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State University Sys-

Expressions

Spring 2015

Volume XXVIX

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Expressions 2015

Student Winners

SHORT STORY

First Place

Naibi's Quest Danny Strickland

Second Place

Clowning Around at the Plaza Hector X. Gomez

Third Place

Moments of Terror Jesus M. Ogden

Honorable Mention

Her Sailor Husband Blake-Leigh M. Dockens

Adopted Ashley N. Gallentine

The Mural Enriqueta A. Torres

ESSAY

First Place

The Things I Carried Stacy Simon

Second Place

Graduating in the Face of Adversity Robert Nunes

Third Place

Things That I Carry Sergio Guzman

Honorable Mention

Guidance, Purpose, Structure Robert Nunes

Everyone Carries Jenna Bush

My First Semester in College Hardy X. Jones, IV

Times Flies Coyth Whitney

SPECIAL ESSAY CATEGORY

Sponsored by PHI THETA KAPPA

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Hidden in the White.....Racheal Milich

Honorable Mention

Hello DarknessEmily Griffiths

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A Man Out of Stone Christopher Clint Hussey

The World Turns for Her..... Christopher Clint Hussey

Cancer..... Danny Strickland

LITERARY CRITIQUE

First Place

The Wall.....John Christopher McElhatten

Second Place

The Rocking Horse Winner...John Christopher McElhatten

COVER ART

First PlaceRebecca Jo Stephens

Second Place..... Ashley Trejo

Third Place.....Shardai Keyes

Honorable Mention..... Kayleigh Pope

GENERAL ART

First Place Blake-Leigh M. Dockens

Second Place

Earth, Wind, Fire, and Rain Racheal Milich

Third PlaceRaegina Powell

PHOTOGRAPHY

First Place Audrey Jones
Second Place Kalli Gizzi
Third Place Alexa Poore
Honorable Mention Tori Gassiott
Honorable Mention..... Kristi Segura
Honorable Mention..... Kelby Sparks
Honorable Mention.....Jacey Rossi

DIGITAL ART

First Place Karli Bowman
Second Place Laura Fosdick
Third Place Patricia Halbert
Honorable Mention..... Karli Bowman

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Student Contributors

Titus Banks	Hardy X. Jones, IV
Karli Bowman	Jeremy Jones
Shermandra Bromley	Shardai Keyes
Jenna Bush	April Kessinger
Culberson Campbell	Robert Glenn LeBlanc, Sr.
Shawncella Carrier	Ginger Lemoine
Jason Cavil	Crystal McDowell
Nathaneal Chipps	John Christopher McElhatten
Blake-Leigh M. Dockens	Racheal Milich
Lauren Durham	Frank Neal
Travis J. Eddington	Robert Nunes
Christian Nikki Frederick	Jesus M. Ogden
Laura Fosdick	Alexa Poore
Ashley N. Gallentine	Kayleigh Pope
Tori Gassiott	Raegina Powell
Kalli Gizzi	Shawn Rabon
Ashford Golden	Adam Reyes
Hector X. Gomez	Jacey Rossi
Emily Griffiths	Kristi Segura
Ana Guillen	Stacy Simon
Sergio Guzman	Allissa Soloranzo
Patricia Halbert	Kelby Sparks
Morgan Hathaway	Walter Spidle
JaVaughn Hudson	Rebecca Jo Stephens
Christopher Clint Hussey	Danny Strickland
Tom D. Huynh	Alexandria Talley
Meagan Johnson	Brandon Taylor
Audrey Jones	Enriqueta A. Torres



Cover Art-Second Place

Ashley Trejo

*Short
Story*



General Art-First Place

Blake-Leigh Dockens

Short Story-First Place

Naibi's Quest

Danny Strickland

The boy woke with nervous energy. Today he would start his quest. Since birth he had lived the name Niabi, meaning Fawn. That would just not do for a great warrior's son. His tenth birthday was here! He would return a brave with a new name or a failed boy!

Armed with his knife, bow and five arrows he must set out on a journey starting with a full moon and ending with the next. He is followed by an elder of the tribe, but only to bear witness. The elder must not interfere with fate, and cannot speak, only observe.

He left with great strength and courage as the whole tribe urged on, but as the day ended he found himself cold and alone. He had not made it to the dry river bed, so there was no flint for a fire. With no fire and no food, he curled up at the base of an oak tree and cried himself to sleep. The next morning woke him to freezing snow. He must find shelter and fire or this would be the shortest quest ever!

Sitting in despair wondering what to do next, a moment of clarity came. He had trained for this, and knew what to do. With renewed courage, Niabi headed for the river bed. Along the way gathering twigs and vines to make snares. By days end he was making snares by fire light. He saw a couple waterholes, and set his snares by them. Then bedded down for the night.

Morning came clear and cold, the fire had burned down to coals. With

twigs and a little coaxing it sprang back to life. Feeling triumphant, he moved to find breakfast. The first snare was tripped, but the raccoon had slipped away. The second had a round porcupine in it. Handling and skinning the porcupine proved very challenging, but Niabi hungry and determined would not give up. He cooked everything eating only a little and packing the rest. Gathering his things he headed north to his shelter.

Niabi knew of a cave not far from the summer camp grounds, but that was a hard four days walk in good weather. These days were colder and shorter, but it had not snowed anymore. Each night he built a fire and ate from his only catch. Early the fifth day, making good time, he reached the cave.

The day was spend setting snares, gathering water, fire wood, nuts and berries. Building his fire, he fell asleep exhausted. The cave provided his first warmth since leaving his mother. How he missed her! Mother Earth smiled on her young brave, his four snares were filled with fat rabbits. He spend the days making jerky, gathering roots and more nuts. That night he celebrated the generosity of Mother Earth. Rabbit stewed with roots, nuts and berries was perfect!

Full and warn Niabi fell asleep next to the fire. Suddenly he was wide awake! Every hair stood on end. The fire had died to coals, sensing a presence he strained to see! Only ink blank. A noise, what was that? Was his sleepy mind playing tricks? His heart thudding in his chest, a vague shadow crossed the entrance. It is digging in his food cache! Calming his nerves, he reaches for his trusty knife. His other hand is slowly placing twigs over the coals. When preparing to blow on the coals, a cool breeze whips into the cave. The fire jumps to life! Niabi froze. Across the flames

digging in his cache is the largest mountain lion he has ever seen! As if on cue the car looks up and locks eyes with its new found prey Niabi instantly knew this would be the fight of his young life, and only one of them would leave this cave alive! The cat crouched and screamed, Niabi's blood went cold. The handful of tender flickered out. Extinguishing all light, they were left in utter darkness!

Niabi kicked more twigs toward the coals as the weight of the cat knocked him to the ground. Claws sunk deep into his right thigh and ripped to his knee, Niabi screamed in pain kicking with his left leg. The cat squalled and lunged again. Niabi rolled and the cat missed. Another breeze huffed the coals to flames. Light, Niabi stabbed the knife nicking the cat. Poised for action, the two squared off. He thrust the knife missing his intended mark, but catching a shoulder. The cat swiped leaving four trails of blood across the boy's chest. Niabi needed to finish, his blood loss was weakening him. The flames flickered out, squalling again the cat leaped!

All fell silent. The elder stared in disbelief! Wanting desperately to help, yet knowing not to interfere! Late that afternoon Niabi opened his eyes staring into the dull eyes of his adversary. Niabi had raised his knife as the cat had leapt, and sank the blade through the mountain lion's heart. The impact struck Niabi's head on a rock, knocking him out. The cat lay dead on the boy, and he did not have the strength to move it.

The next evening he finally rolled the cat off himself. The effort left him sweating and bleeding. He once saw the medicine man put ashes in a bad cut to stop the bleeding, so he rubbed ashes in all his wounds. This burned, but the bleeding stopped. Drinking some water, he then started a fire and skinned the cat. Niabi removed the heart and cooked it, leaving

one piece in the fire for “Mother Earth”, and ate the rest. Removing the scrotum he cut small slits around the outer edge. Taking sinew from a rear leg he threaded it through the slits making his medicine bad. Inside he put the claws and teeth. Tomorrow he would have his ritual tea, but now he must rest.

streaming colors, spinning, faster and blackness. The fight, the quest all taking toll on his body. Waking from the quest Niabi is weak and confused. Is it time to return home?

That night was clear and the moon rose high revealing about three days shy of full. Niabi had come here a boy, but transformed into a brave. His heart beat prideful, yet heavy with future knowledge.

Morning came with yet more clarity, another flash memory: the hunter never returns without meat, nor a warrior without a scalp. He must find one or the other, or not return! The elder is greatly impressed. The boy’s knowledge and abilities coupled with his survival is testament to his right of passage.

It was now winter, and every day saw new snow in the “Rockies”. Each night Niabi constructed a lean-to and built a fire. Every morning a bit more anxious as he knew home was a little closer. He crossed tracks of bear and elk, knowing he could not pack the meat alone, left them to hunt another time. He stood on the final peak looking south and saw smoke from the cook fires of home.

There was movement at the bottom of the ridge, something there! At the edge of the creek, a large buck and two fat does. Niabi slipped quietly through the trees, inch by pain staking inch until he was less than ten yards from his prey. He knocked his arrow and raised his bow, deep breath!

Exhale, release. The arrow flew true, the doe never knew what hit her. Again, Niabi removes the heart, cuts on piece for Mother Earth and eats the rest raw.

Mother Earth has smiled on her brave again. His quest complete, and journey nearing its chapter. He would be home tomorrow with meat, prophecy and a new brave for his people. Suddenly, his name no longer mattered. Niabi!



Photography-First Place

Audrey Jones

Short Story-Second Place

Clowning Around at the Plaza

Hector X. Gomez

“Mom, it’s hot out here. Can we go home, now?” I pleaded with my mother for what seemed like the tenth time.

“Not yet, baby. Just a little longer” she responded as we walked up the cobblestoned steps on our way to church.

“But, you said that the last time!” I cried out in anguish.

Feeling agitated, she turned to look at me and said in a stern voice, “stop being a nuisance, I already told you, just a little longer! Now, be quiet and come on!”

This was a typical hot day at the plaza, little marketplace that was located in a curving corridor dotted in wreaths of orange Mexican marigolds. I dreaded every Sunday morning, having to wake up and head for the plaza. My blistering feet would always ache from having to walk all day in the scorching heat. Why couldn’t I just stay in the comfort of my air conditioned bedroom and sleep all day. Instead, every Sunday morning before dawn, my mother would haul me out of bed, dress in my Sunday’s best, and drag me groggy-eyed to church. In typical fashion, a little church anchored the plaza with church bells that would resonate throughout the surrounding villages. This harmonious toll of church bells always brought us to the plaza.

Off in the distance, a rooster would crow, which meant that the sun would be out soon and the plaza would burst alive with activity. Artisans

hawked their wares from stalls around the central plaza, and vendors baked sweet bread and served hot chocolate, filling the morning with a sweet aroma. At a nearby fountain featuring a large statue of two angels embracing each other, romantic couples would toss coins or smooth pebbles into the fountain, conceiving a wish of their imagination. Friends and families also congregated at this fountain, sharing songs and telling stories of the past. The entire plaza was crammed with vendors of cheap goods, T-shirts, lipsticks, and many other trinkets.

Barely, eight years old, I would gawk in awe at how lucid everything seemed. The sights were colored richly with ripe fruits and vegetables, exotic herbs, and house plants, red meat on the butcher's block, and whole chickens stacked on white tile counters. Each display seemed so vivid, each one in its own unique way.

I nudged my mother's arm and said, "How much longer do we have to keep walking Mom?"

She stopped in her tracks with a look of resignation, knelt beside me and said with a soothing voice, "Just a little longer, sweetie."

A little annoyed for having to stand under the blazing sun, I yanked at my mother's sleeve and said, "But, mom, me feet hurt." hoping that my mother would feel a bit of compassion at the sound of my whimpering voice.

She turned to face me and felt sympathy as she wiped the sweat away from my forehead and said, "Poor baby, here take these coins and go buy yourself a snow cone."

"Thanks, Mom!" I replied with enthusiasm as I grabbed the money and turned in search of the snowcone vendor. I walked a few yards when I spotted the gigantic snowcone billboard that encased the vendor's cart. I approached the vendor with the money held tightly in my grasp.

"Hello kid, would you like a snowcone?" the man behind the cart said as he saw me approach.

“Yes sir!” I responded with excitement.

“Well, what flavor would you like?” he said as he waved his arm over the variety of flavors.

There were so many different flavors to choose from, but I had no trouble picking out my favorite.

“I’d like the mango flavor, please.” I responded with a gleam in my eye.

“Wonderful choice!” said the man.

I propped myself up on the nearest bench to wait on my snowcone. Swaying my legs, as I watched the vibrant atmosphere of the plaza. Then, out of nowhere, a red ball the size of a tennis ball came rolling straight in my direction. The ball stopped as it rolled right onto the base of the bench that I was sitting on. I was puzzled, wondering where this ball came from. That’s when I saw a little girl which I assumed to be around my age, come running to retrieve the ball. She gave me a quick glance before she picked up the ball and ran off with it. Startled by the look on her face, I took in the situation.

The little girl had her face painted like a clown with a big bright smile, except she wasn’t really smiling. She looked exhausted, depleted, yet, desperate. From where I sat, I continued to gaze upon her as she tossed the red ball high into the air, her weary gaze following its path, concentrating with all her might. Before I realized what she was doing, she already had a total of six balls high in the air. I noticed her concentration as she struggled to juggle all six balls at once. It took all of her effort to stay focused and read just her technique, as the paint began to slowly ooze down her face, unmasking her true features. The facial paint didn’t

smear from the sweltering heat which caused her to sweat profusely, instead, it came from the tears that gushed from her dreary eyes. This was too much for her, as a ball slipped out of her hand causing the rest to come tumbling down, yielding at her feet. A small group of on-lookers that had gathered to admire this little clown, began to disperse, but not before leaving a few coins on the ground for the little clown's effort. She picked up the remaining coins, she looked up toward the sky and whispered something that only she could hear.

"The little girl you see there, will never stop trying. No matter how many times she drops those balls, she never gives up." The vendor said to me as he handed me my snowcone.

"Well, why doesn't she quit and go home?" I offered in response.

He looked at me with pity in his eyes and said, "Because she doesn't have a home. She sleeps here at the plaza and everyday before the rooster crows, she'll put on her little paint and pretend to be happy," then, before he turned around, he whispered with a sad tone in his voice, "this plaza, is her home."

I was overwhelmed with sadness. Emotionally overwhelmed by this little girl with smeared paint on her face. I wanted to help, but how could I. My snowcone had started to melt, so I hurriedly jumped off the bench and walked over to the little girl. With sadness in my eyes, I extended my arm with the melting snowcone in hand. Without saying a word, she grabbed the snowcone, turned on her heels and walked away. I wanted to ask her, "What did you whisper to yourself as you looked up toward the sky," but the lump in my throat did not let me. I just stood there, transfixed at what I learned that day. I was interrupted by the gentle touch of my mother's hand against my shoulders. That soothing feeling, that only a mother can give, gave me comfort.

"I'm sorry mom, for giving my snowcone away," was all I could muster to say.

Her gaze firmly set on mine as she wrapped me in her arms and said, “It’s okay baby. You did a wonderful thing, I’m so proud of you.”

The church bells chimed once again, filling the whole plaza with a harmonious sound. Mass was about to begin and as I looked toward the church, that’s when I knew the answer to my question. That little girl had her faith and thanked God for her little blessing.

I will never forget that hot summer day at the plaza. Sometimes, I take things for granted and I tend to complain when things don’t go my way. But, then somebody came along and changed my life in a way that I never thought possible. That day at the plaza, when I gave that little girl my snowcone, it was more than an offering. It has an unspoken gesture between two human beings with two separate destinies. I had the courage to get up and give her my snowcone and she had her faith in God. She taught me to be grateful for what I have and left me with a memorable impression. Of all things that I have possessed in life, that day at the plaza, with that little girl with a painted big bright smile, gave me the inspiration to help others. That is the only real treasure any human being can hope to hold always.



Digital Art- First Place

Karli Bowman

Short Story-Third Place

Moments of Terror: Shock, Hurt, Pain, Rage, Despair

Jesus M. Ogden

At 47, I'm a mother of four and now my eldest has brought me through all of these emotions in a matter of seconds. Why this emotional distress? I am now in the front yard of a home I have worked so hard to maintain and promised to provide for them all. Yet I am cradling him in my arms while he clings for life from multiple gunshot wounds.

Am I to blame? This all could have been avoided if I had moved to the neighborhood Benita had told me to. 'Dayum'! Why couldn't I resist the big front porch of this house, that now at this very moment feels like my son's final resting place. All my dreams of peace and tranquility have quickly vanished away as the blood drains so steadily from his body. Hearing his labored breathing while I am squeezing Marin, hoping that my love is the cure to the leakage of life.

Negative thoughts are rummaging through my brain. At once I am to blame. Did I work too much and left them unattended too long? I am fearful but I feel my God will not let my son die on me. He will not leave me with the heart ache of feeling that I wasn't ample or suitable as a mother. As I sit here and wait in anguish for paramedics to arrive. I dread becoming a statistic. I wonder how I of all people would have the misfortune of a child who chose street life.

Then I become enraged. Enraged at the scum of the streets. Enraged

at the parents of the child that lured my innocent child into mischief. Enraged at the hidden figure who sold him the gun to terrorize my family, to shutter my dreams, my peace of having a happy normal life.

I stay helpless in a world that I felt because of my hard work had every advantage afforded to my sons. I feel shocked that for all of my hard work, I am rewarded with the end of my son's future. But through it all, I feel blessed.

Blessed that at an early age I was taught how to pray. So as I sit here with my precious son as he clings for life. I pray to the same God that helped me gain employment, the same God that got me this house, the same God that whispered to me after the birth of each child that I would make it. And I continued to pray in the ambulance. I prayed to Him while Martin was wheeled into the E.R. and put in I.C.U. I continued through therapy and now I pray again as that same son prepares to walk across the stage at Lamar University.

But the prayer now is that he doesn't trip in excitement on his gown going up the stairs. No one could have convinced me 24 years ago when I birthed him that I would experience the ups and downs. Through the many prayers I have survived with all of my son's including him. At times I felt I was the most unfit mother there was because I had the slightest clue of things. Life often deals you a raw hand and you sometimes wonder what have you done to God to have received this punishment, but I kept praying.

I never imagined that my kids would grow up to be who they are cause all I kept wishing for was for them to outgrow their huge appetites. I never felt that I could love an individual as much as I love these kids. It's so pure and inspiring to have an entity to instill so much blind faith in you. That day that I held my son in my arms not only changed his life but it changed mine as well.

A new person was born on the front lawn that day. Because after that

day at that moment I was able to realize that I am blessed to love purely, not because of what I can rear my kids into. In this love, it blossomed a renewal of love within myself. I learned that it's okay for me to love myself despite my flaws. This allowed me to love again.

Never did I imagine in those long moments of terror when my son was shot, that it would lead to me finding myself and finding love again. In doing so, it invigorated me to pour more love into my kids. I no longer wanted to be a provider of a "nice" living place, but a provider of unlimited love and shelter, that no matter what the elements are outside, that it's always love within.

So now as I cry as my son walks across that stage and I stand shoulder to shoulder with my husband of 5 years. I am proud. Proud that at an early age I learned to pray. And from that I was able to live through that day of terror. 5·5·7

FIN



Cover Art-Third Place

Shardi Keyes

Short Story-Honorable Mention

Her Sailor Husband

Blake-Leigh M. Dockens

Underneath the decorated willow tree out near the back of his Pa's ranch down by the creek sat neatly fifty chairs, twenty-five on each side as if to make an isle in between. Lights, white ribbon, and crystals cascaded down from the tree creating a scene of pure beauty, although nothing could ever measure up to the loveliness of his sweet Betty. Today was the day, the day that would open the door to their new life together. He sat waiting at the end of the white satin sheet gazing at the fifty people all gathered to be a witness to this special day for Jim and Betty.

The chatter fell like the calm before the storm; soft music bellowed from the baby grand piano positioned at the rear of the chairs. There she was, ridding in a carriage down the dirt road to her sailor who was waiting for her. The sun kissed her majestic red hair, making her look like an angel sent from God himself. As Betty exited the carriage, "Here Comes the Bride" started on the piano and everyone stood. Slowly she glided down the white satin sheet coated with rose petals. From the far right, water came flooding in over the hills sweeping the guest along with Jim's perfect bride away and all he could do was watch. His voice would not carry, his feet would not move. Jim had begun to sob and falling to his knees to support himself. The nightmare he just witnessed was over in an instant. Jim was back in reality.

Water was seeping into the sleeping quarters dripping on Jim's. Swells twenty feet high were consuming the boat. This trip had gone on for nearly three months and each day Jim missed the beautiful red head he left at home even more. No way to communicate but through letters, and even that had been suspended till they made landfall in the British West Indies. He had fallen asleep with letters he had received from Betty before the boat, Dauntless, had left from Galveston back in May of 1935. His grip on the letters tightened with each rock of the boat, in fear that they would be lost in the vast sea he had been traveling for the past ninety days.

The storm, like a hungry pack of wolves, tore at the sails. Either the men were sea-worthy, or they were gone with the wind and enveloped in the darkness of the ocean whose name they did not know. Jim was called to bare a hand up on the deck. He ran up the steps to help his crew take down the sail. Little did he know what that night had in store for Dauntless.

Within the hour, hurricane force winds doubled. Jim and the rest of the crew were ordered to tie down the free ropes. While reaching out to grab the rope to his left, the airstream yanked it back as if it were a Roman soldier about to strike with a cat of nine tails. Once the cord met with Jim's flesh, pain coursed through his entire being. No matter what would happen to him, Jim was determined to live another day to return home. Images of Betty's sweet smile bubbled up to the front of his mind, giving him the strength needed to be able to endure this long night. The ship was no longer rocking, it vigorously flopped to either side. Lines were still free and some of the equipment for the ship had gone overboard. Anchors, buoys, extra sails, and nails all rushed past Jim, carried by the water on the deck.

Around a half past ten, the waves grew. Jim thought it looked like the Greek God Poseidon trying to swallow the ship whole. His crew started to become sick. The pain and anguish of men who had no one else to live for

was audible over the roaring ocean. No light to see with except for the lightning that struck the sky and went on for miles.

Close to midnight, the ship had settled in a calm patch. The captain made his first appearance of the night. He spoke with a voice soaked in fear, "You boys alright?" "Yes captain, I believe some of the men are sick. Where were you during that horrid weather?" Jim replied, being the only man well enough to answer the captain. "I was locked in the Captains Quarters son," he managed to say shakily.

Jim knew better, the captain was scared. While having ill thought towards the men and his captain overwhelmed his mind, there was a noise in the distance. He dismissed it, thinking nothing could be as bad as what they had just survived. A deep rumble like that of a volcano came from what seemed to be thousands of miles away. No man dared to make a sound. They all stared into the darkness hoping something would appear, or better yet nothing would appear. The only perceptible noise was the beating of frantic hearts surging with adrenaline.

There was a crash in the distance. The water and objects not anchored down were being thrown about. Like a toy ship in a bath tub, the vessel was being submerged every few minutes. Jim and his mates were hanging on for dear life to the railing of the ship, the ropes, and the post that were home to the sails. Fear engulfed the whole boat, as well as the swells that were even greater than the ones they encountered only a few hours previous to this new found storm.

Jim knew what this was, he had heard of it once before. It was what his father had called the "Great Storm." A northern and southern storm colliding where Dauntless had been residing. Rain falling like beads of sharp ice were battering the men. One by one the men were letting go, welcoming the thought of going into the depths of the sea and never returning to another night of pain, and work. Jim gathered nearly seven ropes, tied them together and created a holster for himself against a piece

of railing.

The ship had come apart, bit by bit, and men were floating, freezing, and unconscious. Jim had fallen asleep tied to a piece of wood, being thrown around about the waves for the rest of the Great Storm. A small young boy named Mat, who had accompanied the cook, was smart enough to retrieve the life raft and was in pursuit of Jim. Mat was captivated by the way Jim spoke of his beautiful wife and wanted to see him make it home.

The storm had ended around the break of dawn; Mat finally reached Jim and helped him aboard the life raft. From an unknown source, there was fresh blood. The wood Jim had been floating on had splintered and a large chunk had pierced his gut. Mat had no idea what to do. He could see into the horizon, a small piece of land.

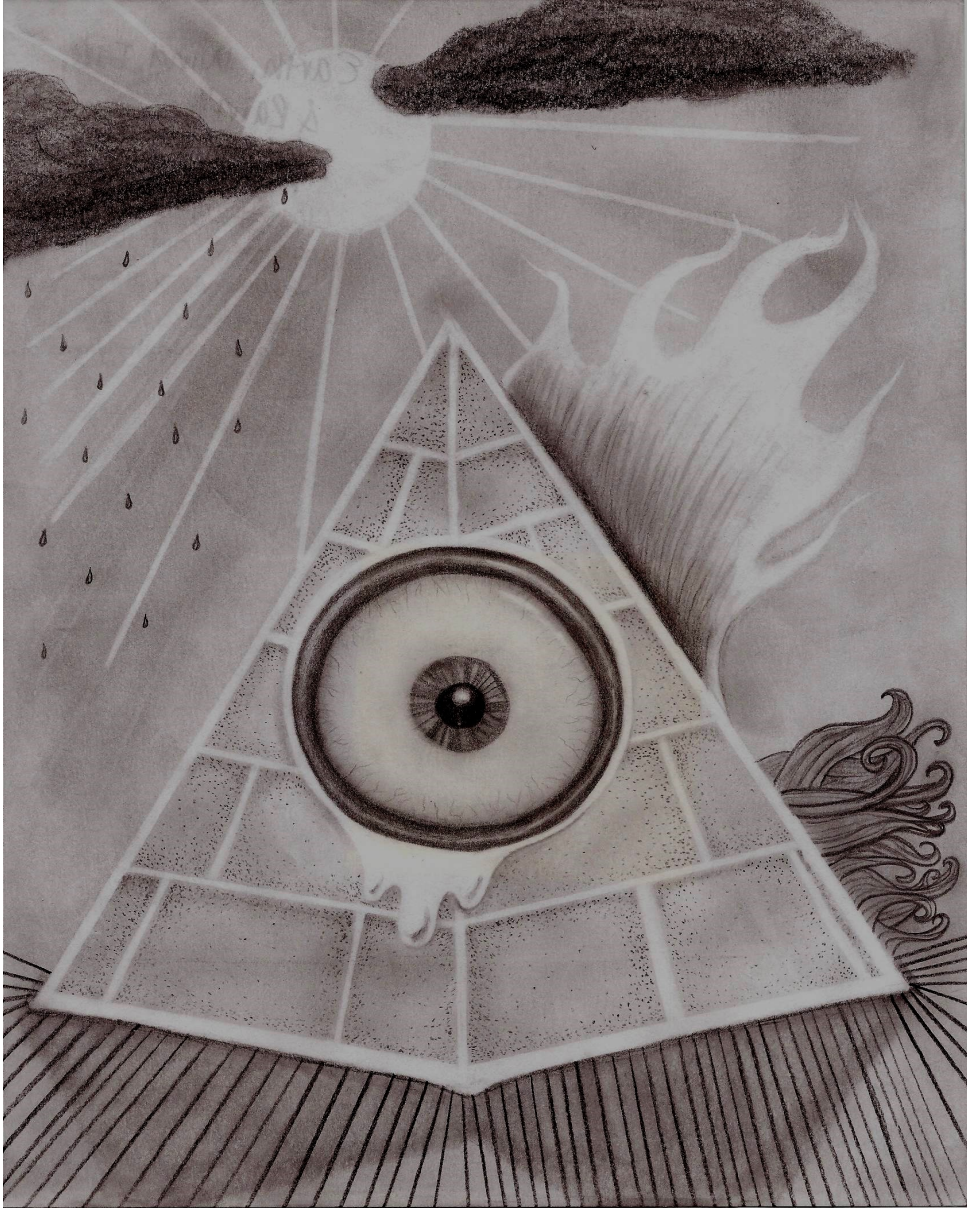
What seemed like a life time went by. Mat had made it to the harbor of the tiny island. Spectators were rushing to their aid. Mat passed out due to the dehydration and exhaustion his body felt. When waking, Mat saw that he was in a room of white. He frantically searched for Jim. All he had was a letter upon the bedside table with his name on it. Opening up the letter, Mat read Jim's last wish. With a tear stained face, Mat would make a promise to fulfill this dying wish for his friend.

Mat reached Galveston in the summer of 1937. He searched for the red head he had only heard about in stories. Hoping to finally meet her. There was an unexpected knock at her pale blue door.

When she answered, the face of a sweet man appeared to be sad. He spoke with a gently, "Mam, my name is Mathew. Is it alright if I come in?" She let him in and directed him towards the living area, they sat together in silence for a moment then he began to speak. "You're husband Jim, did not make it to the British West Indies. He did, however, leave a note for your eyes only. This was his one dying wish, for me to search for you so that you may be able to read his loving words," Mat spoke with tears in his

eyes.

Betty snatched the letter without a single word. She read the sweet words of her husband and tears spilled over her eyes. Her sailor husband sailed to the edge of the world and watched the stars fall down. When she looked into Mat's eyes, she was grateful but plagued with sadness. She told him, "We all carry these things inside us that no one else can see. They hold us down like anchors, they drown us out at sea. That is where my heart will always be."



General Art-Second Place

Earth, Wind, Fire and Rain

Racheal Milich

Short Story-Honorable Mention

Adopted

Ashley N. Gallentine

Walking home from school for seemed normal for Brianna until she got inside her house with her 'parents' crying on the couch. They told her that they had somewhat big news to tell her. In Brianna's mind she thought her 'mom' was pregnant, but when they said she was adopted her face just dropped like a glass vase. It's been sixteen years and they finally decide to tell her she was adopted.

"Brianna I know this might be hard to take in," spoke her 'mother', "but don't overreact."

"Don't overreact! Don't overreact! How can I not over overreact about something like this! I'm adopted and ya'll are just now telling me. Did y'all think I was going to say okay to this situation and go about this as a normal day! I don't think so!" yelled Brianna getting off the couch. "You don't mean that pumpkin," stated her 'father' serenely reaching towards her.

Jerking away, Brianna ran into her room locking the door with confused thoughts. Who are my parents? Where are they? Who am I? Did they want me? Was I unwanted? Thoughts kept spinning in her mind until she collapsed in her bed with a headache.

After thirty minutes had passed there was a knock on her door. Slowly opening it, she saw it was her 'mother'. Wanting to slam it in her face she allowed her in. "Now I know that you don't want to speak to me or John as

of now, but there's something else I have to tell you," her 'mom' spoke calmly. "And what could it possibly be," Brianna shot back. Taking a deep breath Tessa uttered, "Your biological mother is coming here in a few hours. She called today wanting to meet you, and hoping to take you if you're fine with it. This a lot for you to take in, so I will leave you alone for now." Now Brianna's thoughts were all mixed up. If my mom loves me so much then why couldn't we have met earlier? Is her life messed up? What is she like? After that she could no longer think rationally. She packed herself a little backpack of clothes, wrote a note to the ones who she known as her parents all her life, got her little stash of money from under her mattress, climbed out the window and left with no hope of ever returning.

Walking down the road with her thoughts still racing, she stopped at a diner to grab a bite. She sat at a table in the corner where she had a great view of her surroundings. Shortly after getting her meal, she noticed that there had been a young lady who kept staring at her from the moment she walked in. Before she could react, the woman was headed in her direction "Hello. I know this quite odd but may I sit with you" asked the lady.

Stunned at first, Brianna allowed the woman to accompany her. "Thank you, and by the way I'm Ladonna," greeted the young woman. Not being rude Brianna smiled stating her name too.

There was a long moment of silence between the two until Brianna broke the barrier asking, "What brings you to Louisiana?" She had noticed a "Texas Raised" tag on her key chain.

"Oh, well after I leave from here I'm going to meet someone," smiled Ladonna. "Really now, that sounds nice," Brianna stated.

“I hope so after driving from Houston all the way to Baton Rouge,”
laughed Ladonna.

Soon Brianna and the Ladonna began talking for hours as if they know each other all their lives. There was a sense of ease among the two as they talked. When Brianna noticed the time, she thought she should see her biological mother. The conversation with this woman somehow made her feel motivated to meet her birth mother and possibly accept her in her life, as she accepted these three hours to talk to this woman she didn't even know.

Once getting home from a quick bus ride, she noticed that her ‘parents’ didn’t even know that she was gone. Good they don’t know I left. Okay I have an hour to get myself together, make it count .Quickly she got dress, combed her hair, put on her favorite little blue stud earrings, and applied some makeup. She couldn’t wait no longer to see her mother. Then the doorbell rang. She slowly approached the door, opening it see that it was Ladonna.

“Hi Ladonna? Why are you here?” Brianna questioned.

“This is 3675 Lewis Drive right?”

“Yes ma’am. So you’re my...”

“No wonder I felt as if I known you from somewhere when I sat by you. Destine led me to you. You’re my daughter Brianna.” Ladonna cried with tears streaming down her cheeks.

Ladonna told Brianna, well Nae as Ladonna, that she got pregnant at sixteen and that her parents forced her to put Brianna on adoption. Hearing this made Brianna feel better about being adopted. She wasn’t put up for adoption because she was unwanted it was for the best interest of her life.

Finally it came down for Brianna to make her decision. She thought about it for a while, and decided to stay with Ladonna for a month and see where it goes from there. She wanted to stay with her foster parents,

but she wanted to see what life would be like with her real mother Ladonna. She said goodbye to her 'parent', then left with Ladonna to start their life together. A day that seemed so ordinary turned into a leaping alteration in my life. A new beginning and maybe a brighter tomorrow. Then Brianna looked at Ladonna, smiled closed her eyes and turned to the window to see a butterfly fly by.

Short Story-Honorable Mention

The Mural

Enriqueta A. Torres

Reading books is the best past time in the world. From reading amazing ones that will change someone's life to books that will probably be forgotten. However, lately most novels I've seen have been romance novels. Every last one of them has a misunderstood girl that ends up becoming a superstar or a girl that is known very well in her school; basically every book or novel has a happy ending. All fiction, in real life outcasts don't become different overnight. While consciously we know the books are just fiction we can't help but become absorbed in the novels and hope our life is a fairytale like in the books. In reality life is cruel everyone will have their friends and the haters as people say. People are bullied, raped, mugged, and more. The world is morbid and many of us can't seem to accept it.

My life has been normal just a senior in high school. My grades were not the best, but I was passing and had great friends. Overall, my future was also looking bright. I may not have had amazing grades, but I was an aspiring artist as my teachers called it and was almost guaranteed a spot in any art school I wanted to apply to. I loved the idea because all I ever seemed to want to do every day was draw and paint and my friends were the same way.

One day my friends and I decided we wanted to take our art to the next level for everyone to see. We decided that street art or graffiti would

be the best option and we had the capability to make the best mural in our city. Eventually we came up with an amazing statement piece. It involved splashes of red and black and yellow and sky blue as well as angry people and ecstatic people. It was sort of becoming two opposing sides a dark and a light side, our vision of the world. It was weird and gave off a strong statement, but we believed we could make it work. Eventually we found the perfect building; it was an old torn down building near downtown. It was hideous at this point, but it looked as if it would have been beautiful in its earlier years.

We planned to meet up at the abandoned building on Friday at twelve, but no one showed up except for Danny; the best looking guy in our group. Danny and I had a history of not getting along that well, however. One time we almost ruined an entire party because of our bickering over what the appropriate way to shade while sketching was. However, we were determined to finish the mural. We agreed to work on it without everyone else and try our best to be nice to each other. Oddly, being nice to Danny was a lot easier than I thought it was going to be. In fact, I was actually enjoying my time with him and didn't want it to end. I wasn't sure if it was the exhaustion, but Danny made me start feeling like I was in one of those romantic novels I always read. After six long hours the mural was done and Danny and I parted ways.

The mural was amazing and I was so excited for the traitors that didn't show up to see it. When unexpectedly someone grabbed me by the arm and pulled me away. He was a little scrawny and had a deep voice. I couldn't see his face much because of his hat and sunglasses, but I saw his square jaw and a mole on his left cheek. I started to pull away, but he was

so strong. I couldn't believe it, I thought breaking free would be easier. When I came to the conclusion that I wouldn't free myself on my own I called for, "Danny, for someone, anyone." It felt like I was screaming for hours and no one answered. He kept pulling me until finally he reached his goal and threw me in his car; his red car was so small and had a peculiar smell like something was rotting away. Eventually the scrawny guy pulled my head in and pressed a white cloth to my mouth and I dosed off away from the world.

While in forced slumber, I was almost peaceful. I dreamt of Danny and the mural. It was unusual, because I was in the mural and all I saw was the wonderful side of the world. When I started to see the horror on the other side of the mural I was awakened by a slap on the face. It was so surreal I never expected this to be happening to me. The man reeked of blood and I almost threw up as he walked towards me. He started mumbling inaudible words and pushed himself on top of me and I blacked out again.

When I came through, my clothes were on wrong; my pants were unbuttoned and my shirt was on backwards. I didn't want to know or think about what he did to me, all the details, I just wanted this nightmare to be over. I focused away from myself and started glancing around the room where there was no one in sight. The first thought that came into my head was, "there's a chance, get out, get out." The room had no obvious exit at least none visible from where I was at. Eventually I came across a red button hanging from a chain and directly in front of it was what looked like a garage door. Cautiously I walked toward it and pressed it and just as I thought the door started to open up slowly. When the door

was open enough to squeeze through I rolled out and ran as fast as I could away from the place. Sure enough, as I ran I noticed my mural on the side of the building and started to cry.

Weeks passed and no one knew what had happened to me. I was so embarrassed and I didn't want to tell the police, because it would surely go public. Eventually my friends noticed how distant and quiet I became. I had stopped talking to everyone the only activities I would do was go to school, eat, and sometimes sleep. My friends and family eventually accepted the change and moved on with their lives with me just a speck of someone they used to know. Danny was the only one that cared, but I didn't want to tell him. I had started to like him and I had a feeling he was also starting to grow fond of me. One day I decided to open up to him and he didn't take it as well as I had hoped. The next day he did everything in his power to avoid me. I was all alone. No one wanted to talk to the sad outcast teenager.

My name is Chris and I am seventeen years old. I have come to the conclusion that my life will not become any better and there is nothing left for me in this world. If anyone finds me and my letter next to this beautiful mural on the old abandoned building, please share my story and support the outcast teenager no one wants to listen to. Nobody supported me and now my life is about to be over and I'm actually feeling relief. I am a gay, raped teenager that nobody wanted to talk to or even sit next to.



Digital Art-Second Place

Laura Fosdick

Essay



Photography-Second Place

Kalli Gizzi

Essay-First Place

Stacy Simon

The Things I Carried

In the book, “The Things They Carried,” by Tim O’Brien, the character Jimmy Cross reminds me of myself. Although the situations are totally different, the tangible and intangible feelings are much of the same. When my husband was deployed to Iraq in 2009, I carried both emotional feelings and items that reminded me of him. Just like the soldiers, I carried both the visible and the invisible.

The tangible items that I carried were my husband’s deployment letter, his pillow, his cologne, his shirt and his letters. In the book, O’Brien reveals how Cross kept letters and photographs of Martha. When my husband received his letter of deployment that was the first tangible item that I kept. I still have it today. At night, I would sleep with his pillow next to me because it still held his scent. I could smell the soap and deodorant that he used. Before going to work, I would actually spray his cologne on my wrists. Throughout the day, I would smell my wrists as a reminder of him. I would find myself daydreaming about him and not being able to focus on my job. His deployment was very hard on me. My son was 18 months old at the time and would constantly ask for him. I could only tell him that his dad was coming back real soon. The nights were the hardest. I would always sleep in his shirts. He is a Kansas City Chief’s diehard fan and has a jersey that he wears. His favorite shirt became mine. There were also the letters that he would write to me. Those letters became my prized possessions. Just like Cross, whenever I had free time, I would sit, read and reflect on what he had written to me. My husband is an eloquent writer

and to me, his letters were like reading poetry. Although this sounds funny, I would read those letters aloud to my son so that he would know that his dad misses us both and thinks of us often.

My intangible items were thoughts of being with him, reflection of our date nights together, and the memories of how I was affected by those thoughts. What was intangible to Cross, was similarly intangible to me as well. Cross' thoughts of Martha were so similar to mine of my husband that I found myself reflecting on those thoughts while reading the story. I kept finding myself reading the same sentences over and over. While he was away, I would envision my husband's smile, the way he would walk to our bedroom, how he would put his clothes on, and especially how he would care for our son. The date nights we would have were our most precious times together. I thought of those times often because we had our most intimate conversations during those moments together. Thinking about spending time with him while he was away was dreadful to me because I wanted him home. I hated that he was a serviceman and was away from his family serving our country. I often cried when my son would ask for him because I felt I could not explain to him why his dad was gone.

Now that my husband is home, reading "The Things They Carried," has given me a new perspective on life for servicemen away from home. While my husband was away, he would always tell me that he thinks of me and our son often. I did not think that he had the time. But when he arrived home, he showed me that he carried tangible and intangible items as well. Like me, he had taken one of my hairclips, he had a shirt of mine, he had our son's onesie, the letters that I had written to him, and his thoughts. These items, both tangible and intangible, are what I think kept us together.



Cover Art-Third Place

Raegina Powell

Essay-Second Place

Graduating in the Face of Adversity

Robert Nunes

Personal problems will always be an unfortunate part of life, and college students are not exempt. If you are a college student who has personal problems, there are a few resolutions you can make which will help you graduate in the face of adversity.

First and foremost, when dealing with personal problems, make a resolution to exercise serenity - as described in the famous serenity prayer - which consists of accepting the things that cannot be changed, having the courage to change the things that can be changed, and having the wisdom to know the difference.

It is easy to become completely consumed with emotional responses to personal problems in the absence of serenity. The more that you attempt to change the things that cannot be changed, the worse those things steal your peace. And the more those things steal your peace, the less you are able to focus on your education.

Always remember that the opportunity to receive a college education is a privilege and a blessing. Make a resolution to guard your investment. This means making an honest and accurate assessment of what (who) is, and what (who) is not conducive to your current and future success. Keep only that which is useful and remove that which is useless.

Admittedly, this is not a fun or easy task. It often involves distancing yourself from certain people, places, things, and activities that you may be

very fond of. As difficult as it may be to remove these distractions from your life this is solid, tried, and true advice.

The truth is, it is either that or risk being held back. Distractions can, and probably will, either cause you to fail or just barely pass. If you want to excel, then put your education first, and refrain from any and all activities that would be inconsistent with that.

Make a resolution to be as responsible and productive as possible. Keep your priorities in order. Poor time management will always serve to intensify your stress level, make your other personal problems harder to cope with, and compromise your grade point average.

School always trumps recreational and other extracurricular activities in importance. When you deliberately make the time to take your time on your assignments you will rarely have as difficult a time with them, as opposed to when you put them off until the last minute and attempt to rush through them.

You can rest assured that despite whatever personal problems you may encounter, you can persevere if you make resolutions mentioned here. Once again these resolutions are: to exercise serenity, to guard your investment, and to be as responsible and productive as possible.

One final piece of advice: most of your personal problems are temporary, regardless of their apparent persistence and intensity. They will often pass much faster if you approach them with maturity. When all is said and done, you will be graduating in the face of adversity.

Essay-Third Place

Things That I Carry

Sergio Guzman

All of us can relate that we need certain items to live our lives and sometimes even survive. Tim O' Brien's short story, "The Things They Carried," was a great way to show how people have to carry two types of items that makes life more meaningful. Material items and non-physical items are carried by every person living on this planet. In O'Brien's short story, a group of military fighters were at Vietnam fighting, enduring, suffering, and trying to not be fully dishonored. I also carry tangible and intangible items in my life.

Just like the military soldiers in the story, I carry material items. My cell phone, car keys, pen, flash drive, college textbooks, a binder, wallet, earphones, and a necklace that holds four pieces are some of the items that never leave my side. Being a college student/young adult all the items

I carry have a lot of meaning. First, my cell phone holds my daily life: I receive constant emails, family calls, very interesting text messages, my personal bank account information, and exciting social notifications. Next, my Honda car keys I carry are also important because, besides being the only copy I have of them without a car anyone's life can become a real hassle. Then, any kind of pen/pencil, flash drive, and binder are also extremely important because they are required in my college life to do challenging and quite meaningful work. A person has to be ready to be educated so having the materials to do the tasks is a big bonus. Also, my

wallet is one of the most important items I carry because it contains my debit card, three different forms of ID, and a copy of my social security number; those items are mandatory to live in the United States. Finally, the necklace I carry is another treasure I bring because of the items it holds. My gir(a little cartoon character from nickelodeon) pendant, car remote, car key finder device, and my house key are on the necklace and if I were to ever lose that I would have some serious problems. Without some of the tangible items we all own our lives would be a lot more difficult to live.

Also just like the combatants in the short story, I carry intangible items. Sometimes, while trying to walk with physical items the immaterial items I carry weigh more because of the stress they bring. Friend, college, family, and soccer life are some of the intangible items I carry. Initially, friends can be both great and hurtful to anyone's life. They can be people who listen, talk, guide, and help a person with problems. On the other hand, friends can be corrupt, unkind, and backstabbing and just cause more problems. Following, college life can be something tough to deal with because of all the deadlines, homework, discussions, new peers, and new environment someone is introduced to. Then, family life can bring happiness while still bringing tension. My brothers and I cannot look eye to eye because of small differences we have, my sisters don't trust me with any of their problems, and my parents just don't even care what I do. Finally, one of the most important items I carry that can weigh enormously is my soccer life. I plan and train every day to improve my technique and to become better at my position, goalkeeper. Sadly, sometimes my efforts are in vain because I play on Sunday and I cannot make the saves I would

like to. Even though physical items weigh a whole heap the intangible items can sometimes just be the cause of the real burden.

Without tangible and intangible items in a people's life, existence would have no meaning and we would just be living without motivation. The stress the items carry can be seen with two views. First, the stress can defeat me and I will do nothing to stop it. Oppositely, these burdens will be the motivation for me to keep on going in life. O'Brien's short story really opened my eyes and made me realize that I should know what I carry, consider what they do in my life, and hope they will not weigh me down.



Photography-Third Place

Alexa Poore

Essay-Honorable Mention

Everyone Carries

Jenna Bush

Everyone carries different things, tangible and intangible. Everyone uniquely goes through different experiences and cherish different things. In the short story “The Things They Carried” by Tim O’Brien, the soldiers carried various physical things like candy, cigarettes, weapons, dental floss, Doctor Scholl’s foot powder, marijuana, and even one man carried condoms. The soldiers also carried mental things like love, memories, anger, and fears. I also carry tangible and intangible things.

I carry tangible things. I always tend to carry my iPhone because I never know if someone in my family may need me or if something bad happens to me and I need to get ahold to someone. My mother makes me carry a roll of toilet paper in my car because she says you never know if you might need it. I also carry several water bottles in my car because I am always thirsty and I never know if I may get stranded somewhere without water. I carry Chap Stick, lipstick, Hanae Mori perfume, pens, and my Honduras wallet in my Betsey Johnson purse. I tend to have chapped lips a lot so I always need to have some Chap Stick and I am in love with red lipstick. Hanae Mori is one of my most favorite perfumes. I carry my favorite Papermate pens, I could not imagine life without them. I am very particular, I really like bold point pen. I find that they make my handwriting look better. In my backpack, I carry folders from all my class which include Anatomy, Psychology Statistics, Composition II, and United States History.

I also always have my TI-84 Plus Silver Edition calculator, my planner, and Scantrons.

I carry intangible things. I carry many memories from my childhood. I have only two memories of living with my father. The first one, my mother and father were fighting over something and my mother threw Gain laundry detergent in my father's face. At the time I was scared and called my grandmother to pick me up, but when I think about it now I find the situation humorous. The other memory I carry is the night my mother, my sister, and I left. I remember my mother was telling us we were leaving. I grabbed some clothes and climbed into my mother's Suburban while my father was begging us not to leave. I carry memories of all my ex-boyfriends, especially my first boyfriend. He was probably the most stupid decision I have ever made, but I do not regret anything. I carry the burden of being painfully shy. I, unfortunately, carry the dislike of men. I wish I did not but every single man I know is an asshole. On a lighter note, I carry the passion to help people. I am currently enrolled at Lamar State College - Port Arthur to pursue a career of my passion. I carry the love of my family and friends. I would do anything I possibly could to help them with anything they may need. I carry the characteristic trait of being open. I try to never judge a person by what they look like, how they act, who they associate with, or what their sexual preference is. Sometimes I feel I carry the weight of the world upon my shoulders. I am affected by everything I hear and see. Being affected and not being able to do anything about it drives me crazy and hurts me because I cannot help. I carry fear of being alone. I think I would honestly rather be with someone who wasn't right for me than be alone for the rest of my life.

Everyone carries things. May it be tangible or intangible. Everyone's experiences are vary from person to person. No one is exactly the same. I do not really carry many things like the soldiers in the short story. I carry many different things. I carry mental and physical things that have built up from a lifetime of living.



Digital Art-Third Place

Patricia Halbert

Essay-Honorable Mention

My First Semester in College

Hardy X. Jones, IV

August 23, 2013 was the moving day of a new start for me. I was leaving the horrible reputation that I had created for myself, beginning a fresh new journey to make friends, and trying and maintain the grades that I had in high school. I lined up in alphabetical order in Raven Village dorms to receive my room and mailbox key. "Next!" the young lady said, my heads are clammy, my stomach felt like it was full of butterflies, and I took the last steps of being "Narcissistic Hardy." "Sam ID and name" the preppy blonde screeched. She screamed so loud I thought my eardrums were going to bust. So I gave her my information and she handed me this tiny little manila envelope that contained the keys to my new room for the next five months. My father and I headed to the truck to gather all my possessions. I grabbed all five of my three feet tall shoe carrier. I forgot that I had to walk up three stories of stairs to just to get to my room! I swear it felt like I had just climbed up Mount McKinley. Still a tad bit nervous and seeing hundreds of people moving in to their dorms, I finally was through with carrying all my stuff after five trips up and down.

After setting up everything my father and I were saying our goodbyes, something was running down my face like the Nile River. I couldn't believe it because I was crying. I didn't want to say goodbye to my father because he was my rock, even though I hated living with him. Before I knew it he was crying as well, tears of joy though. The last thing my dad told me was

“Xavier, don’t come here and screw up because you will be coming back home if you do. I don’t want anything less than a ‘A’ or a ‘B’, you hear me?” After our sentimental moment, I walked my dad back down the stairs and hugged him one last time, I watched my dad drive off, leaving me exactly 93 miles away from my family.

For the first couple of days only, I didn’t leave my room because Sam Houston State was just ridiculously huge. All of my friends from home were on the other side of campus and my fat ass was not about to walk three-fourths of a mile. Classes began and I had a full load, taking General Chemistry I, Botany, Calculus I English II, and Kinesiology. English was my worst enemy back in high school and at Lamar over the summer; however, in the beginning English was going well. I made ‘C’ here and there on little assignments, nothing major. As my classes went on, I was perfectly fine. I felt like I had all my partying out the way during high school, sadly I was terribly wrong. I went to, Blue Dynasty, the Sigma’s homecoming party. Standing in the line to go inside they had security guards looking for any weapons. There were so many people dressed in orange; anyone would be able to know who was a student at SHSU or an escaped inmate for the Huntsville Prison! That was the worst thing I have ever done in my life! After being searched, strobe lights, hot and sweaty people packed close together like the slaves that were brought to America. That just isn’t the kind of parties nor people I was around in my entire life. “You want a sweet?” one of my friends said. My dumb ass thought it was some type of drink, but I was very much wrong when they passed me the blunt, I almost died. I didn’t want to seem like a party pooper, so I smoked my first joint.

Time passed by in the semester and I started to slack off in one of my

classes. Go figure, it was English Composition. It got to the point where I just stopped going and just went on the days that I knew essays were due. I really didn't even care at the moment of if my dad actually would make me come back to this ratchet place. I wouldn't ever slack off in my other my math and science classes because I am a double major in Biology and Forensic Chemistry.

When I received a phone calls from my dad and he asked me how things were going, I would lie and tell the truth, " Oh everything is going good. I have 'A' and 'B' in the classes that I know about"; however, I failed to tell him that I had a 'C' in English at that point. I continued studying for my major classes while still smoking weed on a regular basis. It comes down to finals and I had a 'B" in Calculus I and 3 'A's in Chemistry, Botany, and Kinesiology, but a big fat 'F' in English Composition.

I was trying to figure out what lie I could tell my dad to try and stay at SHSU and not to stay in this conflicted house with him. I told him that I have all A's and B's. Usually he never asked to see my grades, not in high school nor when I went to Lamar University for the summer. A tragic thing happened after that, he asked for my transcript. I was able to blow it of by saying that I can't pull it up yet until all the grades are finalized. I was able to get by until he said, "let me see your transcript before you leave." Really, the day that I was trying to escape from this horrible as city of Boremont, oh my bad Beaumont. So I was trembling with fear to show him that English grade so I zoomed in on my 32 GB iPhone 5, so that it only shows my other four classes and not the big fat 'F'. He asked me "where is English?" so I had to tell him. He was pissed as hell; I thought he was going to kill me. He made me unload all my stuff from my 2014 black Jeep Patriot

with black chrome rims and took my keys to MY car, which is in MY name, but he pays the insurance and car note. It was too late to register for Lamar University, so every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday I have to drive 16 miles to Lamar State College- Port Arthur to repeat English Composition, along with Art Appreciation and Texas Government. Till this day, English Composition is still kicking my ass.

Essay-Honorable Mention

Guidance, Purpose, Structure

Robert Nunes

By personifying desirable characteristics, parents set positive examples for their children. For example, to teach patience, a person must first be patient. And so it is true for all virtuous behaviors.

In a world full of terrible examples, children are constantly bombarded by profane impressions. Their highly malleable inexperienced minds struggle to discern right from wrong. When parents contribute to this confusion by failing to exemplify discipline and appropriate behavior, upon whom are their children to model their own behavior?

Many children raised by parents who drink, smoke, use drugs, lose their tempers, use profanity, resort to violence (just to list a few objectionable habits), have a tendency to emulate their vicious behaviors. Likewise, children raised by parents who are sober, exercise self-restraint, articulate themselves with dignity, and refrain from hostilities, are predisposed to behave accordingly.

In other words, it is of paramount importance that parents

exemplify merit to substantiate the legitimacy of their authority and earn their children's respect. Respect is the key to properly rearing them.

Children need guidance, purpose, and structure. Parents can provide guidance by finding situations, or even inventing reasonable scenarios, and discussing them in depth with their children. This gives parents the opportunity to impart knowledge and wisdom. It is irresponsible to allow children to learn certain life lessons on their own.

Parents cultivate purpose in children's lives by being attentive to their children's strengths and weaknesses, then nurturing their knack; whatever that may be it should be structured to develop morals, ethics, and integrity. Involving children in athletics is an excellent way to teach all three.

Parents can structure their children's lives with schedules that incorporate academic, extracurricular, and household responsibilities, thus limiting idle time. This practice will instill responsible and productive time management skills.

Children respond to incentives such as allowances and similar rewards for meritorious behavior. Incentives are effective in procuring and preserving compliance. Knowing that the completion of chores results in a weekly stipend, children will

do what is expected of them. Many parents have been successful in motivating their children to earn good grades by attaching dollar signs to A's and B's on their report cards.

Raised responsibly, children are far less likely to make as many mistakes as their peers who were reared by irresponsible or absentee parents. Left to their own devices, children will inevitably experiment with potentially dangerous prospects. Children who have not been taught are not at fault. Only when they know better can they rightfully be held responsible.

In the event that children behave with deliberate disregard for rules, and inquiry must be made to understand their motivation prior to the imposition of disciplinary action. Punitive measures avail parents nothing where the source of a child's disobedience is ignored and allowed to grow. Addressing an effect, while ignoring its cause, is comparable to treating the symptoms of a disease instead of searching for its cure.

All discipline should be administered with the goal being something other than the infliction of suffering. Suffering often leads to deeply seated resentments and character flaws. Corporeal punishment is a lazy approach to discipline. "Grounding" children is also a lazy approach to discipline. Smarter, more effective, disciplinary measures consist of

performance-based objectives that enhance rather than diminish children's lives such as mandated repetition of physical exertions, i.e. squats, push-ups, pull-ups, planks, and the like.

Parents should strive to supplant corrupt beliefs and behaviors with correct ones that will meet their children's needs over time.

Essay-Honorable Mention

Time Flies

Coyth Whitney

Once, there was a little girl who just simply enjoyed being young. She lived with her sister, hard-working military father, and stay-at-home mother. Although her father was gone a lot due to the air force, her mother did as much as possible to keep the family happy and did a great job of it. The girl had no worries because her only responsibility was having fun. She loved to learn, could read by the age of 3, and was excited about starting school although she did not look forward to becoming older.

Before the child could blink, pre-k was over and it was time for kindergarten at Taft Elementary. The girl hated waking up early but enjoyed going to school so it was not much of a problem. She loved reading, writing, coloring, and playing at recess and in P. E. Other students actually got annoyed with her because she was always the favorite and had the best handwriting but it did not bother her because she was proud of herself. Years went by faster and faster. Her dad missed out on so many activities. She would secretly cry when she practiced singing "I'm Proud to Be an American" in music class knowing that when she performed in the patriotic program her father would not be there to attend because he was in Iraq. Still, the rest of her family was there for her and she enjoyed life and school. Sooner than expected, it was time for the little girl to move on to even bigger things.

The young girl was now in fourth grade at Groves Elementary. Scared and

not so little anymore, school became stressful. Teachers were mean and she broke her straight-A streak but she made new friends so that was a plus. Fourth grade was a lot different than she expected. She realized that she did not like growing older though. School became less fun and she liked just having fun. Fifth grade was drama and the girl did not enjoy that at all. She wished that she could just be little again or just grow up already. Either way, she was ready to move out of there.

It was time for middle school. The girl did not seem so little anymore. Her parents did not like her going to middle school because she was still so much smaller than everyone in school and now there were big eighth graders. It did not bother the child much though. She enjoyed middle school. She began to like school and learning again as she did at Taft. She made a lot of friends, participated in the choir, and loved her art class. Sixth grade passed quickly. In seventh and eighth grade, she realized that middle school was perfect for getting away with things. She was what a middle school girl would consider rebellious. Asking for a pass from a teacher just so she could go hang out with friends in other classes, going to the principal's office for the first time in her life, multiple times... Middle school was perfect and she loved it. She was always having fun inside and out of school. But just as fast as all the other years had flown by, it was time to move on again.

The once little girl was not so little anymore. High school had begun. Port Neches and Groves mixed and it was a weird adjustment. School was not really good or bad, it was just school. Freshman year was fun because the girl had a lot of friends and she partied all the time. She was responsible even when she was being irresponsible though and always

told her parents where she was no matter what. She had a bad-boy for a boyfriend just like every stupid high school girl wants for some reason. Sophomore year was about the same. She kept her grades up, had a couple drinks on the weekend with friends but for the most part stayed out of too much trouble and enjoyed herself and her life. She got rid of her crappy boyfriend and enjoyed being alone. The summer after sophomore year, the girl, her mother and sister went to England to spend time with her father who was always on and off with his deployments. Spending time with family was still the most important to her. Junior and senior year were dedicated to being on the Indianette drill team and, of course, enjoying a social life. Without searching and enjoying the single life, she found a perfect boyfriend from Bridge City that she had met through a friend. She no longer liked the single life and they began dating. She loved dancing on the field on Friday nights more than anything. In her Indianette uniform, red lipstick, and French braids, nothing could stop her from smiling while doing Cherokee and looking at the audience knowing all of PN-G, including her father, was watching. Her dad was home for good her senior year and didn't miss a thing of the best year of her life. Being from PN-G and her boyfriend from Bridge City, senior dances and get-togethers were almost nonstop. She enjoyed every bit of it except for waking up early for school. She knew that she did not want to graduate even though so many others did. She couldn't grasp the fact that life was all about to change with graduation right around the corner. But low and behold, she walked across the stage in her favorite color of purple to receive her diploma.

The summer after the girl's senior year, it was party time though.

Graduation money was coming in, graduation parties were constant, and senior trips were coming up. Crawfish boils, sitting by the pool drinking strawberries daiquiris and tanning were heavenly. She spent a week in Mexico on the prettiest beach she had ever seen with endless frozen margaritas with extra salt that she didn't even have to keep ordering because Jose, the bartender, was already making her next one. The Dominican Republic was fun and relaxing as well. She did not want summer to end. But just as plenty of other fun times had ended, summer was over and once again it was time for the girl to move on whether she wanted to or not.

College began. What a change from a fun-filled and care-free senior year and summer she thought. The girl was now an adult and began her basics at Lamar Port Arthur and was on her way to a nursing major. She made A's and was doing well in school but did not like it. All she could think about was how much she loved being young not having any responsibility, back when stress was not an everyday emotion or ever for that matter. All she did was study. Nonstop work, no social life, no friends. All of her friends from school were still partying and made no effort in school so there was no one but her parents, sister, and boyfriend always close by her side. Everything had changed. She had gotten older even though she had never wanted to.

I am this girl, the young girl who once was but is now an adult. I never did like the thought of growing up as so many others did. I liked having fun and being a care-free child and teenager. But none of it lasts. Nothing really lasts. Even in elementary school, I realized that I could not help getting older and could not stop the constant changes in my life.

become older or not, I did. Times can be hard, sometimes sucky and not fun, but it's only a matter of time before it all changes again. There is no reason to fret the future. If I did not like where I was at one point in my life, life soon changed to better times and vice versa. Taking each stage of life one step at a time, learning from mistakes, and appreciating the life is what the young girl did. She became what she said she never wanted to be, and that was a grown-up. Yet, she was still so young. And just as she had when she was little, the girl did not want to grow older. But the girl knew as fast as everything else had passed, this shall too.

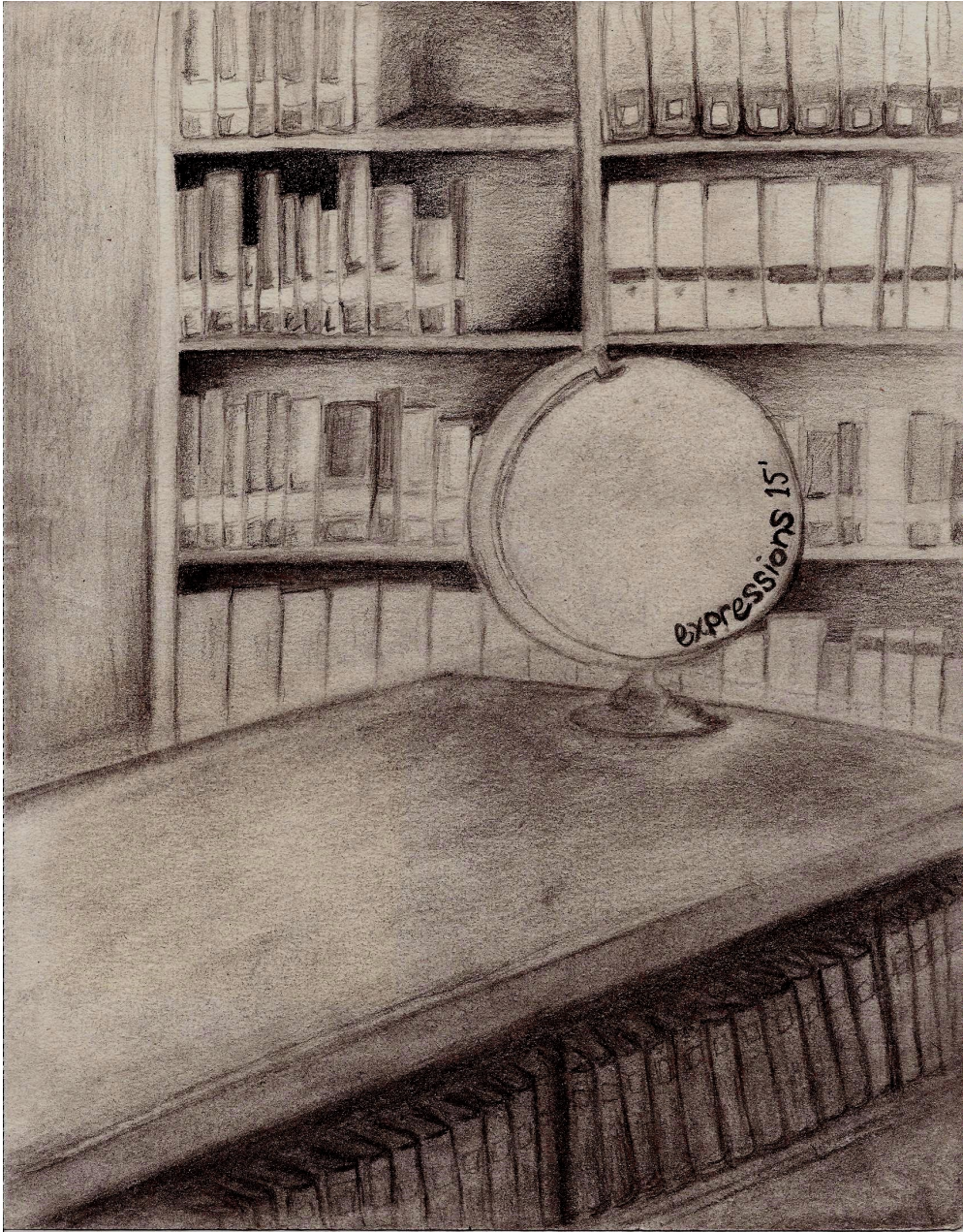


Digital Art-Honorable Mention

Karli Bowman

*Special Essay
Category*

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Cover Art-Honorable Mention

Kayleigh Pope

Special Essay Category-First Place

Douglas R. Hofstadter

John Christopher McElhatten

Douglas Hofstadter is best known as the 1980 Pulitzer Prize winning author of, Gödel, Escher, Bach: An Eternal Golden Braid. At that time, his book was considered to be the premier text concerning artificial intelligence. Not bad for a guy who was only 35 and a first-time author.

In his book GEB, (as it became known), he emphasized that the proper approach to AI is through the longer and more arduous task of actually understanding human intelligence. Intelligence alone is defined as the capacity for learning, reasoning, and understanding. However, at the core of human intelligence is a process which enables people to make a sense of the chaos that is going on around them. We refer to this process as cognition. And, as Mr. Hofstadter explains, "Cognition is recognition." To further explain, I can offer the analogy of how a person will automatically differentiate between their mother, father, and brother as opposed to everyone else in the universe. They can make a determination in a split-second, by either looking at a face or hearing a voice. It is distinguishing between people who they recognize versus who they do not, that creates understanding.

Modern technology has strayed further and further away from what Douglas had originally envisioned. Which is, an idea that artificial intelligence would possess the ability to reflect upon itself. Not just from a

standpoint “within” the system, but also have perspective “about” the system. This quality is most associated with consciousness and often manifests in humans as criticism. What varies the most between humans and animals are the extensive and elaborate ways of which we engage in such practices. Therefore, what most people fail to realize is that modern computer programs are just plain artificial.

Although, they may seem to parallel the cognitive skill of humans, and from outward appearances seem to be consciously aware of our existence. The truth is: they do not possess any true intelligence even by a simple definition of the term.

Nowadays, the focus of Doug’s mission centers around the question of, “What is thinking?” But, given the nature of his brilliance, vision, and the current politics surrounding the computer industry; his work has put him at odds with a field he helped to inspire a generation to revolutionize.

The root of such evil is simple. The most popular approach to modern computer programming is to design programs that will have a direct and immediate application. Hence, the advent of the phrase, “We have an app for that!” in so many marketing campaigns. Then, there are others which center around the function of “command and control”, like first-person shooter video games. And, as always are specialized “expert systems”, but those are just a few very basic examples.

An obvious reason for designing these “rigid” computer systems, is of course money. The primitive basis being that if people can use programs in the here and now, and are willing to pay for them. Then, a company or person who is capable produces it. No matter how stupid its actual purpose is. An excellent example is the recent smart-phone game

featuring Kim Kardashian.

It is these practices and many others that the industry has substituted in place of discovering how to facilitate genuine artificial intelligence. Consequently, it has also further removed Douglas from an epicenter where he once stood all alone. With the advent of “machine-learning”, “data-mining”, and the “big data” collections of large corporations like Google: the truth is that the shortcut will continue to be the road to nowhere. A reality he had accepted long ago.

Mr. Hofstadter has been tenured professor for over 30 years at Indiana University at Bloomington, who dabbles in the cognitive science program. In addition he also affiliates with other departments - including computer science, psychological and brain sciences, comparative literature, and philosophy - although maintains no official obligation.

He characterizes himself as a person who compulsively engages in “intellectual binges” until he can “see” the reason why things are true. He says he is, “totally obsessed, possessed” and is unable not to explore.

Philosopher Daniel Dennett describes his friend as a “practicing phenomenologist”. Whereby, studying the moments of personal experience allows for more precise cognition, and promotes discovery, exploration, or the understanding of what those events might entail. It is a spoil of the human condition that creates so many ideas in Doug’s mind; essentially, he cannot help but turn the gun on himself.

He does extensive studies on his own thoughts, behaviors, feelings, and actions in an attempt to figure out “how thinking actually happens in the brain.” Douglas and his student’s ultimate goal is to build “computer models of the fundamental mechanisms of thought.”

He is the current director of the Fluid Analogies Research Group (FARG), and has written that their purpose is “first, to uncover the secrets of creativity, and second, to uncover the secrets of consciousness.”

His quest can also be summarized as one that is preoccupied with figuring out how understanding works, as a stepping stone, to the artificial intelligence he first advocated in Gödel, Esher, Bach. A momentous objective for which the faint-hearted need not apply. There is nothing artificial about the intelligence of Mr. Hofstadter, therefore he does not possess any illusion about the fact that it may be a reality to be enjoyed by those of the next lifetime. He hasn't been to an artificial intelligence conference in over 30 years, and does not see the point in going when all people want to do is argue. As Douglas Hofstadter like to say “Ars longa, vita brevis” ... “I just figure that life is short. I work, I don't try to publicize. I don't try to fight.”

*Ars longa, vita brevis - art is long, life is short.

SOURCE: The Atlantic - November 2013 pg. 90

volume 312 - NO. 4

The Man Who Could Teach Machines To Think

By James Somers

Poetry



Photography-Honorable Mention

Tori Gassiott

Poetry-First Place

Being a Black Women Love/Hate

JaVaughn Hudson

Love

I love being a Black Woman. From my smooth, brown skin to my kinky fro on my head. I embrace who I am and people around me does also.

I love that not all people care about the color of my skin or the gender that I am. Constantly older white men are flirting or younger Hispanics are whistling at me. I don't like it but it lets me know that I'm being admired from all kinds.

I love being a Black Woman who is able to accomplish things many people of my race and gender haven't. I'm in school, I work, and do not have kids. I'm twenty-one and have a lot of time left to complete my goals in that order.

I love being a Black Woman because I love being black period. Black is beautiful in my eyes. The skin tones vary from high yellow and red bones, to brown sugar and dark chocolate. I love it all.

I love being a Black Woman because I can have a strong Black Man, to grow old with. He will compliment me and my style. He will be my rock and I his backbone and rib. We will be the next power couple.

I love being a Black Woman because we know all the tricks to get someone

to submit. Bat our eyes, give them the puppy dog eyes, or just say a few words in our baby voice. It works every time. Hasn't failed me yet.

I love being a Black Woman because our independence shines through. We push harder than most and strive longer. Our goal is to rise and not fail. Nothing against men, but women run this.

I love being a Black Woman because we run the world so the rest can have a seat.

Hate

Spectate our actions but copy not. No one can do it quite like we do. The drive we have cannot be matched.

I hate being a Black woman, because racism still exists. People see my color and shy away. They see my color and look at me like I just sneezed and snot flew out my nose. They see my color and that's it. It's just a color but to them it's abomination.

I hate being a Black woman because all they see are hips and breast. I never get eye contact from most men. If a person wants to learn more about me, my eyes tell all. Even my deep, dark secrets. The only secrets on my chest and butt are Victoria.

I hate being a Black Woman because male chauvinists exist. To them women are dumb and never know what we're talking about. Where's your wife? She needs to realize you're an asshole my friend.

I hate being a Black Woman because harassment is hard to avoid. Males say sly comments that go unacknowledged. I will say that I think women

fear men when it comes to these situations. We need to stand up and do something about it.

I hate being a Black woman because in the future I'm going to carry kids. I love kids but why does my body have to change when I'm incubating? I'm going to have a human growing inside of me. Every time I think of a baby moving in my tummy, I cringe.

I hate being a Black Woman because in the work place it's hard to grab the position I want. It's already hard being a woman but being a black woman is a trial. Yes being a woman is difficult but until one becomes a Black Woman, it's hard to feel our pain.

I hate being a Black Woman because trials seem to face us more since most of us come from the hood or projects. It doesn't mean we become a product though.



Photography-Honorable Mention

Kristi Segura

Poetry-Second Place

Take Me Home

Jason Cavil

I'm close to croakin, chained up, soaked by the rain and still
soakin
Been beaten, battered, banged up and broke but not broken
still focused, hoping the doors will soon open
cause my age divided by time I'm barely remaining by the
quotient
Blood flowin from incisions cut with precision
from indecisions, trippin from no recognition that I'm missin
I would've stayed in the house if I'd envisioned my position
now wishin I can eat one meal in my mama's kitchen
thinking of quittin, cause its no mo fight, no rounds in the
cartridge
just darkness, scarred, torn apart like an old warship
I'm sicker than a drank sipper needin a barr fix
cause as close as I get to home is catching chain on a hardship
trying my hardest to overcome hardships I'm infected by
and recognize my place in life and rectify
my mistakes and I love the fire I'm tested by
cause without that test I'm not able to testify

Poetry-Third Place

Hidden in the White

Racheal Milich

Spill me out upon the page
Tell my story in the best way
Lines to form my harbored thoughts
Textures to bring them sustenance
Colors to fill them up with life
Shapes begin to form in rife
Draw and draw it all again
Erase then find a better line
Hiding in another crease
Draw, erase, torture the leaf
Reveal the image it brings
The song my heart sings
The paper had it all along
The white façade hid my song



Photography-Honorable Mention

Kelby Sparks

Poetry-Honorable Mention

Hello Darkness-Hello Cruel Lost Friend

Emily Griffiths

What is your business here? What pain will you lend?

When did you first begin to take my happiness's place?

Why the hell did you seem like my saving grace?

I want to know now and I want to know when I let this start

I want to know the day that I let you into my heart

If I can think back to the day that I began listening to your hurtful tips

Then maybe I can trace the day that you first crossed my lips

Hello Darkness

Did we first meet that day in school when I was young?

Oh yes, I remember the sinister songs that you sung

The long minutes of a child waiting to be chosen last

I grit my teeth as I relive my past

You would coolly whispered "No one wants to be your friend"

"You are so weird, eventually they had to pick you in the end"

As I walked forward to the unlucky team that day

You filled my mind and I began to say

Hello Darkness

Maybe I am mistaken I was just a child

I couldn't have harbored such an evil that was so wild

It must have been during the days that my father would yell and scream

I hated those days when he was so mean

You covered me in your dark looming shadows as my ears began to ring
I remember the suffocating feeling that you would bring
But through my gasping tears and through the blaring rage of my father's
anger
I could hear my soul echoing as if I was in an old abandoned hanger
Hello Darkness
No, no, no!
My father couldn't have made his own daughter feel so low
I am thinking, I am trying, but I cannot remember the specific moment
How could such a devil be one of my key components?
Fine I cannot remember the foul day that you entered my life!
But I assure you I remember crystal clear the day that you drove me to my
knife
With a trembling body and a tear stained face, I bled
And as I closed my eyes I felt your presence I said
Hello Darkness
I know that that day was not the first day I said your name but I remember
it because of the pain
I swore that that was the last damn time that I would ever be under your
rein!
I may feel down at times but you will never be welcome here!
Go ahead and try because you will never get near
My life is in the light and it will never go south
Let me tell you two words that will never again breathe out of my mouth
Hello Darkness (this is the last line)

Poetry-Honorable Mention

I Am From

Ana Guillen

I am from the smell after the rain and the smell of recently cut grass. Every Saturday morning, my alarm is the lawn mower being put to use.

I am from Piedras Negras and Morelos, Coahuila, Mexico. I remember the dirt roads and how everyone was always hot and sweaty because we had no air conditioning.

I am from “as algo por tu vida para que no estes batallando como nosotros,” which means “do something with your life so you don’t have to struggle like we do.” “We want a better life for you is what I hear.

I am from Heights Boulevard and the Church’s that was on the corner on the block across from us. The delicious butter topped biscuits that made my mouth water. As well as the spicy chicken that would be on our tables almost twice a week.

I am from the Tia Pancha and Sabadomingo, where we would spend our Sundays walking around and buying elote en vaso with the extra parmesan cheese that I loved. I would always spill it because I never knew how to correctly eat it.

I am from the night my mom gave birth to my younger brother. Waking us up in the middle of the night to take us to Tia Vero y Tio Conrado’s house.

I am from my mom’s mouthwatering home cooking. You made me a picky eater, so now I struggle to eat other people’s food. If it’s not yours, I can’t eat it.

I am from Mulberry Street in San Antonio. From my godparents’ cat that would nip and scratch us while we slept. I would

always hear her bell, and knew the cat was around.

I am from the brown paper bags that had a special surprise inside wrapped in aluminum foil. I always knew they were tamales because you would always say you bought “dos dosenas,” two dozen.

I am from the longest hour and a half trip that we made when we moved from Houston to Port Arthur. I dreaded seeing the refineries and the empty roads on the way here. After eight years, I haven’t completely settled in yet. Hoping that we won’t be here much longer.

I am from the smell of beer in my relative’s breath and the loud music they would all play. From the frijoles and arroz that never missed the party. From the drunk uncle that would pull on my cheeks until they were red and ached.

I am from the day I went to Target and bought a scrapbook because I wanted to keep memories. Now it just collects dust in my closet, and I only pull it out when I want to reminisce.

I am from staying quiet at the dinner table because my parents would always tell me that the dinner table was made to eat at, not to talk. All you heard was the silver wear scraping against the plates.

I am from “se te va aparecer Juan Diego,” which until at this age and time, I don’t completely understand. Mom and dad always tell me that when they feel I said something out of line.

I am from the day before my birthday that mom and dad took me to Build A Bear Workshop. I chose a monkey and named him George. He reminds me of when I fell asleep on the couch and awoke in my bed.

Poetry-Honorable Mention

A Man Out of Stone

Christopher Clint Hussey

Through it all

I did not waver

I did not fall

Tied tight my boots

Squeezed tighter my heart

Stood my ground

While broken nearly apart

I won't back down

No matter the force

For the night wind whispers

Stay the course

The morning sun is rising

Pushing hard the shadowed sky

Just moments till dawn

Hold on till dawn

Carry on, young man

Carry on

Poetry-Honorable Mention

The World Turns for Her

Christopher Clint Hussey

Dawn

The Great Divider

The Tie That Binds

Always

Finds You Away

Finds A Season Of Longing

Comes

Those Golden Rays And Summer Days

Those Hazel Eyes Sparkling With Love Eternal

Dawn Always Comes My Dear

I Will Find You There

I Can Hold You Then

Poetry-Honorable Mention

Cancer

Danny Strickland

First came denial
No way, this can't be
Then came acceptance
But why God, why me
Reasoning gave no logic
In search to find an answer
The radiologist told me
Our scan shows you have cancer
now we must diagnose the type
To formulate a plan
We will use all we know
And save you if we can
Turned out we caught it early
So treatment could bode well
There was so much left uncertain
But only time would tell
Chemo and radiation
Is the path we chose was best

It was taxing on my body
And put me to the test
Now it's in remission
Is what the doctors say
The side effects on my body
were a small price to pay
Thanks to all of you
Who prayed I would be cured
God showed mercy on me
For that I am assured

*Literary
Critique*



Photography-Honorable Mention

Jacey Rossi

Literary Critique-First Place

The Wall

Short Story by Jean-Paul Sartre

John Christopher McElhatten

Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980), was a Frenchman who left his mark on the world of literature as a philosopher, novelist, and dramatist. He is most renowned for his existentialist attitude and continues to be viewed as a major exponent of the philosophical system. One may understand this as being the direct result of having been imprisoned in Germany during World War II. After he escaped, he went on to become an active member in the resistance movement.

The Wall is one of Sartre's most notorious works and is rife with the lasting influence of his personal experience as a prisoner of an occupying force during war. The primary setting takes place within the confines of a hospital cellar that was repurposed as a makeshift cell. The storyline and plot are just as direct and cold as; the cell in which the three men who have been condemned to die is. Keeping within the parameters of the same theme is the non-judicious proceeding with which the story drops right into. Bearing in mind the fact that he held true to this method of direct delivery throughout; is what lead me to believe had an overall vision or purpose he was trying to achieve with this particular story.

Now, at the expense of writing the greatest short story ever known in the history of man. I suppose Sartre uses THE WALL as a vessel to deliver an impact on audiences; who do not readily understand what it was like to have actually lived in (and survived) and era such as World War II. So

personally, I am not upset because I am a fan of substance - bar none. Had the bulk of the story been all fairy tale and fantasy, chances are it would have wound up in the trash.

So, it was pleasant to find that Jean-Paul saturated the dialogue, thoughts, and actions of his characters with reflections of his philosophical ideology. In some cases, they were almost word for word with how I was first introduced to him, in a philosophical format. Therefore, it naturally led me to this compound question: Did he begin as a writer who then extracted from his work the existentialism? Or, did he start with the attitude and some definitive quotes first, and then create from there. The truth is, had it not been for his philosophical influence, I would have never run head-first in THE WALL in the first place.

As far as the overall vision and purpose of this story, if I had to narrow it down and cite a perfect example of how he accomplishes the direct impact on the reader. I could not pick a better one than when a secondary character name Tom, speaks about their impending execution. His words read as follows: "Someone'll holler 'aim!' and I'll see eight rifles looking at me. I'll think how I'd like to get inside the wall, I'll push against it with my back ... with every ounce of strength I have, but the wall will stay, like a nightmare."

This direct style of writing is consistent throughout this work. And I do not believe it is a coincidence why Jean-Paul Sartre entitled this story THE WALL because of the serious nature of his message and his experiences. Given the context of which the excerpted passage was taken, I do not believe reading it as I have presented it, does any justice whatsoever. Because, it is from then on which the story forces you to literally rethink

the entire notion and circumstances surrounding one having their back up against a wall. That is both in the physical and metaphorical sense of the thought.

The overriding substance built into THE WALL, is that it forces the reader to personalize a philosophical quote of Jean-Paul Sartre, like I have done before. This quote has existentialism written all over it, but beyond that, there is no escaping the answer. Which happens to be:

“The fundamental question is:
What have you made of your life?”

Literary Critique-Second Place

The Rocking Horse Winner (1932)
Short Story by D.H. Lawrence

John Christopher McElhatten

The Rocking Horse Winner is considered to be D.H. Lawrence's most famous story. I, myself am inclined to champion this statement as well. But to be fair, I must confess to being an avid reader of nonfiction, who seldom reads fiction. Another truth is that I do not recall having read any other work written by D.H. Lawrence.

Nevertheless, my fixation with this short story is centered around Lawrence's writing style and storytelling techniques. He also displays many examples of how the Modernist Period in English Literature (1914-1965), has influenced contemporary radio, television, and film. Primarily, it shows how a writer's command of narration, dialogue, and cadence can reveal volumes about a character's stream of consciousness, without specifically working those intimate thoughts.

Under the guise, he is able to bring out the true innate character he created for his main character Paul. Having done otherwise, I believe it would have discredited the overall effect

and feel of his story. Through the skill and mastery of his craft, he deliberately refrained from “over-authoring” the neurotic and obsessive qualities that made Paul such an appealing protagonist.

Rather, Lawrence left this dynamic of character development to the reader, which allows Paul to retain his innocence as the child he is. This proves how ambiguity is a universal concept in writing, and can be applied in creative, innovative, and unique ways. It does not always have to be used as a climatic cliffhanger, which seems to be the industry standard for commercial fiction and a common ploy for mass media.

Instead, he uses this device to evoke and add a deeper or more personalized perspective on various plot elements throughout the story. The descriptions, mannerisms, and dialogue between characters also contain ambiguities that prevent the reader from foreshadowing certain events. In addition, there are many psychoanalytical aspects to this short story, which prod the reader to consider longer after the initial reading.

The Rocking Horse Winner has a majestic, yet believable quality that is necessary in all fiction. What I find to be most

appealing, is young Paul's conviction and assertiveness behind his responses. Especially, when he is defending some obscure statements he has made to his mother or his Uncle Oscar.

Most noticeably is when he stoutly says to his mother, "I'm a lucky person." And when his mother asks, "Why?" he says, "God, told me." This conversation occurs very early in the story, and as events unfold, one is left to wonder if in fact Paul has already won any money, by betting on horse races at that point. Or, had he been simply mimicking the same answer his mother gave him just prior in the related series of questions. Again, that ambiguity (I believe) has intentional purpose, because it compliments other character and plot developments quite well.

In another scene, Uncle Oscar is questioning Paul about his "gambling affairs" in a playful manner, because he still believes that he is only speaking out on a made up fantasy. That is, until he begins to sound like a seasoned gambler. Paul makes a distinction between the 1,300 pounds he supposedly "has", as being separate from the other 20 pounds he keeps in "reserve", and the additional 20 pounds he just won the bet his uncle placed on his behalf. After consulting with Bassett, (who is "Master Paul's" partner) Uncle Oscar can only be convinced after proclaiming, "I'll see the money." This is the denouement,

and coincidentally the same time the audience has verification that Paul has indeed been telling the truth. Money, as always, has the ability to make a believer out of almost anyone. So naturally, that is where the story had me hooked.

That moment gave credence to an earlier statement he made to his rocking horse (“Now take me to where there is luck! Now take me!”) Lawrence goes on to narrate the scene with, (He knew the horse could take him to where there was luck, if only he forced it!)

Young Paul is a captivating protagonist who captures the heart and mind of the reader. Where his mind might be a little warped, eccentric, or maybe even schizophrenic. One could never doubt the sureness of his heart. I’d bet the whole “fiver” on that. In the words of Paul he says, “We’re all right when we’re sure. It’s when we’re not quite sure that we go down.” Those statements are very relevant to a world of which has so much conviction, many have forgotten to be reasonable in the process. They too, like Paul hear a whisper: “There must be more money! There must be more money!” Irony, has always been the way of the world much like the theme of this short story.

Without speculating too much, I believe D.H. Lawrence

focused his emphasis on Paul's optimism, imagination, and the moments of his experience to convey an understanding of the world to his audience. Take a second to hear a person out, even if it is a little kid. Matter of fact, especially if it is a little kid. Everyone has a voice and an impact on this world. Just the same, we have those who believe and others who do not. So, at what point does a gift from God become valid? Before or after the money?

What is not ambiguous is that up until now, this is the best short story I have ever read. Since I do not prefer fiction at all, it would not have been plausible to write this critique any other way. Anyone who has not read this short story, should try to read it soon. I truly and genuinely love this story...

HONOUR BRIGHT!

*Thank you to all
contributors
and
Congratulations
to those
published in
Expressions 2015*

Expressions 2015

Faculty Advisor-Editor

Sally Byrd

Poetry and Prose

Sue Wright

Former Instructor of LSC-PA

Instructor

Austin Community College

Art

Angela Osbourne

Instructor of Art

Lamar State College-Port Arthur

Photography

Dr. Charles Gongre

Dean of Academic & Continuing Education Programs

Lamar State College-Port Arthur

Publisher

Caitlin R. James

Instructor of English

Lamar State College-Port Arthur

Technical Support

Ariel Fontenot

Administrative Assistant

Lamar State College-Port Arthur

Statement of Editorial Policy

The editorial staff of EXPRESSIONS 2015 would like to thank all of the students who submitted work for consideration to EXPRESSIONS 2015 this semester. Unfortunately, not every entry can be published. In order to insure fair and impartial judging and publication selection, the copy without the author's name is sent to the judges. The judges at no time see the copy which identifies the individual author.

The purpose of EXPRESSIONS 2015 is to publish the best entries for consideration. We are proud of the entries published in this issue and appreciate the support of all students, faculty and staff who contributed to and enjoy the magazine.

As the editor, I will make changes to reflect correct grammar and usage to enhance each entry and the magazine as well.

Sally Byrd, Editor

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