

LAMAR STATE COLLEGE

PORT ARTHUR



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Expressions

Spring 2017

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Table of Contents

Short Story

Wager, Jeff	3
1st Place		
Cabrera, Rocio	7
2nd Place		
Davis, Arthur W.	.....	10
3rd Place		
Parker, Jonmarc	.....	14
Honorable Mention		
Davis, Arthur W.	.....	18
Honorable Mention		

Essay

Abel, Ryan	.....	23
1st Place		
Tamez, Brian C.	.....	26
2nd Place		
Anderson, Matthew	.....	30
3rd Place		

Special Essay Category

Torres, Raul	.....	35
1st Place		

Poetry

Garrison, Dylan	.....	39
1st Place		
Heileman, Earnest	.....	41
2nd Place		
Alvarez, Julian Alexander	.....	44
3rd Place		
Wager, Jeff	.....	47
Honorable Mention		
Weaver, Karlee	.....	49
Honorable Mention		
Horton, Ja'Kelon	.....	51
Honorable Mention		
Moreno, Clarissa	.....	53
Honorable Mention		
Harris, Nikita	.....	55
Honorable Mention		
Ashworth, Cheryl "Shay"	.....	57
Honorable Mention		

Book Review

Murray, Darian	.....60
1st Place	
Parker, Jonmarc	.....66
2nd Place	
Parker, Jonmarc	.....70
3rd Place	
Perez, Jose A.	.....74
Honorable Mention	

Literary Critique

Martinez, Chelsea	.....79
1st Place	
Tamez, Brian C.	.....85
2nd Place	

Faculty & Staff

Peeler, Robert	.....92
James, Caitlin R.	.....93
Judice, Michelle	.....94
Dickert, Gerry	.....95
James, Caitlin R.	.....98
Judice, Michelle	.....100
Lowe, Zebulon	.....101

Cover Art

Wager, Jeff	.....COVER
1st Place	
Garcia, Mario	.....9
2nd Place	
Rabbon, Shawn	.....21
3rd Place	
Moreno, Albert	.....33
Honorable Mention	
Sanchez, Aniceto	.....43
Honorable Mention	
Sanchez, Aniceto	.....48
Honorable Mention	
Garcia, Mario	.....56
Honorable Mention	
Chaney, Brittany	.....65
Honorable Mention	

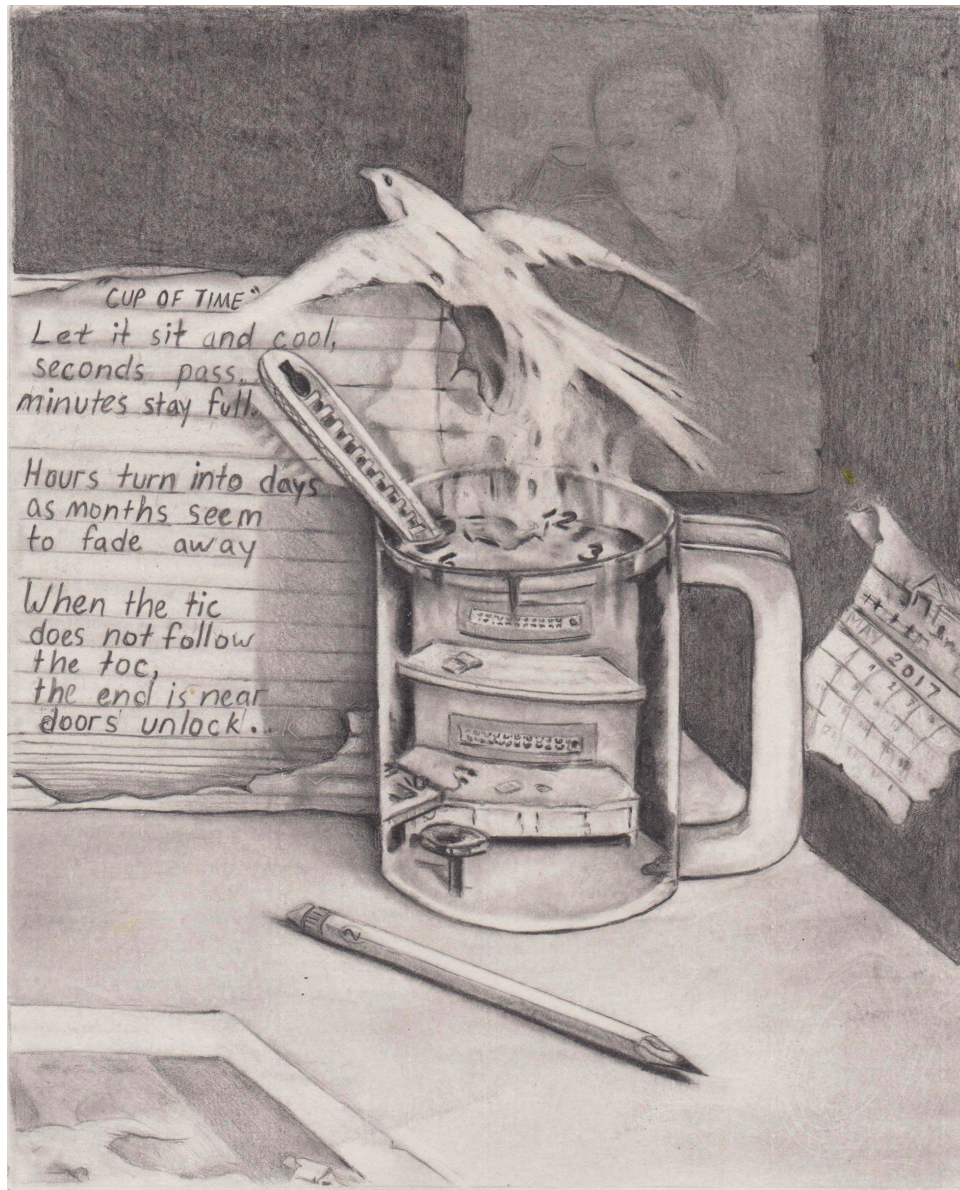
General Art

Garcia, Mario	.....1
1st Place	
Holliday, Clifton T.	.....13
2nd Place	
Moreno, Albert	.....25
3rd Place	
Sanchez, Aniceto	.....37
Honorable Mention	
Brown, Kevin	.....46
Honorable Mention	
Lopez, Alejandro	.....52
Honorable Mention	
Banda, Antonio	.....58
Honorable Mention	
Chaney, Brittany	.....69
Honorable Mention	
Rabbon, Shawn	.....73
Honorable Mention	
Thomas, Jonah Swift	.....77
Honorable Mention	
Wager, Jeff	.....84
Honorable Mention	

Banda, Antonio	.....90
Honorable Mention	

Photography

Galvan, Juan A	.....6
1st Place	
Figueroa, Jazmin	.....17
2nd Place	
Medina, Juan C.	.....29
3rd Place	
Medina, Juan C..	.....40
Honorable Mention	
Medina, Juan C..	.....50
Honorable Mention	
Weaver, Karlee.	.....54
Honorable Mention	



General Art—First Place

Mario Garcia



Short Story-First Place

An Abandoned Child

Jeff Wager

Tuffy was just eleven years old. I watched him cry. His mama had just explained to him what a divorce was.

“But why Mama?”

She hugged him as tears fell down her face.

“You’ll understand when you get older, okay Tuffy?”

She combed her fingers through his hair.

“Don’t ever forget that I love you,” she managed to say. The pain in her twenty-seven year old heart was more than she could bear. Her baby boy was crying, and she didn’t know what to do.

This made no sense to Tuffy. His world was falling apart. His mama cried when she told him she wouldn’t be able to take care of him anymore. She took him to a stranger’s house.

“This is your real daddy,” she said. “He will take good care of you, and I will come see you whenever I can.”

Tuffy held onto the car door-handle as she backed out of the driveway. He was crying, “Don’t leave Mama. Don’t leave me, please!”

She would not look at him. She could not look at him. She was crying too.

Tuffy believed he was an abandoned child. The words in his heart were loud and clear, “Nobody loves me.” Who was going to care?

Forced to live with a daddy he did not know, Tuffy decided he would refer to this man by first

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Forced to live with a daddy he did not know, Tuffy decided he would refer to this man by first name only. Time revealed two things about Mr. first name, Thomas. One, he worked all the time, and two, he had a mean temper when he was at home. Tuffy spent his time avoiding that temper.

Days turned into weeks. Weeks turned into months. This passage of time only made him miss his mama more. She was the only one in the whole world, who might still love him, but she hadn't come to see him in nearly a year. He was even more convinced now; the words in his heart were telling the truth. He was all alone.

Even with a new family around, he was alone. They tried to cheer him; but Tuffy believed that, if he allowed himself to love anyone like he loved his mama, he would be a traitor to her. That was something he would never be. Life was hurting his heart, and when his new family acted as if life was a good thing, it didn't make sense. Life didn't seem so good to him. He became rebellious.

He started doing things that didn't make sense. He became a "D" student instead of an "A" student. He punched the school principal. He set the school on fire. Right after he turned twelve, he burglarized his neighbor's house, and the judge sent him to a boys' home.

Tuffy had much to do in the boys' home: fishing, swimming, horse-back riding and, of course, he went to school. He also had to go to church every Wednesday and twice on Sunday.

I remember when he got baptized. His pain made me cry so deeply. He was an abandoned child. He wanted someone to love him. He cried to God; but God seemed so far away while the words in this heart were loud and clear, "Nobody loves me."

No letters, no visits, and no phone-calls for nearly a year - not from anyone; and now, suddenly, out of the clear blue, he received a phone call. Oh, he was so excited! "My Mama is calling me!" He ran to the phone as fast as he could run. "Hi Mama!" he said, as he picked up the phone; but the voice that answered back wasn't his mama at all. Nothing in the whole world could have prepared Tuffy for the question his "real daddy" was

fixing to ask, “Son, how would you feel if you didn’t have a mother?” I cannot describe the look of absolute loss that came across Tuffy’s face. I cannot describe the feeling of absolute horror that terrorized his soul. He was never going to see his mama again.

Tuffy had to go home for the funeral. Thomas had one of his truck-driver buddies, who happened to be in the area, to stop by and to give Tuffy a ride home. Tuffy’s mama was dead, and he had to ride home with a stranger. He stared out the widow, at nothing. There was a pool of tears in his heart, and he was drowning without answers, “Why did my mama divorce my daddy; why did she make me go live with Thomas; and why did she shoot herself in the heart?” He cried.

After the funeral, Tuffy was just an empty shell. It was as if someone had taken his little soul and wrung it out like a wash-cloth. He did learn to live his life with those unanswered questions, but I assure you, not even forty more years has erased the echoes of his recall.

Sometimes, late at night, he hears the echo of a child holding onto a car door-handle, “Don’t leave Mama.” He hears the echo of a phone-call. “Son, how would you feel if you didn’t have a mother?” He hears the echo of a hollow world as he stares out the window, at nothing; and then, he hears a gunshot. That echo of finality still fills my heart with tears. I just close my eyes in that moment, “It’s me Mama,” I whisper, “I love you,” and I cry.



Photography—First Place

Juan Galvan

6

Short Story-Second Place

The House in the Mountain

Rocio Cabrera

As Raquel and her family were walking up the steep, muddy road way, up the mountain, it was hard not to slip and fall. The road was narrow and slippery as snail slime, it had just rained and droplets still fell sporadically from the trees. They managed to walk about two hours and had seen nothing but mud and more road. The trees on each side of the road grew thicker and larger as they went up the mountain. The family took a slight break, glancing at the rain water streaming down the mountain onto rocks and hitting the zig zagged roadway.

“Bacaww!” said a rooster nearby, it sounded quite young and excited. Raquel quickly got up, ran, and her family followed. They reached a gigantic chicken house and far back they saw a house. It was old, small, and was formed like a block of cement with windows and a wooden door. Raquel was quickly passed up by her younger brother. His name was Greg, he was short and had long hair that runs down his glasses onto his jaw line. He got to the house and knocked on the door, but there was no answer. Raquel finally got there, and she went through the back.

“DAAADD!” Raquel yelled with fear. Her dad grabbed her and his son and turned them away. It had looked not only like a crime scene but more like if someone enjoyed opening a person up and left some remains. The body was not there, just the intestines and the liver with a puddle of blood. Who was killed? Why? And how? Raquel unhooked herself from her dad and kept walking, she was walking in a fast pace. As she walked she saw blood stains and some skin residue on the floor. She saw it with fear and her heart started beating rapidly.

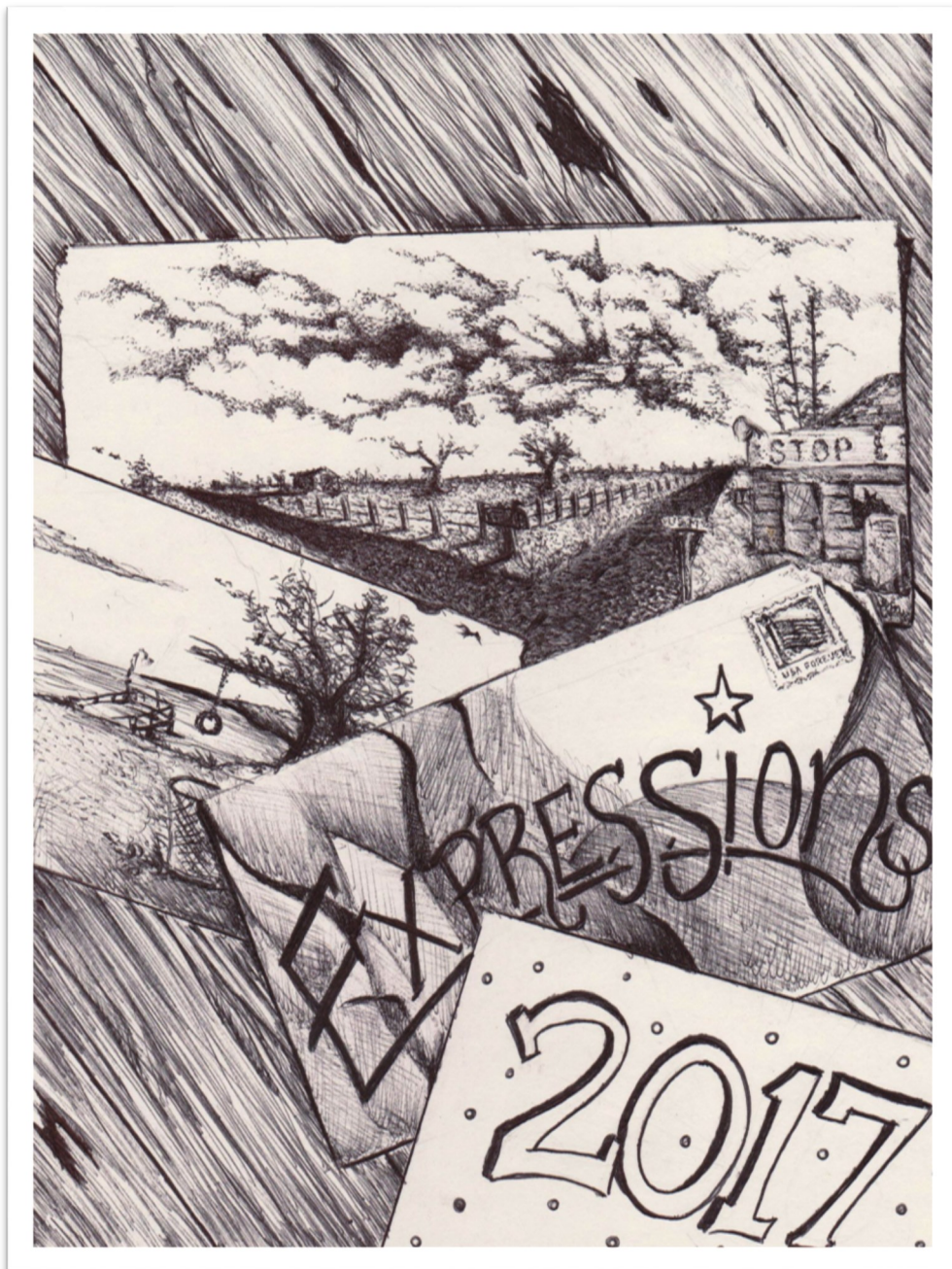
The father followed right behind and they followed the road, but the trail of blood stopped at a tall tree right next to the road. The father started looking at the tall, rough barked tree; as he was looking up

something fell off. In a ghostly fear he kept staring at the trunk of the tree, he managed to grow courage and look down. He saw his son dig on the ground as he was trying to look for it. Greg whispered in a feared voice, “found it,” a thumb. The father smacked the thumb off his son’s hand, grabbed him and told his kids to go back to the house.

They ran as fast as they could, passing up all the blood stains and pieces of flesh. They arrived at the house and went inside. As they went in, it was dusty, old, and the furniture was covered in white sheets. Raquel took the centered couch sheet off and a brown leather couch was underneath. “Wait... This couch, dad? I remember this couch” mentioned Greg. The father looked at him with sadness in his eyes and walked forward to him. He hugged him and his sister.

“I know you do...” said the father. In that moment they heard a big bang on the kitchen window, it sounded extremely loud like if a boulder came down and hit the window. The father looked at his children and said, “Hurry hide and if anything happens, run down the mountain, run down to the stream we saw earlier and dig, dig with all your heart, near the big rock.” The kids hid behind the couch near the back door as the father stood at the front door. The banging started to get louder and louder, and then turned into kicking and slamming. The kids slightly opened the back door as the front door slammed open. All they could see was a black shadow in the orange sunset as sunlight from the back was coming in the house. “GO!” yelled the father, and the kids ran. They got to the stream and near the rock, they dug with all their heart.

They found a blue box with a lock but the lock was rusty and it broke off. Raquel grabbed it and slightly ran her hand on top of the box and opened it. There were keys with a note. It read, “I taught you to walk for two hours, I taught you to never give up, and now I hope you taught your kids well, go down the stream do not be afraid and at the end, to your right, you will see a path way to the nearest town, I love you son.”



Cover Art—Second Place

Mario Garcia

9

Short Story-Third Place

Lost After Thanksgiving

Arthur Davis

After the fear of death, Thanksgiving leftovers offer a joyous reminder of what life has to offer. One of the best perks of working for the government would have to be the four day weekends that we received for holidays. Thanksgiving Day, November 25, 2010, was on a Thursday. This meant I had to plan an adventure to fill Thursday through Sunday, yet be home in time for work at 3:45 Monday morning. Being in California, I refused to waste my life away sitting at home. This weekend, my wife, Johnna, and I, were going camping in Big Sur National Park. I didn't know that this would be the first time to feel like I was staring death in the face.

Thanksgiving Day and Friday morning were fairly normal. On Thursday, I slept in late while Johnna was getting ready for the day's festivities and feast. When I finally woke up, we made a list of what we needed to pack for the following day, and what our prospective itinerary would look like. Once the ham was placed in the oven, we visited a few of my coworkers to wish them well. We returned home in the evening, and began to eat at 5:00 PM. After dinner, all fat and sassy, we began to pack for the trip. We filled the car with our tent, sleeping bags, food, water, clothing, and a multitude of other items. We wasted away the rest of the day dozing off in our food comas and went to sleep early. On Friday, we planned to leave fairly early, about 7:00 in the morning, for the seventy-mile drive to Big Sur.

Friday afternoon, we reached our destination, and quickly learned our plans had changed. The camp was at the top of a mountain in the Santa Lucia Mountains. Once we turned off Highway One and began to ascend, the scenery was beautiful. The enormous mountains, lush valleys, and the fact that there wasn't a soul in sight was tranquil. Almost at our destination, I spotted a tree that sat on another mountain peak and admired the beauty. It was isolated, and it looked incredibly old. This tree would later prove to be incredibly eerie and extremely dangerous. Finally,

we reached the campsite, paid the park ranger, prepared for a quick hike, and began to unpack our tent while there was still daylight. We quickly learned that the tent poles were safely resting at the bottom of our closet. As most young married couples do, we started to blame each other. After a myriad of awful accusations said to each other, we threw our supplies back into the vehicle. What once was a nice, neat package in the trunk became a disheveled mess. Without the adequate supplies for a camping trip, we descended the mountains and headed home. The lone tree makes its way back to my range of sight. "Johnna," I say. "If we aren't going camping, then I'm going to take a quick hike up that tree. There's no point in wasting all this time and not enjoying nature." She grumbled, "Hurry up. I'm going to sit in the car, read, and make some sandwiches." Those sandwiches would have been my first meal since Thanksgiving. Regrettably, I was in for an adventure on an exceptionally empty stomach.

The next twenty hours were bursting with horrible moments, cold weather, wet clothes, remorse, and a great deal of fear. The weather was beautiful, about seventy degrees. I was wearing a short sleeved shirt that read Smartass University, an Under Armor undershirt, and blue jeans. In my pockets, I had my identification cards and a knife. I decided my cell phone was unnecessary in the wilderness of Big Sur. Note: A cellphone is never an unnecessary item. I exited the car and began climbing up three consecutively higher hills to reach my destination. A bit out of breath and feeling accomplished, I made it to my destination. This seemingly ancient tree wasn't what I expected. There were three rock circles, a bit unearthed, that surrounded the tree in the fashion of a shooting target. Scattered around the base of the tree were bird skeletons bleached from the sun. The complete silence from the world that sat below us, the tree and me, and this macabre setting, I examined the setting in awe. Being a bit superstitious and an avid believer in ghosts, I made sure not to be disrespectful and refrained from disturbing anything.

After fifteen minutes of enjoying the scenery and silence, I started making my way down the hill. The incline of the land was steeper than I remembered. It was so steep that I had to start running to stay upright. I had to run until I came upon a valley with a stream cutting through it. At this moment, I realized I was lost. Instead of running into the road Johnna was parked on, I met a waterway I'd never seen before. I panicked. I made my way out of the valley's thicket, and climbed the side of a hill. I could see the small speck of passing headlights in the 5:00 dusk. I was screaming in that raspy voice one has when his adrenaline starts pumping, and his heartbeat is in his ears. It was no use. I was too far from civilization to be heard. I began to sweat. Incorrectly, I attributed this to wearing too many

shirts. I discard the Under Armor shirt. I slowly climbed down to the valley, calmed down, and started working on the plan to follow the stream to the Pacific Ocean. Very quickly, it became so dark I couldn't see my hand five inches in front of my face. I begin to walk with one foot on dry land, and the other in the stream. The splash of the water was a peaceful reminder that I was working toward salvation. I came upon a waterfall. To evaluate the situation, I found a heavy stick, planted my feet on the edge of the fall, and listened for the stick to was. I began to hear leaves rustle on the dry land near me. I didn't want to find out what was creeping beside me, so I decided to jump. I kept my knees bent, my arms above my head, and my back arched. I didn't want the impact of the landing to break too many bones. I slammed into the ground, fell to my right shoulder, and ended up soaking wet. I was more than surprised that nothing seemed broken, but I was less than enthusiastic of the dropping temperature. I began to shiver and decided that the best alternative would be to sleep. First, I tried to rest on the bare ground. This idea was less than beneficial. Fun fact: We can lose up to fifty percent of our body heat by sleeping on the ground. I found a tree branch and placed it in the middle of a thorn bush. Resting on the stick, I drifted away. Wearing a solitary short sleeved shirt, I had my arms and head pulled into the clothing. I would later learn the temperature of that night was thirty-eight degrees. I woke up at the break of dawn. With adequate light, I was able to pick up the pace of my expedition. Stumbling on a bit of luck, I found that the stream ran perpendicular to Highway One. I made it to the street, quickly explained my situation to a group of campers, and asked for a bit of water. These complete strangers were generous enough to offer me a cup and a gallon of water. I drank two glasses and set off down the highway. Not knowing the location of Johnna, I walked nine and a half miles back to the nearest gas station. I tried to call my wife, but there was no answer. My next thought was that, if required, I would walk the rest of the way home. After a bit more walking, I met a man who seemed to live out of his truck. With the very little bit I assumed he had, he offered me a sweater and a warm meal. Twenty minutes later, and a mile down the road, Search and Rescue would pick me up and bring me exactly where my adventure began.

Although I didn't know if I would ever make it out of the mountain range, I stepped out of the truck with a ridiculous grin on my face. This involuntary action, in a sense, aggravated my blubbering spouse. We make our way home. I then ate two large plates of leftovers and slept for sixteen hours. It is said that facing death changes one's perspective on life. I have to agree that it does, but with one caveat. Over time, the feeling of appreciation and happiness is ruined by the merciless hands of time.



General Art—Second Place

Clifton T. Holliday

Short Story-Honorable Mention

A Letter to My Younger Self

Jonmarc Parker

Dear Me,

Would it surprise you if I told you we are still scared 5 years down the line? Back when high school first started, we had thought everything was going to go textbook: We'd slide through classes handily, as usual; join basketball only to wait for it to finish; hang out with our friends for, what we thought would be, an eternity; we wouldn't worry about females because they'd come to us when the time was right. And as life would have it, nothing went according to plan: we were urged towards AP classes, which were the most stress-inducing times of our life; basketball became an offshoot on our path to fulfilling our real passions - tennis and computers; and our friends unfortunately came and went. Seems like everyone decided to split off and go their own way. Also, it turned out we didn't finish high school a dateless loser. Basically, my reason for writing is to let you know, we're doing all right. We're still makin' it. These last five years were unsure, but we made it. I have a lot to say, but not much time, so I'll be brief.

Your fear of the future does not leave. The fear is going to grip your being like a vise, and linger. Your every waking moment is pregnant with that very fear, even if it isn't at the forefront of your conscious mind. Sometimes, we're not even sure what we're afraid of. At this very moment, I'm terrified of what is to come. I'm terrified that I'm picking the wrong degree. I'm terrified about my grades. Hell, I'm terrified of the classes I SHOULD be studying for. Instead, I'm writing. We love to write. I hate that I love it, and I hate that I don't do it more. But we love to write. That fact is our sole gospel. Of all the uncertainties, that's the one surely we

carry with us forever. If it weren't painfully obvious for you to realize all throughout our K-12 education, I'll tell you this now: Write! If it also weren't painfully obvious, you have a swelled-head. All the way until high school, we'd been told we were an exceptional writer. We're still not as good as we THINK we are though. We never will be.

We're still afraid -- writing hasn't set us free. It's not a perfect solution. God only knows that we'll never find one of those. The thing we fear most for is our writing. Our writing raises the question "Am I good enough?" No matter what activity we're doing, our mind, which is self-intrinsically motivated, can't help but ask, "what if this isn't good enough?" I know, for a fact, that eight years down the line, when we're applying for the 4th straight time to a publishing house, or when applying for an internship to anywhere and anyone at all who will take us in, our writing still won't be good enough. And only in moments like those will we remember that feisty, fiery, "gregarious," red-headed English teacher that rocked all our worlds. She is handily the most interesting person we'll ever meet. Take notes.

She's quite possibly the oddest teacher we'll ever have. She was a Caribbean-born Indian, who grew up in New York and did life the only way she saw fit. She was a hippie when hippies were cool, and protested when waving around bras in the street were, well, cool. She ~~dragged her~~ graced everyone with her Elvis cut-out everywhere she went. I mean seriously, she has multiple shrines to Elvis; she absolutely adored him. She had so much to teach. And you're going to despise her. At first. But by senior year, you'll understand you owe all your writing to this 5'4" mass of absolute unshakeable, unwavering, undeniable terror. Seventy. Seventy. Seventy. Sixty-five. Seventy. That's all we saw coming back on our essays. Not ONCE do we ever get an A in her class. So much for your swelled-head. But it was through that failure that we learned to soar. And it was only when we hit that rock bottom that we could realize we had fallen. We were tempered in her hearth; we were the steel under her Hephaestus. She hammered our molten potential into a refined tool. She put any college course to shame. By graduation, the pen revealed it was happy to call us its friend: We passed the second English AP Exam. If that's not proof to stand faithful in your writing, I don't know what more to say. She taught us to approach writing as a lifelong friend; whether we liked Him or not, we'd have to deal with Him.

The bottom line is that when you're feeling down and out and have no other inspiration; when you're feeling like the knife is mightier than the pen after all, and embracing that metaphysical, romantic idea of

death is all that you pang for; when you want to dismiss life entirely. Just write. People testify about how religion brought them out of their Hell-on-Earth. Well, pen & pad is our prayer; Hemingway, our scripture; English class, our daily bread. We were meant to write, and I'd like you to know, even after all that's happened, we're still making it just fine.

Wishing you the best of luck,

The Guy You Hoped to Be



Photography—Second Place

Jazmin Figueroa

17

Short Story

Honorable Mention

My Orange Taco

Arthur Davis

Moving out of my parents' house prior to finishing high school, I didn't want any added stress. In October of 2008, Johnna, my girlfriend of three years, and I started shopping for our first apartment together. Needless to say, her family wasn't very supportive. Not only was it stressful for us due to the lack of support from her family, we were both working full-time jobs and completing our senior year at Port Neches Groves High School. After quite a few garish apartment complexes, complete with roaches, holes in the wall, doors that were unable to lock, and inhabitants that made us feel uneasy, we found the perfect one-bedroom apartment in Nederland. Quickly, Johnna would make our lives a bit more problematic with an animal.

Receiving a great deal of help from my family, we moved all of our belongings into the apartment and started making it look like our first home together. With all of our boxes sitting in our tiny living room, we didn't know where to start. Being the eccentric that I am, I didn't own a traditional bed. I slept on a pull-out mattress from a portion of a sectional couch. I didn't even have the entire couch. This was a one-armed love seat. We sat down on this tasteless piece of furniture and marveled at all of our belongings scattered around the room. Together, we felt like we were dreaming. Because her family didn't adore me, her home life wasn't easy. Johnna finally had a home she could feel comfortable in. We assembled our bed (her bed), lined our boxes along two of the living room walls, made sure we had clothes for the morning, and went to sleep. The next day would hold a furry little surprise for me.

Our lease explicitly stated that we weren't to have any animals in the

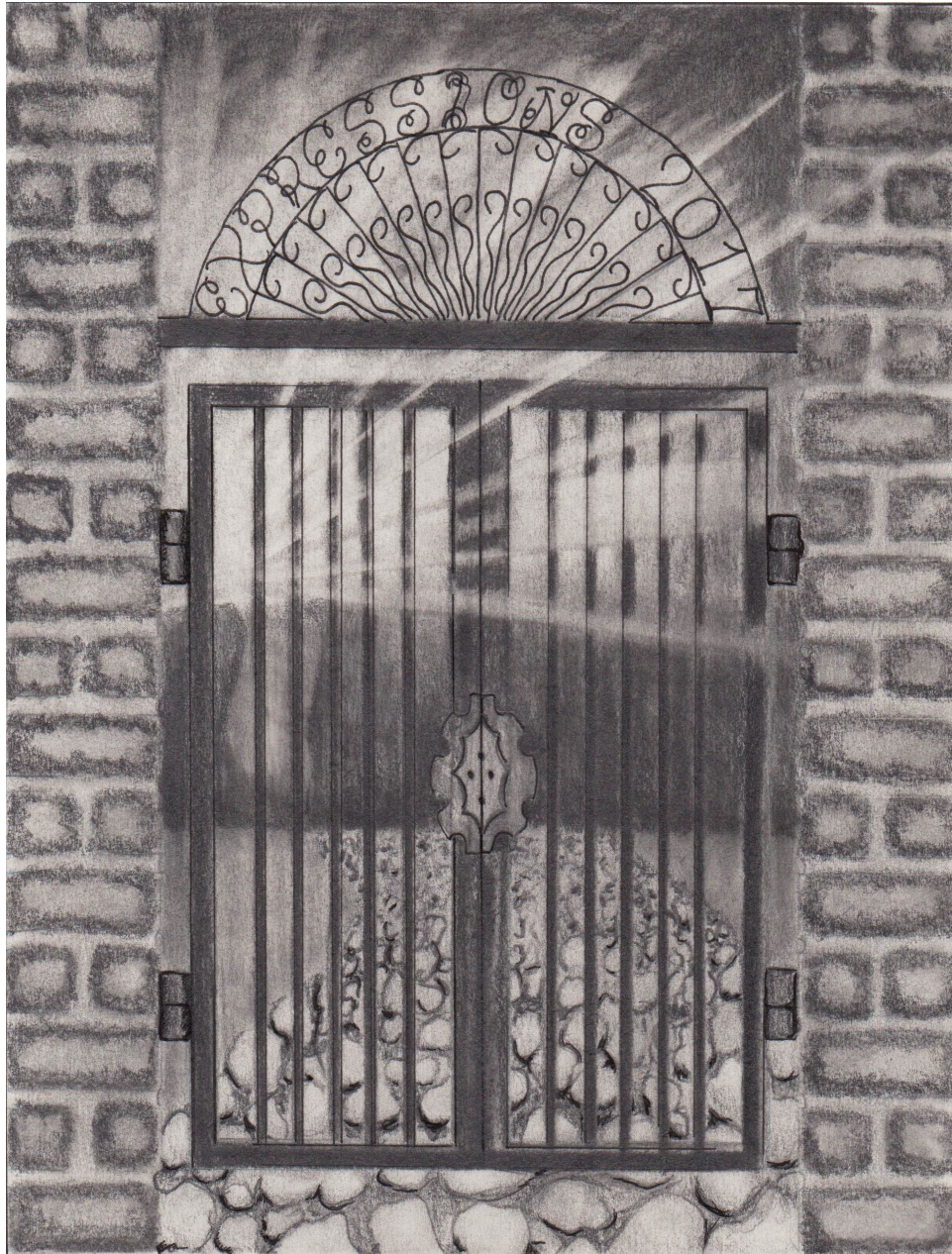
residence. We both knew this fact, but one of us decided to ignore it. After school, Johnna didn't have work, but I did. She rushed to Helena Street in Nederland, frolicked with fourteen tiny kittens, and decided to buy one, a small, orange cretin. Later that night, 10:00, I opened the door to our apartment and greeted Johnna. I knew she was up to something. She was sitting cross-legged on the couch with a goofy grin on her face. I stood at the door for a solid three minutes and tried to figure out what she did. I couldn't make an educated guess, so I began to make my way to the bedroom to change. I heard a meow that came from the closed bathroom. I asked, "What was that?" Johnna replied, "What? I didn't hear anything." I placed my hand on the doorknob and said, "If there is a cat in this bathroom, I'm sending you back to your parent's house." Johnna interjects, "You can't. You would never be able to pay all the bills on your own." She was right. I couldn't afford an apartment on my pay. I guess she would be permitted to stay.

I had to meet this creature. Finally, I opened the door and this adorable kitten bolted out of the door. I was in a state of shock. What made the situation worse was his first impression. He hid behind my stop sign that was propped against a wall and decided to defecate. I couldn't understand why Johnna would add another mouth to feed to our stressful situation. I refused to take part in anything that dealt with this burden. As a fact, I gain a respect for animals and people that are persistent. During this time, I seemed a bit aggressive and most living creatures would steer clear of me. This cat, which still didn't have a name, would not. He would climb in my lap, sleep at my feet in the bed, and followed me everywhere I went. After a week, I fell in love with him and decided he needed a name. I asked my nephew, Landon, what we should name him. This four-year-old child replied that his name should be Water. I didn't like this answer. Due to the fact that we had very little time to cook, and very little money to waste, we had Jack in the Box tacos for dinner. With this cat in my lap, and a greasy triangle with lettuce in my hand, I expressed my love for this faux Mexican Cuisine. Johnna looked at me and said, "What about Taco?" For some reason, I preferred the name Taco over Water.

When Johnna brought Taco home, she didn't know she was helping me on an emotional level. When I was about fourteen years old, I had a girlfriend, Dana, who ended up pregnant, a completely avoidable situation. My mentality changed instantly. I began looking for a career that I could advance quickly in, like computer repair, and started taking steps to withdraw myself from school. I was young, but ready to deal with the consequences of the situation. With very little input from me, she

decided an abortion was the best option for the situation. The bond between the two of us faded. Over time, I would agree that it was probably for our best interests. From that moment, I had a void that I filled with a great deal of hostility and chaos, like fighting and drugs. When I finally gave into Taco's persistence, he became my child. He filled the desolate part of my soul with an abundance of love.

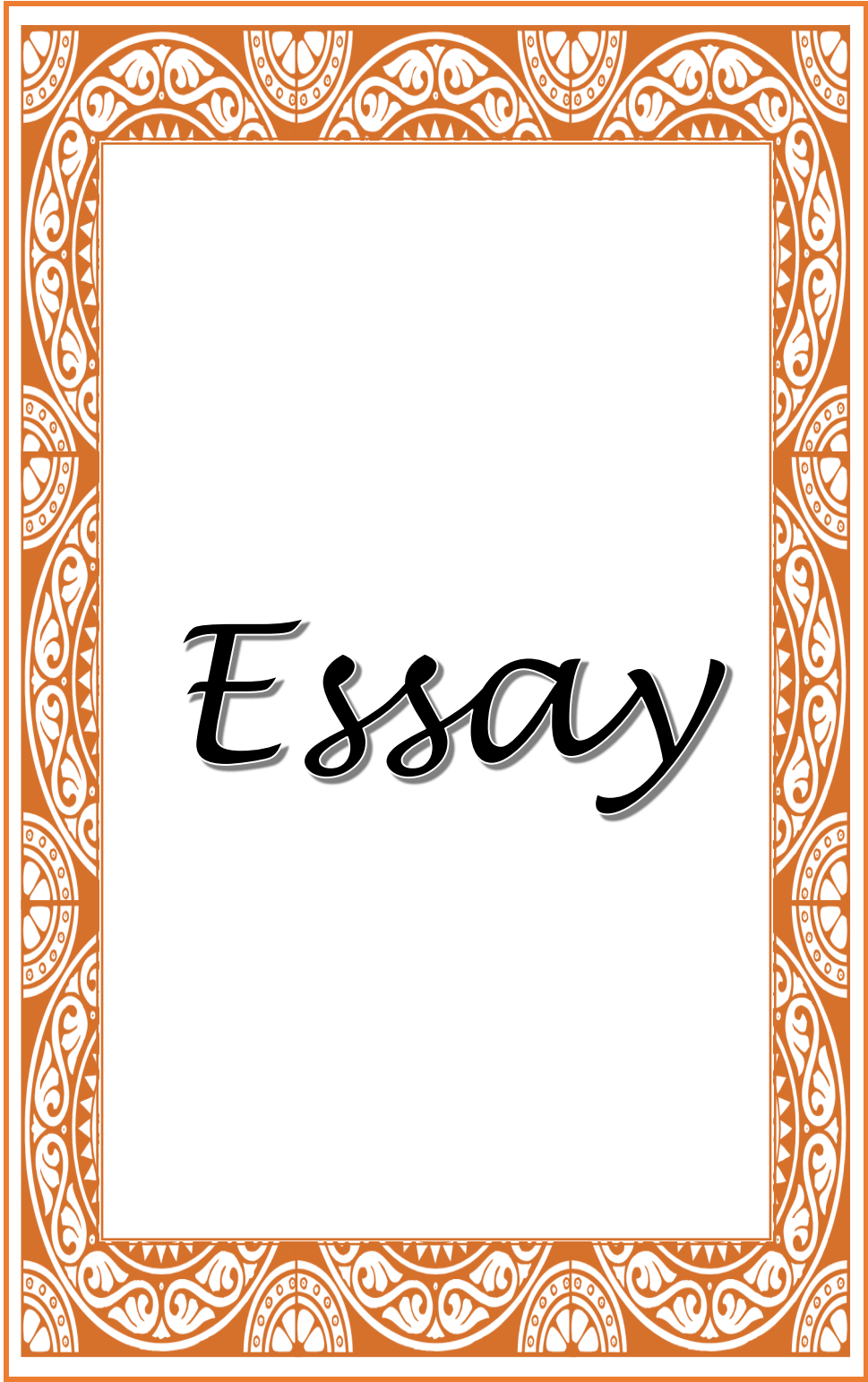
Johnna may have made our lives more problematic, and broken a few rules, but Taco became the most important aspect of my life. After the birth of my first child, Elidi, I still try to make sure he doesn't feel forgotten. This eight-year-old cat may be less energetic, but he is still an integral part of my family. Emotionally, I know I should have tried to seek professional help pertaining to the abortion, but my orange cat is the greatest contribution that helped me overcome that hardship. I am delighted that I was able to put an end to that emotional suffering prior to Elidi. I'm definitely a more competent parent than I would have been without him. The likelihood of spoiling and pampering my daughter, to an unhealthy degree, would have been high. Spoiling a cat has less of an impact on society than spoiling a child. Due to this, I can better assist in molding my daughter into being the best person she can be.



Cover Art—Third Place

Shawn Rabbon

21



Essay

Essay-First Place

More than a Memory

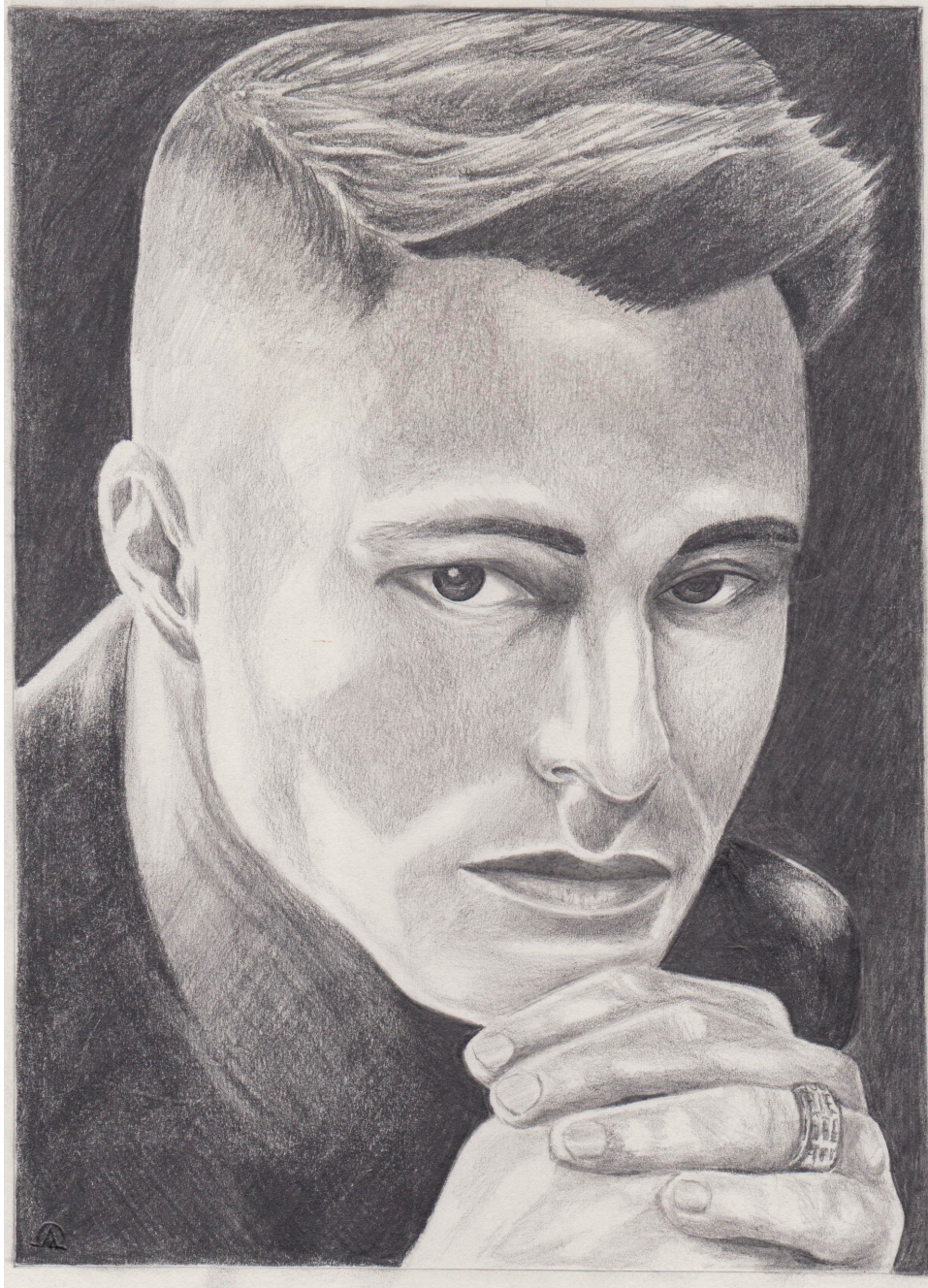
Ryan Abel

Only one hundred and five miles north of Groves, Texas, lies Toledo Bend Dam. As vast as the pines of the National Forest and as wide as human thought, this lake stretches over eighty miles long and three miles wide along the timber of east Texas and much of Western Louisiana, and remains surrounded by beautiful, richly colored willow and cypress trees most parts of the year. Toledo brings forth many opportunities for all kinds of people year round. What was once a secret, is now a living paradise to many Louisiana natives and Texans as well.

Lake life during the spring and summer is the most populated time of the year. Some weekends there are as many people on the water as there are in a strip mall on Black Friday. Early in the mornings the whine of boat motors can be heard across the lake. The motors send rooster tails as high as skyscrapers. Running lights are abundant across the lake before the large yellow ball rises above the horizon. All fishermen have the intent of catching the fish of a lifetime. The cool air rushing through the body is a thrill that never dissipates. As the day warms up, the beach goers take their turn on the water. Jet-skiers run nonstop throughout the day, racing and pulling tubes. Eventually everyone ends up in the clear water, searching for the cool spots that are far and few in between. The water feels much better than the base of an aluminum boat, which is like the skin of a cow that has just been branded. As the sun begins to fall, people head back to their camps to fill their stomachs, get some rest, and eagerly wait to repeat the task again tomorrow. The cooler seasons of winter and fall bring about much activity as well. Both seasons offer ample opportunity for good fishing as well as hunting. The cooling temperatures keep only the avid fishermen on the water. The orange, yellow, and red leaves begin filling the trees, but as quickly as they appear, they end up on the ground in many shades of brown. Hunters begin filling the piney woods in their camouflage

and hunter orange. These hunters are in search of deer, hogs, squirrels, and even rabbits. The other hunters are searching for the many different species of duck. They fill the sloughs, creeks, and flooded timber like soldiers on the frontline. Some mornings, the lake and woods are completely covered in fog. This makes it difficult for the hunters, but allows the animals to get so close they could reach out and touch them. Other mornings may be dead, the trees still as a deer in the headlights. The sound of a gunshot seems to travel across all of East Texas. This is what all hunters want to do: squeeze the trigger, watch the smoke roll out of the gun, and see their desired game on the ground. Thanks shall be given to Mother Nature for the opportunity. The lake is more than just the lake. It is the deep and dark depths and the variety of beautiful hardwoods and evergreens. As night comes, temperatures drop and fire pits bring light and warmth to the area. The lake is like a fire that warms all living things that surround it.

Beauty is everywhere, whether it is seen or not, from an eagle sitting high in a tall pine, to children laughing and splashing in the lake. Pictures are painted in the sky and also reflect off the water like the reflection of a mirror. Stars fill the sky like children cover a playground. Many do not get to experience this ever present gift of God, but those who do are drawn back time and time again. From the sky it may look quiet, but Toledo Bend is so much more.



General Art—Third Place

Albert Moreno

25

Essay-Second Place

Conquering and Commerce

Brian C. Tamaz

There are many aspects to the mechanics of our world. How it operates and why, is truly a matter of perspective, based on the amount of accurate information an individual has acquired. For the rich-elite, life has become a competition for wealth and power; for the not so fortunate, it is a mere struggle for survival. For the sake of attempting to be “politically-correct,” I will say that our world revolves around commerce.

Since the beginning of recorded history, nations have battled to maintain their respective territories; and some, a lot more than others, have strived to conquer, plunder, and control other homelands. Three primary reasons for this are for the possession of valuable natural resources, the advantage of strategic global positioning, and the exercising practice of enculturation. The combination of these activities play a major role in the affluence of a nation, and its success in the trading of goods and services, domestically and internationally.

Superior More Developed Countries (MDC's) have historically invaded poorer Lesser Developed Countries (LDC's). One of the main reasons for this is to obtain their desirable natural resources. Obtaining these assets enable the conquering country to prosper at home, and to more successfully barter and trade with other power countries that they were not yet able to overtake. From grains, produce, and livestock, to platinum, gold, and diamonds, materials such as these lead countries to economic advancement.

Another important facet of trading is the establishment and maintenance of strategic locations. Maintaining a stronghold near trade routes for effective and efficient transportation and protection of valuable commodities is imperative. These locations also make for prodigious defensive positions for related interests, as well for maintaining a military force of readiness. By maintaining a commanding presence in the subdued country, the

conquerors are easily able to manipulate and influence the poorer country's culture.

The practice of enculturation was of the utmost importance and must not be overlooked. When an MDC invades an LDC, it exerts maximum effort into breaking the backbone of its opposition's culture. The conquerors convert language, religion, and even race by impregnating the native women and introducing their genetic material to the fallen land. The invaders install their customs, values, and of course-forms of government. All of this bridges the gaps of understanding and cooperation that makes for better business (economic) relationships for the conquerors.

The superior countries eventually depart, and the "formerly" oppressed country believes that it has now gained its freedom and independence. How "free" and "independent" is a country that has to sign a treaty, in which the superior nation mandates several stipulations and obligations that the weaker country must abide by to maintain its independence? Of course, the bulk of these mandates directly concern wealth, valuable goods and services, and of course relate to commerce.

The "politically correct" would like us to believe that More Developed Countries would like the Lesser Developed to become prosperous as well. If this were to even happen, where would the rich elite of the MDC's relocate their sweatshops that capitalize cheap labor? They would no longer be able to drain the life-blood from the peasant countries by relieving them of their indigenous resources and cheap products.

The most valuable element of profiting from any product or service is sales. Globally, this is more easily controlled by, as we have previously discussed, mandating and forbidding particular business (trade) relationships. It is no secret that MDC's play a major role in this, which should shed light on to the reason why the "righteous conquerors" are so eager to "re-structure" the fallen country's government once they have wreaked havoc on their land. The MDC's ensure that the new governing body has their best interest at heart, to better access the collapsed county's wealth and valuables. Of course these "business relationships" mostly benefit the MDC, as it increases its wealth and trading power.

Money may make the world go-round for most people; however, if one looks at the big picture, we will see that is the possession and commerce of prized commodities such as platinum, gold, oil, and gas that truly keep the world in motion. The common citizen is at the short end of the commercial system, trapped in a never ending cycle of paying for even the most basic of life's provisions and or necessities. When it is all said and

done, the average person has lived a lifetime of servitude to wealthy individuals and their companies, simply for the sake of maintaining a comfortable home, nice means of transportation, and maybe to do some traveling, or obtain a boat.

When thinking about it, these lifetime achievements seem relatively simple for an “advanced” civilization.

This current system of commerce is great for the persons who are being paid and worked for, but sometimes not so great for the working party.

Currently in the United States we have some freedom of choice to decide where we would like to be in this system of commercial capitalism. The choice is for each...choose wisely!



Photography—Third Place

Juan Medina

Essay-Third Place

Debated Courage: Alexander Hamilton, Thomas Jefferson, and a Nation Divided

Mathew Anderson

Even though Thomas Jefferson and Alexander Hamilton were both Founding Fathers, they could not have begun to be any more different. They contrasted on not only political parties and beliefs, but also on personal values, and even their upbringing as a whole.

Thomas Jefferson was the United States' third president, and is overall remembered as being highly distinguished and well-liked. However, this does not mean that he was seen without opposition from citizens of the country and his fellow members of politics alike. A defining political trait of Jefferson's was that he was a Democrat-Republican, which is slightly different from the two parties we have today that share these same names. For example, the Democratic-Republicans were the traditional standard" of American politics of the day; it was essentially all our country knew up to this point. They sought to expand our nation's landmass, develop our entire society based around agriculture, and wanted minimal government involvement in the everyman's life. Jefferson and the party he represented felt similar to the Republicans of today's political world. "Federal government should not become entangles in the lives of its citizens; the less control on the people, the better for our nation." Furthermore, when it came to Jefferson's personal beliefs, we know that his political views mostly coexisted with his private life. He was extremely trustworthy to others, and also hopeful for the future and even expanding our nation "sea to shining sea" as the colonial song suggests. Not only did Jefferson have a traditionally optimistic view towards people, he also loved his family and held them dear to his heart, which suggests that Jefferson was a happy and loving man all in all. This behavior seems almost obvious after considering his background and upbringing though, as he never suffered a great deal when it came to his personal life or family. He was

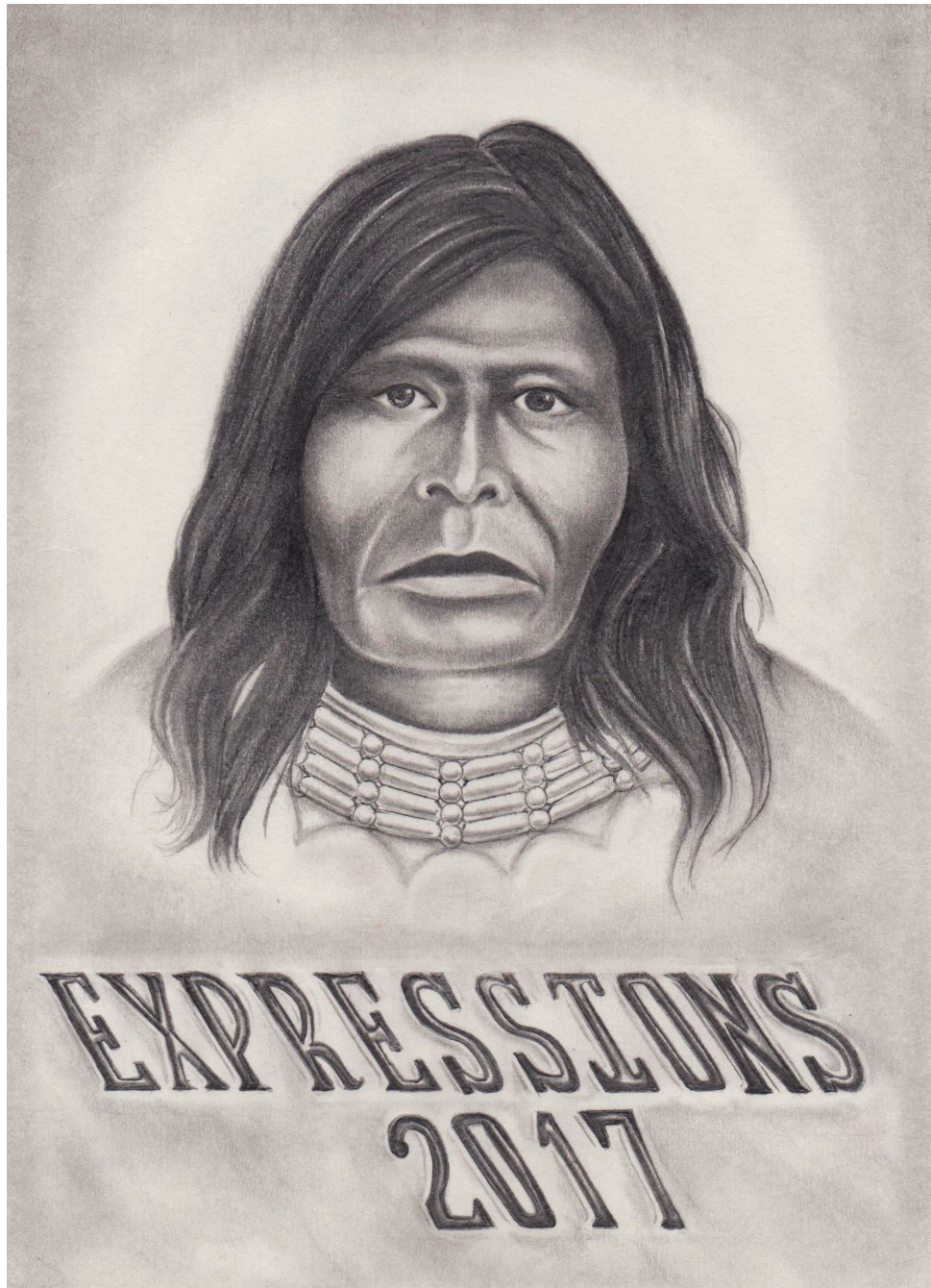
even allowed to go to an esteemed college, gain notoriety in the professional world, and had a seemingly pleasant life without a great deal of heart-break to “push him over the edge” as is so easy to do in this fragile world.

Alexander Hamilton was not a United States president, but he did, however, serve as the United States first Secretary of Treasury. Alongside Jefferson himself, he was George Washington’s “right hand man” when it came to political matters. Something that differs entirely from Jefferson’s political views is that Hamilton himself actually invented the Federalist Party. Not seen in action still today, a strong parallel to the Federalist Party would be a more liberal-Democratic plan. Hamilton personally viewed the individual citizen as untrustworthy (and even a little stupid), which is what caused him to create Federalism as we know it. He also loathed the idea of expanding our already troubled nation, which almost cements ultimate political failure during his time. Opposing the Louisiana Purchase was surely the most foolish decision he made in the world of politics. His views indicated that our country must rely on the power of the dollar, and encouraged banking and industry alike to flourish in our small yet powerful nation. Just as the same could be said for Jefferson, Hamilton’s political views and personal views were overall very similar. For example, Hamilton distrusted most people and decided to make his work his focal point. He lived for his nation, and no one else, not even his wife or children. Though he seems to be the “colder” of the two, his thoughts and criticisms towards the “average Joe” might make a little more sense once consideration of his background and upbringing in his life is taken into account.

Hamilton simply was not raised with the same “silver spoon” that Jefferson was given. Not only did Hamilton’s father desert him at an early age, but also two years later his mother died, and he was left alone to be orphaned on the relatively small island of Nevis. He soon after decided not to wallow in his own pool of self-pity and essentially taught himself most of the things he would need later in life when it came to government, and not so much human interaction. He later worked for a man of the law, and in four short years, owned the entire company for himself, which obviously tells us that he would grow to be an almost “elitist and bitter” sort of man.

When it comes to the grand scheme of our nation’s development and early years, we simply could not be where we are today without both Jefferson and Hamilton. Though they were entirely different people at their cores, they greatly respected the fire within one another and certainly also the hard work and dedication they provided for the American people. Jefferson was one extreme, wanting our nation to avoid banking and industry

at almost any cost. Hamilton loathed the idea of becoming an agriculture-first nation. He desperately wanted us to become a world power and a financial leader in the international market. I personally do not see either one to be greater than the other, simply two different sides of the same equal and just coin.



Cover Art—Honorable Mention

Albert Moreno



*Special
Essay
Category*

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Special Essay Category

First Place

How the World Works: Global Perspective

Raul Torres

Some people are born into royalty, others are born into poverty. The world revolves around no one. The people who run this world are the ones who took chances, those who strayed from the path that everybody else followed for years. One can have everything, yet feel like he has nothing. It is just how the world works these days.

Many people do not even know when they are going to eat their next meal. They do not know what a Lamborghini is. Equality? That is just a fairy tale to them. Yes, many of them try to better themselves; they try to escape from the horrors they live on a day to day basis. But the fact is, they cannot. A lot of people feel trapped, and the only way out for them is either through a miracle or death.

Money can literally make or break a person these days. Wealth might be materialistic, but being wealthy can buy freedom and time. I remember reading in my history books that the one thing every slave wanted was freedom. The Jewish people wanted to escape persecution from Adolf Hitler. Almost every problem can be solved with money when considering it. The problem with money is that eventually it can get into the wrong hands.

People become powerful with the help of money. Fame, friends, and everything in between can be bought with money. If one has a tremendous amount of wealth, he can go anywhere at anytime with anybody. Now *that* is true freedom. The one thing about wealth that many people do not seem to understand, is that wealth can be achieved by anyone. This also means that power can truly be achieved by anybody. Money can easily be compared to guns; owning a gun does not make somebody good or bad. It

all depends on the person who is in possession of it. However, money is the one thing many, if not all, people want to have. Money can even be linked to most of the world's problems.

Every country has its own problems. For example, the U.S. has a huge amount of debt that will hopefully be paid off in my lifetime. Developing countries like Mexico and Afghanistan are plagued with violence and poverty. Some countries have citizens that know nothing about other countries because everything on the internet and news is censored. Countries like Indonesia have many citizens that have never come in contact with someone of a different race. Luckily, the U.S. is home to many people of all races. History shows that the majority of immigrants that came to the U.S. came for a better life and a taste of something called freedom. It is crazy how history repeats itself, is it not?

The one thing about human nature that most people should know by now, is that we can never have enough. That is how we're programmed, we are always left wanting more. Some people might not agree with me, but think about everyone always trying to improve himself. Every day, people try to become smarter by studying, healthier by eating and exercising right, and even by getting surgeries to make themselves look better. Majority rules and most people work not only to survive, but to be able to purchase the things they like, the things they want. Are people being greedy or selfish by buying anything other than the things they need? I highly doubt it, it is just how the world works these days.

It is not about what one knows anymore; it is about who we know. The world has evolved from the days of sticks and stones. Face it; no one is born equal and life isn't fair. The world does not control life; the individual does. Everybody knows the "secrets" to living a long life, yet no one knows how to live a perfect one. In reality, the only thing that matters in your life is you. The body achieves what the mind believes, and I believe there are no limits to what someone can accomplish in this world.



General Art—Honorable Mention

Aniceto Sanchez



Poetry- First Place

Sonnet

Dylan Garrison

Why don't you just get in
And we can go for a ride
Drive through the city of sin
Where no ones demons can hide

You cannot run away
No matter how far, or how fast
The only choice is to stay
And see how long you can last

But when you have served your time
Completed your quests and deeds
All will seem just fine
Until you look further into the weeds

Be careful when playing cards with the devil
His playing field is never level



Photography—Honorable Mention

Juan Medina

Poetry - Second Place

My Story's Not Finished

Earnest Heileman

All hasn't been lost, in spite of my
Personally protecting my pride at any cost.
I now reminisce ponder in deep thought
These things after all these too many years.
Of hard driven guilt, yet-n-still my quest
For my physical freedom rings ever clearer.
The good the bad the ugly, the hurt;
Cry-ing. Then laughter my ultimate
Redemption begins now extends hereafter.
The chase is over reality is all up in my
Face right about now, Oh-it hurts oh! So
Good I got to love it, a sin by choice
Pleasure for a season, till exposure came.
Truly my sins have found me out.
My deeds where Evil before on all holy.
Sustainer of breath, life is in the blood.
In which I'm now covered I'm not the same
Where did I go wrong and how I suppose
I was weak when, I should have been strong.
As I reflect on my dreadful past I now can
Say, "I have grown fearless and strong.

I was weak when, I should have been strong.
As I reflect on my dreadful past I now can
Say, "I have grown fearless and strong.
The only fear is to be afraid is fear it-self.
I refuse to be and unfinished story
Placed upon some shelf complete.
Confined behind Bars of Steel iron clad/
THE NEW ME embrace the change I have
Faith my stay soon shall be shortened.
That I be allowed another chance to;
Fulfill my Dreams for a messiah fearing
Loving family, my freedom I can taste it.
Come rapture on early release, all I can tell
You is mentally I'm free in the bodily confinement.



Cover Art—Honorable Mention

Aniceto Sanchez

Poetry- Third Place

Time

Julian Alexander Alvarez

It keeps on ticking, keeps on taking
Keeps on taking, and never gives
It only takes from those who live
Those who have no more to give
Those whose life still run on it
And beats them up 'til they submit
Their life now virtually ended
But the their soul not yet transcended
Suffering the pain that it is to live
Through the loss of family and friends you did not wish to give
It keeps on ticking, keeps on taking
Keeps on taking, and never gives

It keeps on ticking, keeps on taking
Keeps on taking, and never gives
All the pain that it has caused
Any progress in life is not to be paused
Memories now are left to consecrate
Before they move on, before they migrate
All the friends that now are gone
That it shows no remorse for, makes their souls move on

All the friends that now are gone
That it shows no remorse for, makes their souls move on
But if there is one thing I have yet to understand
How do I deal with loss that is unplanned?
It keeps on ticking, keeps on taking
Keeps on taking, and never gives



General Art—Honorable Mention

Kevin Brown

Poetry - Honorable Mention

Season of the Fall

Jeff Wager

There are rolling beads of sweat on the brow,
environment and circumstance somehow,
time is taking its toll.

Is destiny part of selected flaw?
Leaves floating down, is it part of this awe?
All this we choose to know.

Struggle in the sun just to earn a dime,
angry clouds of thunder sneak in sometime,
this is a chosen fall.

Grief, suffering, and heartache come today,
although beginning was the springtime play.
Because we have a choice...

Because we have a choice...
is the season of the fall.



Cover Art—Honorable Mention

Aniceto Sanchez

Poetry - Honorable Mention

Late Night Munchies

Karlee Weaver

Late at night when my stomach gets to grumblin'
I sneak into my kitchen to put something in my tummy
Trying not to wake my parents, keeping the lights off, I start stumblin'
Oh, how you know I'm going to pick something yummy
Looking high and low through my pantry
Keeping the fridge open at a blank stare
You'd think I'd find something that my eye might fancy
Nothing caught my eye and now my stomach can hardly bear
Deep down yonder, past the big bowl of snacks
The package of cheese-itz was waiting for me to attack
Thank goodness I found them so fast, there was only one pack
Apples and oranges all sounded so wack
Crawling back to bed with my stomach satisfied
If I wouldn't have eaten those cheese-itz, I probably would've died



Photography—Honorable Mention

Juan Medina

50

Poetry - Honorable Mention

Roaming

Ja'Kelon Horton

The Lights above do shine like candles
Immensely void of life to light
We reach above in search of handles
To leave the Earth in weary nights.
Far they lie in empty space
A host of stars with Earthly features.
Dormant and awaiting the human race
For born we are nomadic creatures.
We seek new homes and plains to wander
A lesson learned on Earth of old.
Of resources to not vastly squander
For our consequences have been foretold.
For in our place of human pleasure
Our incompetence we did not measure.



General Art—Honorable Mention

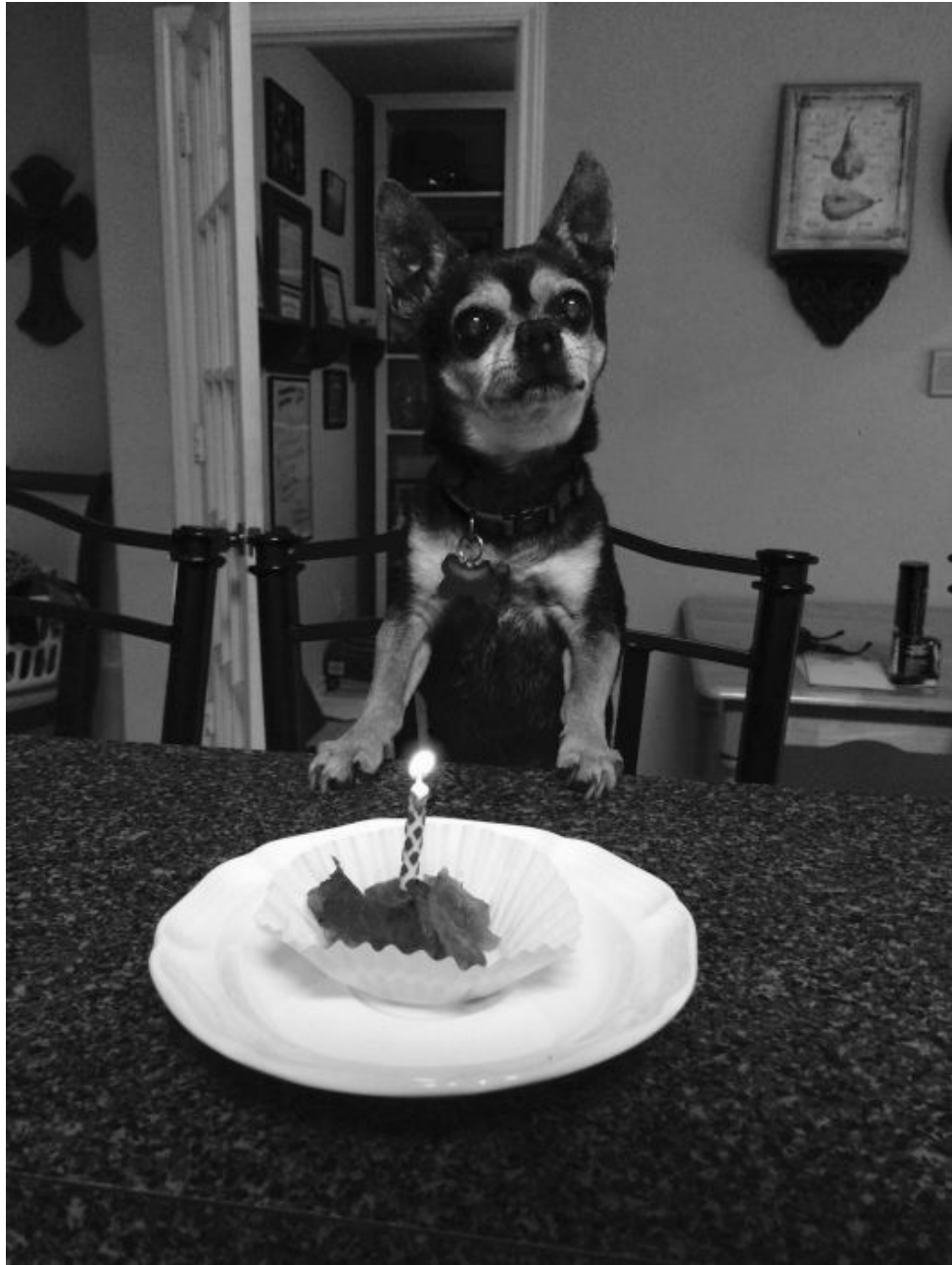
Alejandro Lopez

Poetry - Honorable Mention

She loved me, She loved me not

Clarissa Moreno

Her love was identical to a rose
If you admired too long the visible the drought.
You couldn't embrace her for the harder she pierced.
I discovered her beauty from afar
For her love would've never adhered to my heart.
She yearned for a touch, drowning away in it
And yet always she remained half empty.
She held the sunlight, dancing away with it
Still, she crippled your trust.
Her love wasn't infinite, for as soon
As the darkness lay await, she wilted away.
And that was where her love had boundaries
For she love me not.



Photography—Honorable Mention

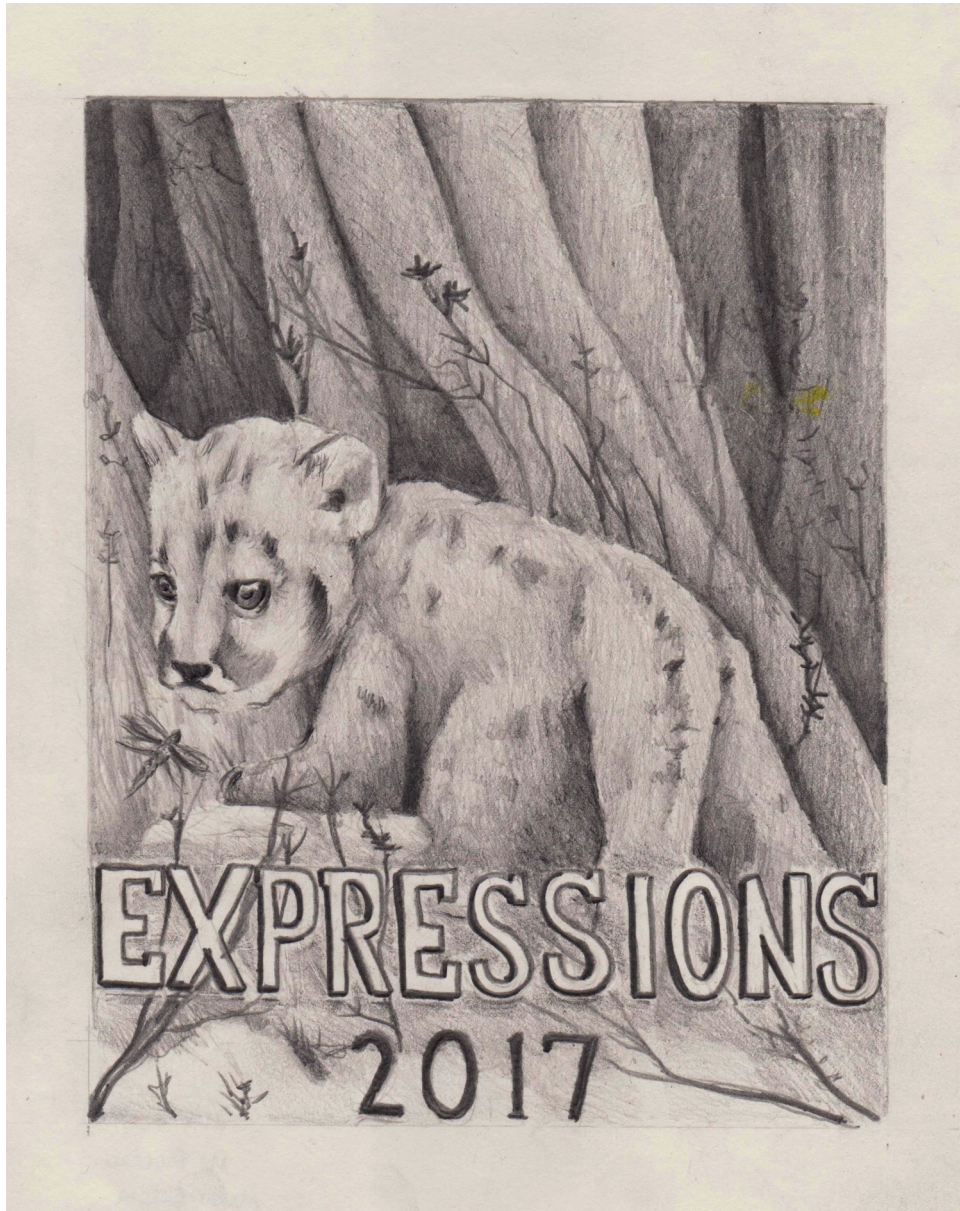
Karlee Weaver

Poetry - Honorable Mention

Sequestered

Nikita Harris

Stung by the wrong vibe
Awkward silences arise
Words resonate slowly or not at all
All sound that encompasses the air stronghold all awareness
There is a disrupt in meaningful communication
The Trickster has been unintentionally invited,
He creates his playing field
Your accounts of goodness are made credit less
Willpower is tested
The ego is misled into an abyss
A shock to the system ensues
From one pursuit to another,
Your projection to the world becomes an arrhythmic stutter
With scant amount of faith and hope,
a crime has been committed against the soul.
Welcome to the pit
It exists behind burning mires
It's where you learn the right dance,
or become engulfed in abasing flames of fire
To bail out and assume a new freedom
Is to learn the secrets revealed when before a mirror.
Long after the lesson is learned the Trickster,
may often help you remember
When sequestered
It is his domain you have entered



Cover Art—Honorable Mention

Mario Garcia

Poetry - Honorable Mention

From the Well

Cheryl “Shay” Ashworth

Life is given by the ink
From the well to the quill
In crisp, new pages it does sink
It is my heart that it does thrill

Spoken words are fleeting
But written it may last
Compelling verse keeps my heart beating
Its pace keeps fast

The story builds and peaks
To capture our attention so.
It is our interest that it seeks
The tale has mine and won't let go.

Literature is the key
And has already caught a hold of me.



General Art—Honorable Mention

Antonio Banda



Book Review - First Place

UNDAUNTED COURAGE

Darian Murray

Undaunted Courage: Meriwether Lewis, Thomas Jefferson, and the Opening of the American West. By Stephen Ambrose. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996. Pp. 13-484. Index, bibliography, notes).

In Undaunted Courage: Meriwether Lewis, Thomas Jefferson, and the Opening of the American West, author Stephen Ambrose gives the reader an idea of what America was like 200 years ago, starting with the original 13 colonies and ultimately Thomas Jefferson's idea of Manifest Destiny. Ambrose goes on to periodically list the process in which the United States gains information of geography, cartography, Indian beliefs and practices, and celestial observations, that inevitably lead to the expansion of America from the Atlantic to the Pacific. Ambrose writes not only on behalf of the most influential figures alive then, such as Thomas Jefferson, William Clark, and Meriwether Lewis, but also incorporates his own ideas and beliefs into the story. He does this in spite of whether or not two ideologies contradict. I believe that by doing so, Ambrose is given credibility, because it shows that he does not fear ridicule. Ambrose also does not hesitate to disagree with modern critics such as Paul Russel Cutright, who he often refers to throughout the story. This furthers the sincerity of Ambrose's story, showing that he will not conform to popular belief. I believe that with an author such as Ambrose, and a topic such as how continental America developed, it is inevitable that an inspiring account of the exploration of the American West will be created. Furthermore, Undaunted Courage, a story describing precisely how the American West was established, proves to be a story comprised of political conflict, as well as one of honor, pride, and ultimately courage.

As the book begins, Ambrose informs the reader of the primary purpose that Meriwether Lewis will serve, exploring the American West. Ambrose portrays this idea of exploration by proclaiming that "one could look out at Rockfish Gap, in the Blue Ridge Mountains, an opening to the

West that invited exploration.” (19) It is important here to note that by Ambrose specifically beginning with ideas of American exploration, he sets the tone for the rest of the story. After informing the reader of Meriwether Lewis’ childhood and his diverse background, Ambrose wastes no time in showing the reader that Lewis was destined for greatness. With stories of young Lewis killing vicious charging bulls, to dousing a campfire to prevent an enormous Indian raid, Ambrose ensures the reader that Lewis was discerned to be a leader at a very young age. It is, however, crucial to realize that every great hero has their Achilles heel, and Ambrose makes no attempt to dismiss the many unfortunate qualities that Lewis possessed, such as hypochondria and excessive drinking. It is imperative that Ambrose not hide these unattractive qualities of Lewis, because if he did, his story would be one of idealism, rather than one of truth. Despite these distasteful attributes, many would argue that Lewis’s impact and contributions of priceless information to America is one that cannot readily be compared, much less discredited because of problems that many people still have today.

As the partnership of Lewis and Clark begins, the reader almost simultaneously undergoes a feeling of adventure. After discussing Jefferson’s wish that “there might be a water connection, linked by a low portage across the mountains, that would lead to the Pacific”, one feels that all there is left to do is set out and explore. (55) Contrary to popular belief, and most unfortunately for Lewis and Clark, this was not the case whatsoever. After deciding where to delegate the amount of money they received for their journey, Lewis and Clark felt confident that they would be able to pursue all of the objectives Jefferson desired; the primary goals were to discover an all water route to the Pacific, and set up trading posts with the natives of the land, ultimately monopolizing trade not only along the Mississippi, but throughout all of future America.

As Lewis and Clark set off, they encounter countless numbers of new plants, animals, and Indian tribes never before seen. Ambrose proves again to be an author of perfect detail, refraining from excluding any of the crucial particulars of what Lewis noted, such as the “prairie dogs, antelopes, or white-tailed jackrabbits.” (166) While the initial months of their journey proved rough due to obstacles of “encroaching bluffs, islands, sandbars, and narrow channels along the Missouri”, the Corps of Discovery kept its hopes high. (140) Many critics today find it interesting that the men of the Corps of Discovery, who are alleged to be the “most fit for the journey”, run into difficulties such as these so early on in their conquest. One would imagine that these obstacles, now seemingly minute, should have been expected and avoided. Nevertheless, the frontiersmen for the

American West persevere through the beginning hardships, believing that they would accomplish any task that lay before them for their country. Of the many political obstacles that faced the Corps of Discovery, perhaps the most important was peace among the native tribes. Jefferson stressed above all things that Lewis and his men are to “make a good impression on the [natives] and make them into friends of the United States.” (170)

While the voyage proved to have many altercations with the natives, none prove more significant than that of the Sioux. After refusing to leave the pirogue after a night full of whiskey drinking, the chiefs of the Sioux were forced into the canoe and dropped off inland. The Sioux become enraged that the white men would not accommodate their needs of more whiskey, and the hostile scene of “bows strung” and the “lighted taper over the swivel gun” was captured. This altercation with one of the first tribes the Corps of Discovery runs into leads Ambrose and many others to believe that “the first meeting between the Sioux and the Americans had gone badly.” (171)

I feel that Lewis proved to be of short temper here, being ready to kill natives simply because of a disagreement, which is inevitable in politics. Nonetheless, as the Corps of Discovery continues to discover and note the many qualities of the country they hope to eventually claim, the going seems to grow worse. It is at this point in the story that the reader begins to realize the journey of Lewis and Clark is not one of hast, nor is it one of guarantee, for some of the men of expedition might not survive the voyage. I believe it is at this moment that most readers become riveted to the book, anticipating every turn of the page, and questioning what the next obstacle will be that faces the expedition. One rather interesting piece of information that Ambrose transcribes is that during the vote to explore the Great Falls, all members of the expedition are allowed to vote, meaning Clark’s slave and Sacagawea. Ambrose says that “it was the first time in American history that a black slave had voted, [and] the first time a women had voted.” (316). Prior to reading this story, I was ignorant to the fact that a woman, and much less a slave, were given the right to vote at such an early time in American history. This decision by Lewis and Clark show me the compassion and understanding that the captains possess for the members of the Corps of Discovery; it would have been easy for the two leaders to dismiss York and Sacagawea from voting, but they refrained from doing so, for reasons that are still debated today. In my opinion, I think that the captains allowed such actions to unfold in respect for the two “outsiders”, simply because they have made it so far into the journey. As the voyage comes to a head, Lewis and Clark are hesitant to admit in writing that “there was no all-water route across the continent.” (331) I think by being straight forward with Jefferson, as well as the public, about the lack of an

all water route to the Pacific, Lewis and Clark show their courage in acknowledging a fact that few wanted to hear. This act of openly admitting their failure in this part of the voyage, despite this goal being out of their control, further solidifies the strong moral character of the captains. After the voyage endures two painful winters and innumerable deadly situations, the Corps of Discovery return to the colonies with information that has created the foundation for the America we live in today. The men are embraced with a warm welcome, and the many burdens of paperwork and money are now replaced on the shoulders of the two captains. I find that the amount of stress and outwardly major problems the captains return to are completely impractical. These two men had just made the most informational and productive journey in the history of America, yet they return to issues of “Lewis [owing] some twenty-nine hundred dollars, exclusive of land debts.” (469) Ambrose incorporates this into his writing possibly because he hopes to show that even the most courageous and important men cannot avoid the responsibilities that tie him back to his homeland. Many believe that Ambrose does an excellent job at capturing the stress and anger Lewis feels at this point in his life. Either unable to contain his feelings of depression, or possibly because he felt he had reached his pinnacle of success, Lewis ended his own life. After two failed attempts at a mortal wound, Lewis “begged the servants to take his rifle and blow out his brains.” (475). Upon reading the tragic way in which Meriwether Lewis perishes, I was overcome by an intense feeling of sadness and disorder. After reading of Lewis’s suicide, I became deeply conflicted, wondering whether one should be happy that the life of Lewis was not taken by another man, or that by Lewis taking his own life, he deprived America of the many more discoveries he could have made.

Overall, my opinion of Undaunted Courage, by Stephen Ambrose, is that the story was thought provoking, and ensures that the reader will be left with a feeling of euphoria upon completion. I dare to imagine another author of Ambrose’s stature describing the events that led to the expansion of the American West, and highly doubt that another man could even remotely compare in depicting so vividly the events that unfolded on the journey of the Corps of Discovery. Although William Clark seldom suffered from internal conflict like Lewis, I feel that both men, upon returning back to the colonies, had satisfied their own expectations. While Meriwether Lewis appeared at times to be a ticking time bomb with a short fuse, I trust that the qualities that led to his downfall are what guided him through the American West. Many of the decisions that Lewis and Clark made, in my opinion, derived from the internal conflict that Lewis felt. If there were one piece of information that I could testify as being true, it

would be that Thomas Jefferson chose the most fit gentlemen of the time to shape America, and I believe that no other duo of men, that being Meriwether Lewis and William Clark, could have accomplished the enormous task with the amount of detail and attention as they did.



Cover Art—Honorable Mention

Brittany Chaney

Book Review - Second Place

UNDAUNTED COURAGE

Jonmarc Parker

Undaunted Courage: Meriwether Lewis, Thomas Jefferson, and the Opening of the American West. By Stephen Ambrose. (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996. Pp. 13 + 484. Notes, bibliography, index, maps.)

It was across two-thirds of America that the grandest adventure any American had ever experienced took place. This expedition was undertaken by the Corps of Discovery, or more popularly known as the Lewis and Clark Expedition. Meriwether Lewis & William Clark is one of the most iconic duos in American history, but in spite of that, their legacy is often brushed over in today's education system because it is deemed unimportant. That is ironic because this is one of the most splendid endeavors mankind has known. Stephen Ambrose sets out to change that in his masterpiece Undaunted Courage: Meriwether Lewis, Thomas Jefferson, and the Opening of the American West, in which he blends accessibility and loads of factual information into an exposition that redefines the courage, thoughts, and actions of the Corps of Discovery. Ambrose made it his mission to educate the world about what became his favorite subject. On a random visit to his aunt's house, he was loaned a set of the journals kept by men on the expedition; he was instantly enamored. Despite my distaste of historical subjects, the Lewis and Clark expedition, through the eyes of Ambrose, was an admittedly enticing tale of action, thrill, spectacle, and admirability. Regardless of its minor shortcomings, Stephen Ambrose's Undaunted Courage is the quintessential true account of the epic task a group of men bore on their shoulders.

It is important to note that Undaunted Courage is centered on the life and undertakings of Meriwether Lewis. Despite William Clark's vital role in the expedition, it was Lewis who was granted the authority of leading the adventure. Because of this, Ambrose dedicated this account to the life of Lewis, detailing every known part of his life. The story of Meriwether Lewis in Undaunted Courage starts in Virginia, where he was born and raised. He was neighbors to Thomas Jefferson, a key character in this "narrative." (I call it a narrative because I believe it to read just like a narrative). Lewis was educated by several different mentors in his

childhood before he went off to the military, much to his mother's dread. He came out the military rather accomplished. In 1803, Jefferson decided it was time for western expansion, and what man better for the job than his esteemed Meriwether Lewis. The mission was to find a trade route to the Pacific and to map out and explore the newly acquired Louisiana Purchase. Lewis brought along his old war friend William Clark and together they put together a band of soldiers, hunters, Indians, cartographers, and interpreters. The expedition, dubbed the Corps of Discovery, not only mapped out and explored the unbeknownst-to-white-man part of America, but they also made scientific discoveries in the fields of geology, mineralogy, botany, and zoology. They made relations with the natives, some going awry (Teton Sioux), some going decently (Arikara). Amazingly enough, no one section or field of the expedition was all patched together before, until Undaunted Courage. In this sense, Stephen Ambrose was an artist, patching together various things about the expedition into one concise, comprehensive narrative. The ultimate success of Undaunted Courage attests to how effective this amalgamation was.

Stephen Ambrose's strong feel for organization, entry-level detail, subtle humor, and commitment to detail all attribute to making Undaunted Courage the go-to book for both a classroom setting or for personal enjoyment. Ambrose's diction isn't exceedingly complicated to the point that it's a turn off for less experienced readers, making it very accessible to a wider audience: experienced readers, making it very accessible to a wider audience: hardcore historians have heaps of pure detail to enjoy, whilst amateurs can connect easily with the storytelling-like pacing. Another favorable trait, though few and far-between, is Ambrose's sense of humor. He's often found making jokes like: "At times, walking over the plains as full darkness came on, he thought it was all a dream. But then he would step on a prickly pear." This was humor, subtle enough to not detract from the information presented and keep the reader focused. Ambrose's humor was often overshadowed by his interesting, and highly stylistic, inclusion of careful organization; more specifically, his play on paragraphs. On page 216, Ambrose says "he [Lewis] stepped forward, into paradise," ending the paragraph right there. "Paradise" is a word loaded with meaning; it makes the reader wonder the sights that Lewis saw or how he felt, but promptly after, Ambrose follows with "not quite paradise." He'd give, then take, only giving to ramp up the reader's expectations. The way he structured his chapters are also worthy of note. Ambrose would organize the information to the point where it'd be the climax of a chapter building up, but then he'd end it right there, for instance, the ending of chapter eighteen, "From Fort Mandan to Marias River." They had finally reached the mouth of the

river, and as the day closed, so did the chapter, leaving the audience wanting. And finally, and most important, is the level of pure, unrefined detail layered throughout. Ambrose essentially plays the role of a registrar of sorts. He has gathered all the information previous Expedition works have excluded, or not found yet, and crafts it perfectly into this chronological story. The amazing part is that Undaunted Courage is all about Meriwether Lewis, yet Ambrose beats out other accounts solely of the Expedition. The information he relays is never polluted by bias or opinion. Sometimes he'll interject what he thinks about the subject in the footnotes, but the information is always 100% truthful – a sign of how much he cares about the expedition. Some would go so far as to argue that Undaunted Courage is to Meriwether Lewis as the Bible is to Jesus Christ. However, that is the book's biggest downfall! Ambrose will sometimes lay down fact after fact, with little analysis, so the chapters will sometimes feel like they are dragging. This is found quite often throughout, however, his stylistic devices often outweigh the slogs of information.

Personally, I enjoyed the read quite a bit. Lewis's untimely end and elegy made the adventure feel quite epic; A huge adventure tied up by the agony-laden words of Jefferson. Despite the unending praise Ambrose receives in this review, it cannot be stressed enough just how spectacular his speculative skills are. It is clear he has poured over this subject time and time over, the evidence being his ability to draw conclusions and speculate the party's actions and cognitions, similar to how a mother knows the thought process of her children. Experience. It is clear he was experienced in this field, so he deserves his title of undisputed writer of the Lewis and Clark expedition.

In conclusion, Stephen Ambrose did a spectacular job on Undaunted Courage. Widely respected as the go-to book on many recommendation lists, it has achieved notoriety as a *New York Times* bestseller, proving that any audience, learned or lacking, can enjoy history. It contains a comprehensive narrative that people with aversion towards historical subjects can enjoy. It is the quintessential book for the Lewis and Clark expedition.



General Art—Honorable Mention

Brittany Chaney

Book Review - Third Place

BOUND FOR CANAAN

Jonmarc Parker

Bound for Canaan: The Epic Story of the Underground Railroad, America's First Civil Rights Movement. By Fergus M. Bordewich. (New York: Harper Collins, 2005. Pp. 1 + 540. Notes, bibliography, index, maps.)

It is interesting what comes to mind when people are asked their interpretation of the Underground Railroad. The subject itself is not very comprehensively taught in most educational plans so it's not surprising to hear responses like: a subway system, a set route with definitive leaders, etc. Whilst only one of those are majorly off kilter (looking at you "subway"), it is true that the Underground Railroad, which we'll shorten to UR, had its definitive figures. Most famously known is Harriet Tubman and Frederick Douglass. Tubman can be named by just about anyone with an education above the 3rd grade. She's so influential for her actions that she was awarded a place on the twenty-dollar bill, something only old, white men have been given the opportunity to. Tubman was influential because she was constantly on the frontlines, planning, moving slaves, meeting with abolitionist to set up safe places, etc. Obviously deserving of her spot. This isn't what the UR is all about though. It's clearly amazing that the greats did what they did, but what about the ones who went unnamed? What about the ones who died trying? In Bound for Canaan: The Epic Story of the Underground Railroad, America's First Civil Rights Movement, Fergus M. Bordewich sets out to give names to the fallen, to put face to the less recognized, to not only broaden the appeal of the UR, but also to commemorate the brave "soldiers" who fought the good fight. Fergus Bordewich is an American-born author from New York, New York. He was born in November of 1947. Bordewich is an accomplished historian with multiple novels under his belt. Bound for Canaan is only his

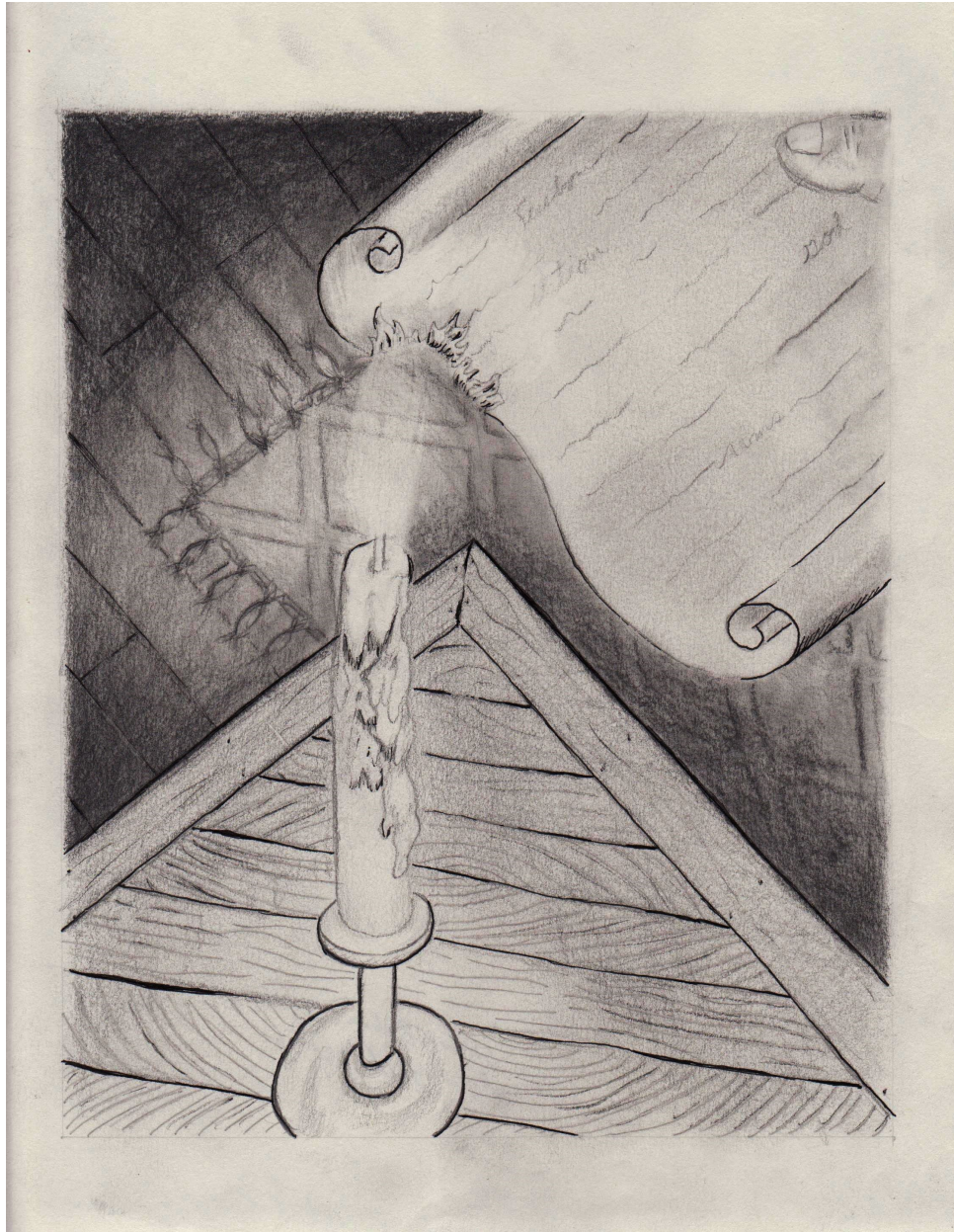
second most successful work, but he felt compelled to elaborate the UR extensively, and do it its justice. His primary literary device is his organization, specifically the way his stories are broken up. It really exemplifies the individual struggles countless slaves went through. Though Bordewich does a great job in including almost every facet he can get his hands on, every single nuance isn't necessarily a needed nuance. I think Bordewich's one fault, and it is only a perceptively breaking fault, is how in-depth he goes with the politics at times.

It should be noted that the white abolitionist was an obviously huge part of abolishing slavery. One of Bordewich's main themes is highlighting the fact that though it was a war of both abolitionist and slaves together, it was less about the abolitionist. Both the freed and enslaved blacks underwent extreme duress, both mentally and physically because of the situations they had to endure. Some had to leave behind family, others were made to betray fellow slaves, etc. Another thing Bordewich stressed was that though whites were abolitionist, they weren't necessarily unprejudiced. Bordewich makes sure to show his disdain for post-Revolution America. After gaining their freedom from Britain, Americans wanted to create a land based in equality and opportunity. Bordewich highlights this irony by reminding us of the Founding Fathers who still left black people out of the constitution. Whites didn't see abolition as the just thing. They saw it as the morally right, by way of religion, thing to do. We're reminded about how much of a moral dispute it turned out to be, what with the Enlightenment and Great Awakenings. Bordewich made certain to highlight the fact that though many whites helped African Americans, they still hated African Americans. The UR transcended racism though, because it was an obligation of faith. Or that was how most whites saw it. There was the rare abolitionist who wasn't a racist, one of them being Jonathan Walker. Walker was caught "stealing" slaves (what the law found harboring slaves as was "stealing"). He was caught and branded a "slave stealer."

It seems as if Fergus Bordewich made sure to push the politics on his audience. I disagree with this choice though personally because I find myself lost in unenthusiastic writing. Upon inspection of the writing style and the low-level vocabulary, it seems Bordewich was targeting the classroom demographic. *Bound for Canaan* won't enrich academics, but that's not what Bordewich set out to do. It seems a lot of children, depending on where they grew up regionally, have set misconceptions about the UR. Children from the North believe abolitionists helped slaves warmly, or with an open heart. False. Children from the South believe that the Civil War wasn't about slavery. Only half true. In my eyes, what Fergus

Bordewich did was hard to read, but it's raw and unrefined. Exactly like the Underground Railroad. Bordewich won through losing, and lost through winning. Quite the paradox.

In conclusion, Bound for Canaan: The Epic Story of the Underground Railroad, America's First Civil Rights Movement efficiently fulfills its mission of sealing any misconceptions students may have had about slavery. Fergus Bordewich also makes sure to stress the idea that the UR wasn't a solo effort. Everyone did their piece, albeit separately. There were no armies, no factions, no teams amongst slaves. Everyone wanted their Canaan, and everyone did their part in trying to get anyone willing to fight for that freedom *that freedom*.



General Art—Honorable Mention

Shawn Rabbon

Book Review

Honorable Mention

UNDAUNTED COURAGE

Jose Perez

Undaunted Courage: Meriwether Lewis, Thomas Jefferson, and the opening of the American West. By Stephen Ambrose. (New York: Simon Schuster, 1996. Pp. 13+ 484. Index, bibliography, notes).

In Undaunted Courage: Meriwether Lewis, Thomas Jefferson, and the opening of the American West, author Stephen E. Ambrose depicts possibly the "... greatest expedition ever undertaken in the history of this country" (Theroux, Paul). Starting by describing the events that led to Meriwether Lewis embarking on the trip and throughout, Ambrose was able to detail every aspect of it with the word use of the time and by using vivid imagery. One can almost envision themselves as being one of the members in Lewis' lifetime. By providing with personal information of Lewis, one can understand that he was the man for the job. Ambrose wanted to describe the voyage that Lewis made with orders from Thomas Jefferson to explore the new lands in hopes of more fertile soil and a direct water route to the Pacific, just beyond the Rockies. It was not an easy trip to make, but with Lewis' experience alongside William Clark (a former military man), Sacagawea and their crew, known as the Corps of Discovery, the journey was a success. This novel of Meriwether Lewis and his expedition was to describe what new lands he discovered with the Louisiana Purchase.

When beginning to write this book, Ambrose decided to start from the very beginning, maybe a little too much into the beginning, but all in all, everything led up to Lewis making the expedition. It was not an easy time for Lewis, but he did manage to pull forward. "When I recollect that at 14 years of age the whole care and direction of myself was thrown on myself entirely, without a relative or friend qualified to advise or guide

me...” (30-31). That is just to show how Lewis managed to do it all on his own, at such a young age. Eventually, at age 20, he was the head of his plantation, but with “ardor of youth and a passion for more dazzling pursuits” (36), Lewis found himself enlisted in Washington’s volunteer militia. He was just like most youngsters of his era wanting to follow in their father’s footsteps to join the military. His stepfather being in the army once probably had a much greater influence on his decision to volunteer. It was not an easy job for that time period to be in the army, let alone a volunteer one. Ultimately it served him right as he transferred over to the main army and was awarded with the rank of Captain, gaining much needed experience that he required. With time, he became Jefferson’s secretary, while attending to his studies. Ambrose also includes letters written by Lewis himself, mainly to his mother. Those letters just add to the arsenal of evidence that Ambrose has used to detail Lewis’ life. Once the Louisiana Purchase was finalized with French expanding the United States’ territory, Lewis and Clark with their company set off.

Of the Lewis and Clark story, probably the most influential character has always been their supposed Indian woman guide. A great romanticized misconception is clarified within this book. Looking back at history lessons as a child of Sacagawea that were painfully watered down. The story of Lewis and Clark mapping the new world with their female Indian guide. As it turns out, Sacagawea was a 15 year old pregnant wife of an interpreter that they acquired along the way. When further looked into, it turns out that she was one of only two slaves in the traveling party. She proved herself to be very useful and earned praised for it in the accounts given by the Captain of the party. During times of hunger she would find roots to eat. During the wreckage her own “husband” caused and panicked during, Sacagawea gathered all the small items floating around her. She was there to interpret through a painful “translation chain that ran from Sacagawea, speaking Shoshone to the Indians and translating it into Hidatsa, to Charbonneau, who translated her Hidatsa into French, to Private Francis Labiche, who translated from French to English”(277). She proved even more useful when the Shoshone were finally located and in a serendipitous event, the chief happened to be her own brother.

Among many other great accounts brought back to Jefferson by Lewis and Clark, there is the almost completely lost history of the Clatsops and the Chinooks. Here the author gives us insight of Lewis’ great abilities as an ethnographer. Lewis notes, “I think the most disgusting sight I have ever beheld is these dirty naked wenches” (338). Being a Virginia gentleman, having full sight of women and men’s most intimate parts was not a

sight welcomed by Lewis. He looks past it to give a real account of this people, such as the strange custom to tie the ankles of women to swell them, as they believed that to be beautiful.

Moving forward with less delay, they finally made it back and were able to report their findings. Ambrose states that even though the mission of finding a direct water route that connects the Atlantic to the Pacific failed, Lewis was a bit disappointed but nonetheless held his head up high.

Ambrose was able to put the reader almost as if they were in the story themselves in his way of writing about this epic journey. Detailing every aspect of it. After reading this, the reader could ask, “Who, if not Lewis, could have pulled this off?”



General Art—Honorable Mention

Johna Swift Thomas



Literary Critique

First Place

Jane Austen & Love's Experience

Chelsea Martinez

*"If I loved you less, I might be able to talk about it more."
— Jane Austen, Emma*



Jane Austen's works have touched the lives of people for centuries. They invoke emotion. Her novels at first glance may seem to be just fun pieces of literature, but they have substance. It has been said that, "Austen, like Shakespeare and Dickens—is achieving something of a world-wide diffusion... it is the creation of personalities—major and minor—who are fully individuated, who speak highly distinctive styles, and above all who persuasively represent highly possible human beings" (Bloom 2).

When one hears the name Jane Austen, one often thinks of her classic romance novels, but does one ever stop to wonder what the inspiration behind her works was? Austen, who wrote through personal experience, also wrote of the world around her.

Austen was an author during the era of Romanticism. Romanticism has been defined by Professor James as "a spontaneous overflow of

powerful emotions,” meaning many writers and artists of that time period believed in nature, beauty, freedom, and emotion. Jane Austen was certainly a believer in beauty, freedom, and emotion. She demonstrated a belief in beauty in each of her books, when she wrote her character Jane of Pride and Prejudice (who is an interpretation of Austen’s sister Cassandra). She wrote of the desire people have to be free to marry for love instead of out of necessity; each of her novels presents characters with strong emotions. Obviously, Austen certainly fit the time period during which she wrote.

Jane had many personal experiences she drew from for her writing. Perhaps the most obvious personal experiences she drew from were her encounters with love. It could be said that Austen always wrote happy endings for each of her protagonists, (*International Journal of Multidisciplinary Approach and Studies* 109) because she did not get one herself. When Austen was young, she fell in love with a young man named Thomas Lefroy, but their love was doomed from the start, for his family desired him to marry someone with money, which Jane did not possess. In Pride and Prejudice, Darcy attempts to persuade Bingley for a time, not to marry Jane Bennett because of the Bennet family’s lack of fortune. He admits this to Elizabeth in his first attempt to propose to her: “I have no wish to of denying that I did everything in my power to separate my friend from your sister, or that I rejoice in my success. Towards *him* I have been kinder than towards myself” (Austen 164).

Austen faithfully wrote for her characters to find real love and not just to marry out of necessity or for advantage. Characters she wrote that did marry for convenience or something other than love either regretted it, were a disappointment to the heroine, or left feeling melancholy. Austen was proposed to by a man named Mr. Bigg-Wither. She accepted his proposal at first for convenience sake, but changed her mind the next day because she felt no true love for him (Simons 1). We again see her use personal experience to create a memorable part in one of her novels when in Pride and Prejudice, one of Austen’s characters, Elizabeth Bennet, refuses her cousin Mr. Collins’ proposal of marriage because she wishes to marry for love. Later in the novel, Elizabeth’s best friend Charlotte accepts a marriage proposal from Mr. Collins. Elizabeth feels complete disappointment in her friend because she knows it is not true love. In the end, Charlotte is rather indifferent to her husband, but is thankful to know she will not die an old maid.

It can certainly be said that Austen enjoyed observing life around her and that she found material for her novels through these observations. There are many things she observed and gathered information from such

as the ways in which men and women interact with one another; various professions; and the necessity for money.

Often in Austen's novels there are married couples who are not suitable matches for each other (it is likely Austen observed matches of this sort during her life); these characters are never the protagonist, but they may be closely related to the protagonist. Austen uses these characters to further her belief that one should marry for love. In Sense and Sensibility, Mr. John Dashwood and his wife are shown to have vastly different personalities and the Mrs. John Dashwood is a terrible influence on her husband encouraging him not to assist his stepmother and sisters (7-11). Pride and Prejudice also lends an example of a couple stuck in an unhappy marriage through Mr. and Mrs. Bennet. It is mentioned that they are rather indifferent to one another, and Mr. Bennet encourages their daughter, Elizabeth, throughout the novel to marry for love. When Elizabeth tells her father she is in love with Mr. Darcy, he is very pleased: "Well my dear,' said he, when she ceased speaking, 'I have no more to say. If this be the case, he deserves you. I could not have parted with you, my Lizzy, to anyone less worthy" (324).

Throughout the history of the world one may perceive that when searching for a life partner men prefer faithful women; when looking for good fun they will seek out the flirtatious, bold woman. "Men preferred the long-term committed strategist (Jane Bennet) to the flirty Lydia Bennet for both a long-term committed relationship and a short-term relationship" ("Mating" 200).

Without fail Austen mentions many professions in her novels including clergymen, officers of the army, officers of the navy and sailors. Austen's father was a clergyman, which is a noble profession. Naturally, she wrote her observations of the profession in her works. Mr. Collins is a clergyman in Pride and Prejudice and in Mansfield Park, Edmund Price plans to become a clergyman.

Officers of the army are often mentioned, because it was a very common profession in Austen's day. Officers are mentioned at great length in Pride and Prejudice. The two younger Bennet sisters and their mother, Mrs. Bennet, all have an obsession with them: "My dear Mr. Bennet, you must not expect such girls to have the sense of their father and mother. When they get to our age I dare say they will not think about officers any more than we do. I remember the time when I liked a redcoat myself very well—and indeed so I do still at my heart" (24).

Two of Austen's brothers joined the navy at young ages and became successful officers (Halperin), so that is the assumption as to why that

profession is so often mentioned. Naval officers are mentioned in Sense and Sensibility with Marianne's love interest Colonel Brandon; they are also mentioned in Mansfield Park, and Persuasion.

Money is topic Austen cannot seem to avoid in her novels. She writes of its benefits and the cruelty of it. Money was certainly a benefit in Pride and Prejudice when Mr. Darcy saves Lydia and the entire Bennet family from ruin by paying Wickham to marry her. In Emma the protagonist attempts to educate a girl and bring her into a higher social standing, but this proves to be difficult because the girl, Harriet Smith, as Emma's friend, Mr. Knightly, points out: "She is the natural daughter of nobody knows whom, with probably no settled provision at all, and certainly no respectable relations" (58).

Clearly, Austen was a literary genius, both during her lifetime and even now after she is long gone. She made her characters believable, gifting them with flaws, trials and challenges to overcome, and real emotions. Growing up reading Austen's novels, I was touched by her characters, especially Elizabeth Bennet. To me, she is one of Austen's strongest heroines. She is a character of sharp wit and vivacity, she is proud but learns to overcome her greatest fault and admit when she is wrong, she is a loyal defender of her family, attempting to protect her sweet sister Jane from the pain of losing Bingley. All of these traits make Elizabeth Bennet real to me; she is more than just a character in a novel, Austen made her almost like a friend. Because of Austen's skill at creating characters, she has become one of my favorite authors. The way she wrote with simplicity is enjoyable. She wrote about the things she knew and did not overreach.

She gave true insight into the lives of people (women in particular) of the Eighteenth century. Austen demonstrated just how little power women of the Eighteenth century really had, they were not able to hold jobs, and they had no voting rights. The only way a woman could have a say in her life was to marry. Marriage offered women the security of a steady income, a roof over her head, and her husband's vote might give her some same in the world of politics if he believed as she did.

There has been a drastic change in our society since the Eighteenth century, but because of the way Austen wrote her characters, I not only understand what women went through, but I also have sympathy for these characters because they feel real. Their experiences weren't just words on a page. She experienced their struggles herself and made the stories come to life, emotionally connecting her audience to her characters.

Austen's works will forever be considered classics. It is a shame she died so young only leaving us six completed novels. I firmly believe that

had she lived longer, she would have taken the world by storm while she was still alive, but the few works we have live on. As long as readers continue to be captured as I have been by Austen's works, she will remain a classic author and literary mastermind.

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General Art—Honorable Mention

Jeff Wager

Literary Critique

Second Place

Objective Passion

Brian Christopher Tamez

February 2, 1905, in the unlikeliest country on Earth for supporting the concepts and aspirations of a resilient self-thinker, a literary icon was born. “Collective” communism was (and still is) prominent, and sacrificing one’s life for the sake of the state was the status quo. Against all odds, she pursued her dreams of contributing to man’s progress by standing up for the rights of the “individual”. At a young age she decided to become a writer and developed her own unique perspective of “objectivism” which was, of course, based on an objective understanding of reality. Her novels often featured bright, bold characters who represented the value of a talented intelligent persons versus the typical influential entities that represented the often imprudent interests of a misguided society. Immigrating to a “free” America from an oppressive Soviet Union, she saw the deterioration of American society, often caused by destructive collective influences. Through her writing, the author strived for people to recognize their own individual value. She undertook a life-long battle, urging people to use logic and reasoning when making life choices, instead of being swayed or intimidated by irrational social pressures. Challenging herself and the rest of the world with her views, objectivism not only sold spectacularly, it became a recognized philosophy.

Ayn Rand, screen writer, playwright, novelist and philosopher was the author of several inspiring and influential works from the 1930’s to the 1980’s. ‘Objectivism’ she described as “the concept of man as a heroic being, with his own happiness as the moral purpose of his life, with productive achievement as his noblest activity, and reason as his only absolute,” was her own philosophy and passion. Rand supported realism over anything and everything. She considered all knowledge to be based on a sense of perception, and considered reason to be, “the faculty that

identifies and integrates the material provided by man's senses." She rejected all claims of a *priori* knowledge or any form of "just knowing." Rand argued that the requirements of cognition determine the objective criteria of conceptualization, which she summarized in the form of a philosophical razor (Rand's razor). She was also a strong advocate for rational and ethical egoism, and argued that an individual "should exist for his own sake, neither sacrificing himself to others nor others sacrificing others to himself."

Rand's political philosophy emphasized individual and natural rights, and deemed *laissez-faire* capitalism as the only moral social system.

As a writer she considered romanticism to be the approach that most accurately represented the existence of human free will. She described her own approach to literature as "romantic realism." She is best known by two of her greatest works of fiction, in which she also implements her philosophical perspectives to illuminate her audience.

Ayn Rand's best known effort, and final completed work of fiction was her 1957 novel *Atlas Shrugged*. The plot involved a dystopian United States in which the most creative industrialists, scientists, and artist respond to a welfare state government by going on strike and retreating to a mountainous hideaway where they build an independent free economy. The (behind the scenes) hero of the novel and leader of the strike, John Galt, described his strike as "stopping the motor of the world" by withdrawing the minds of the world that most contributed to the nation's wealth and achievement. In the novel, Rand illustrated that without the efforts of the rational and productive, the economy would collapse and society would also crumble. The novel combined romance, mystery and science fiction, and contains Rand's most extensive statement of objectivism in any of her works of fiction. It also contains the core tenets of her Philosophy and expresses her concept of human achievement.

Atlas Shrugged was considered Rand's *Magnum Opus*. Despite many negative reviews and attempts to discredit her and her work, it became an international best seller and in 1991 the novel was named the second most influential book for Americans next to the Bible.

The novel was entertaining as well as enlightening; Rand did an excellent job of illustrating a distinct image of her philosophy. One who "thinks outside the box," and looks at "the big picture" of life's events would be more receptive to the message that the author delivers.

The completion of this novel marked a turning point in the author's life; it was the end of Rand's career as a novelist, and the beginning of her role as a popular philosopher.

Although not quite as celebrated as *Atlas Shrugged*, *The Fountainhead*, was the novel that first brought Rand fame and financial security. It also happens to be my first Rand read, as well as my personal favorite... which I will discuss in further detail. It is a story of collectivism versus individualism. Utilizing her rational perspective and a romantic motif, she captivated her audience with the story of a brilliant architect and his passion for life and his artistry. She chose to glorify skyscrapers in the novel because she felt that they were symbolic of both man's achievement, and of life on earth.

The story centered on its main character Howard Roark. Roark exemplified the author's concept of the ideal man. Although extremely personable and talented, Howard was expelled from his architectural school and refused to conform to the practice of designing the customary structures expected from his instructors as well as his future employers. He could not diverge from his chosen path, he knew exactly what he wanted out of life, and refused to settle. Irrefutably an idealist, yet, Roark made decisions that "he" deemed practical. Either loved or hated, he needed no one, depended on no one, and wanted no one. Possessing those characteristics, he was both a challenge and a danger to his colleagues. Roark signified the hunger, intellect, integrity, and value of prized "individuals" in society.

Due to his principles and methods, he was rejected by his peers. This occurrence demonstrated the baseless denunciation of creative minds in society. It was an example of how people make decisions and determinations without properly examining their subjects. Much of the time, society seems to be about as open minded as a programmed machine. Simply "going through the motions" and "with the flow," making decisions and performing tasks just because it is how it has always been done, not because it is the best choice or method of resolution. Often times there are ulterior motives and hidden agendas behind these activities. Prime specimens of this can be found in the characters of Ellsworth Toohey and Peter Keating. Toohey, Howard Roark's nemesis/supervisor represented the unfounded expectations and demands of the world's shot callers; and Keating Roark's chief competitor denoted the conventional second hander in society (people that attempt to live through others, placing others above themselves). Although an effective architect, he was eluded by the creative spark. Rather than producing works that were uniquely significant to himself, he merely reproduced and improved upon conventional designs. In opposition to Roark, Keating was quite ordinary, yielded to social pressures and lacked a spirited life-force that would have led to significance in

existence.

Howard Roark eventually departed from his esteemed career, assuming a humble position as a laborer in a rock quarry. In doing so, his actions conveyed the passion he had for his occupation. He was either going to create first-rate works of art, or nothing at all. In his laboring lowliness, his undeniable genius is finally recognized and supported by the aristocratic Dominique. Dominique denoted the author's concept of the essence of femininity (a strong, intelligent, and beautiful woman that is devoted to her male counterpart). She was also representative of society as a whole, rejecting the strong, bold, and eccentric until it recognized the value and brilliance of a person. At first, put off by Roark's unconventional conduct, she is eventually captivated by his strength and passion. Love and artistic expertise conquered all.

Roark's designs became a favorite in his field, yet he was faced with another challenge towards the conclusion of the novel. Again, he defied the expectations of his patron and society in his construction of a monument that was more symbolic of himself and man's achievement than what was demanded of him. This endeavor brought about a law suit which led to a dramatic courtroom scene where Roark delivers a captivating speech effectively communicating the essence of the author's passion and belief both individualism and objectivism.

Without entirely spoiling your experience (if you have not yet read the novel), it was a powerful story of the triumph of a brilliant mind and a courageous heart over unwarranted collective acceptance as well as mundane mediocrity. *The Fountainhead* was rejected on 12 occasions before it was finally published in 1943. Adamant about her artistry and beliefs, Rand refused to change one word of her manuscript. *The Fountainhead* has sold to millions the world over, and to date still sells over 100,000 copies in the United States-annually. That's pretty darn good for a book that allegedly would, "never sell!"

Ayn Rand and her works faced overwhelming adversity. Still, she refused to yield to adverse social pressures. She was passionate about her work, and writing was much more than just a means of supporting herself. Loved or hated by the world as brilliant individuals often are, her efforts eventually prevailed. As each year passes, interest in her work increases. It appears to take some a lot longer than others to step outside the box, and take an "objective" look at what is happening around them, and truly understand our reality. "There are two aspects of a man's existence which are the special province and expression of his sense of life...his love and his

art” (Ayn Rand).

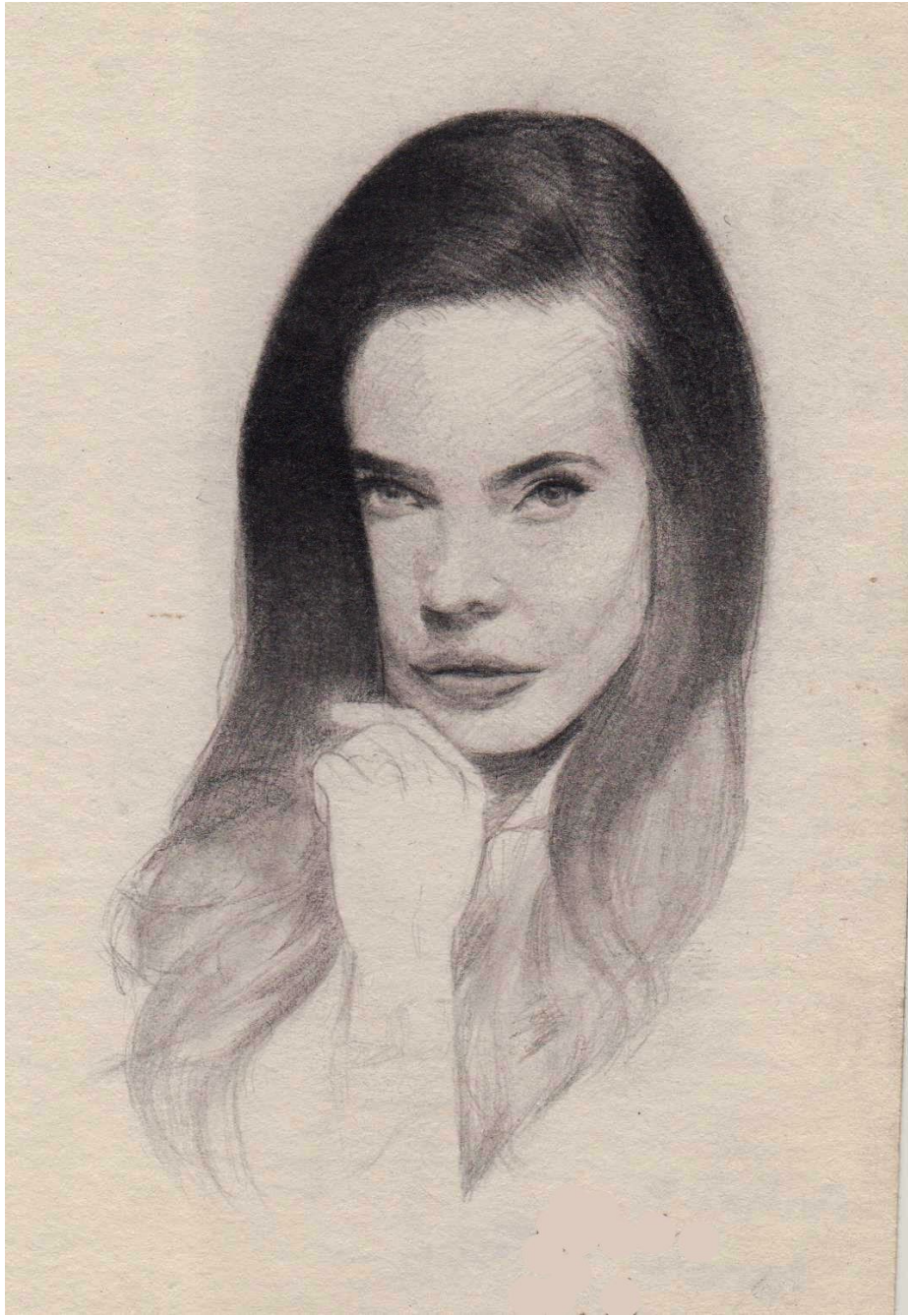
As aspiring artists, or simply as human beings, if we do not have, or even know what a “sense of life” is, it would behoove all of us to find out, and obtain one. Otherwise, we have to ask ourselves...what we are truly living for.

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General Art—Honorable Mention

Antonio Banda



Faculty
&
Staff

SEMPER PARATUS

Robert Peeler

Semper Paratus is a Latin phrase, meaning “Always ready.” It is used as the official motto of some organizations, such as the United States Coast Guard.

My Coast Guard career began after I completed active duty in the Navy. I had to serve six years reserve time to finish 10 years before I could join the Coast Guard reserves.

In the reserves we served one weekend a month and two weeks active duty every year. The first few years on the boat crew at Sabine Pass was very busy. We usually spent most of the time several miles out in the Gulf searching for missing boaters who failed to return when they were expected.

Sometimes we would be out most of the night, often in a storm with rain and heavy seas. Many of them had engine failure and some boaters would actually be out of gas.



CURVE BALL

Caitlin James

I once heard about a man
who was smoldered by a trigger-happy
grenade.

He listened to the sounds,
bodies fell like rain.

Cover your mouth because
no cry shall ring

When stones, like bullets
On the field of dying men sing.



Michelle Judice

UNTITLED

Gerry Dickert

Mary sat with her back to the old oak tree that stood near the edge of Old Man Taylor's cow pasture.

This is where she would come to think, ponder life and make decisions ... the big decisions. This was her sanctuary, her safe place. Somehow it seemed secret, even though it was right out in the open. Used to be that Mary could come here and truly be alone. But the little road nearby seemed busier than before, she thought to herself. Beneath the rustling leaves, she pulled her legs up to her chest, propped her chin on her knees and let out a sigh. Too soon she wouldn't be able to come here anymore.

Since she was a little bit of a girl, she would sneak away and come here, climbing into the low branches, daring to go only so high before hearing her mother's voice calling in the distance.

Over the years, she had come here many times, always alone. Her girlfriends at school talked about going to the "tree of love" for their first kiss. Mary shook her head at the very idea. She didn't have time for any boy's nonsense.

Standing up, she brushed the loose grass from her dress. It was really too cool for the airy print sundress she wore, but she had waited so long for spring to come and chase away the cold, wet winter. Besides, her older sister had gone into town as she did every day to work at the grocery store, leaving Mary alone with a closet full of fashion possibilities.

Mary turned toward the big tree and ran her hand across the rough bark, stretching up as high as she could, as if to reach up and touch a piece of the past.

For as long as anyone could remember, young lovers had come here to sit together beneath its green canopy. Holding hands, they talked about the future and wondered aloud at the depths of their budding love.

No one really knew who started the tradition, but over time sets of initials started appearing, carved into the tree's sturdy trunk. A young man in love would take his penknife and engrave a display of affection in the bark for all to see.

For some, forever did happen. Others would have to be careful to direct a new girlfriend to the opposite side of the big tree, away from last year's girlfriend's initials.

As time passed, the carvings made their way up the tree. The oldest carvings reached high into the branches, faded by years of rain and sun.

But couples would return on occasion, grey at the temples now, holding hands, sharing a kiss beneath the big oak as they did so many years before.

This old tree had withstood windstorms and floods, a drought back in the 1930s and a grass fire that swept through this pasture just two years ago.

Jeremiah Taylor owned the farm situated just off the main highway. He was a good farmer and knew his trade well.

As teens and young adults would come sit beneath his tree, he would give them a wide berth. No one really ever understood his patience with the whole situation. He would just smile, shake his head slightly and go back to his chores.

He could have knocked this tree down any time he wanted. Only he knew why this one tree stood while everything else had been plowed under over the years.

Mr. Taylor was well respected but not very well known by those few families who still lived in this farm country.

He sometimes worked his hay fields with his farm hand David. But Mr. Taylor was a stubborn man. Even as he grew well into his 80s, he insisted on doing things himself and often by himself.

One November afternoon, as he worked moving cattle from one area of his land to another, he fell. He spent hours alone in the frigid cold, unable to get up and get help. By the time David found him, Mr. Taylor could barely move.

Weeks later, his heart stopped. Pneumonia ended the life of a man who had survived a world war, a half-dozen children and the death of his beloved wife, Cynthia.

All of his children had moved on from small-town life to successful careers in the big city. So when the land their father had cultivated for so many years fell into their hands, they simply wanted to sell to the highest bidder. The new owners of Mr. Taylor's farm knew nothing of the "love tree" nor did they care to find out. Theirs was a business of progress and change. The grass, which had grown knee-high in the absence of Mr. Taylor and

David, would be covered over by concrete and asphalt. This is where the big city was headed. People wanted to work in town but still live in the country.

“Hey!” a squeaky little-boy voice yelled from across the field.

“Mary! Mom says you need to come home.”

As a little brother, Matthew wasn't so bad, Mary thought ...

“Mom said ‘NOW!’ ” he screeched.

... at least most of the time.

“I'm 16 years old. I'm a grown woman. I'll be there when I get there.”

Even as far away as he still was, Mary could see Matthew's eyes grow wide at her declaration of adulthood.

“Ooooh. I'm telling Mom!” he said, turning on his heels to dart back to his mother.

Taking a deep breath and slipping her sandals back on her feet, Mary began to walk home. She glanced back at the tree for a moment, then turned to follow her brother, picking up her pace at the thought of extra chores if he got to Mom first.

“Wait, Matthew! I'm coming!”

LITTLE DARLING

Caitlin James

Part I

I had the strangest dream this morning.
I dreamt I was sitting in the grass in my parents' backyard
And my hands were buried to the wrists in dirt.
Suddenly, I heard a tremendous sound,
As I looked down I realized my sternum had cracked open
And out flew a bird.
I watched as the bird took flight and hovered above me.
But the bird was a woman with wings,
And the gaping hole in my chest
Was now filled with grass and leaves.
The Siren was naked and she held a baby in her arms.
I panicked when I realized she meant to drop the infant from the sky.
But then it wasn't a baby anymore
It was a huge porcelain vase.
The vase came smashing to the ground and
Broke into a million pieces,
As I clenched my eyes shut to keep from going blind
I woke up.

Part II

The grass is cool
In my parents' backyard.
Cross-legged, we bury our hands to the wrists.

Oceans spilling into our hollow,
Sky echoes rain.
Clouds sweeping and dancing along the way,
A ballet of torment.
Cracking thunder ignites my chest,
My broken egg shell sternum-
Only a pit for a writhing bird.
The bird- a woman with wings-
Helps me fill the gaping tunnel where the heart once lived.
Smiling, bleeding, I am broken wide.
Caverns of rotting trees begging for the baby in her arms,
That little darling.



Michelle Judice

HAUNTED WATERS

Zebulon Lowe

The mist sleeps - low and thick beneath the night's
dampened lull of cranes and gulls that echo through
abandoned walls of pogie boats still left
clinging to the stale, faint smell of rust and sea.

I've come to know these waters well.

The boats move as young mothers often do -
slowly, to console a newborn child - rocking
from side to side in murky waters with care,
praying as the rivulets of marsh air sing
against the smoothness of their weathered sides.

I've come to know these waters well.

The moon's quaint, mercury halo is caught -
waiting for the sun to loose her from a cloud
of spider silk that snares even the night.
drinking in the silent rhythms life can weave,
still waters fed on death and broken light.
I've come to know this haunted water's wail.

I've come to know these waters well.



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contributors
and
Congratulations
to those
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Expressions 2017

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Statement of Editorial Policy

The editorial staff of EXPRESSIONS 2017 would like to thank all of the students who submitted work for consideration to EXPRESSIONS 2017 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 2017 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.

Caitlin R. James, Editor in Chief

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