. The psychic tarot card reading hippies sit idly, waiting for the next chump to scam.