



**Expressions 2023**  
**Lamar State College Port Arthur**



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# *Expressions*

Spring 2023

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## *Acknowledgements*

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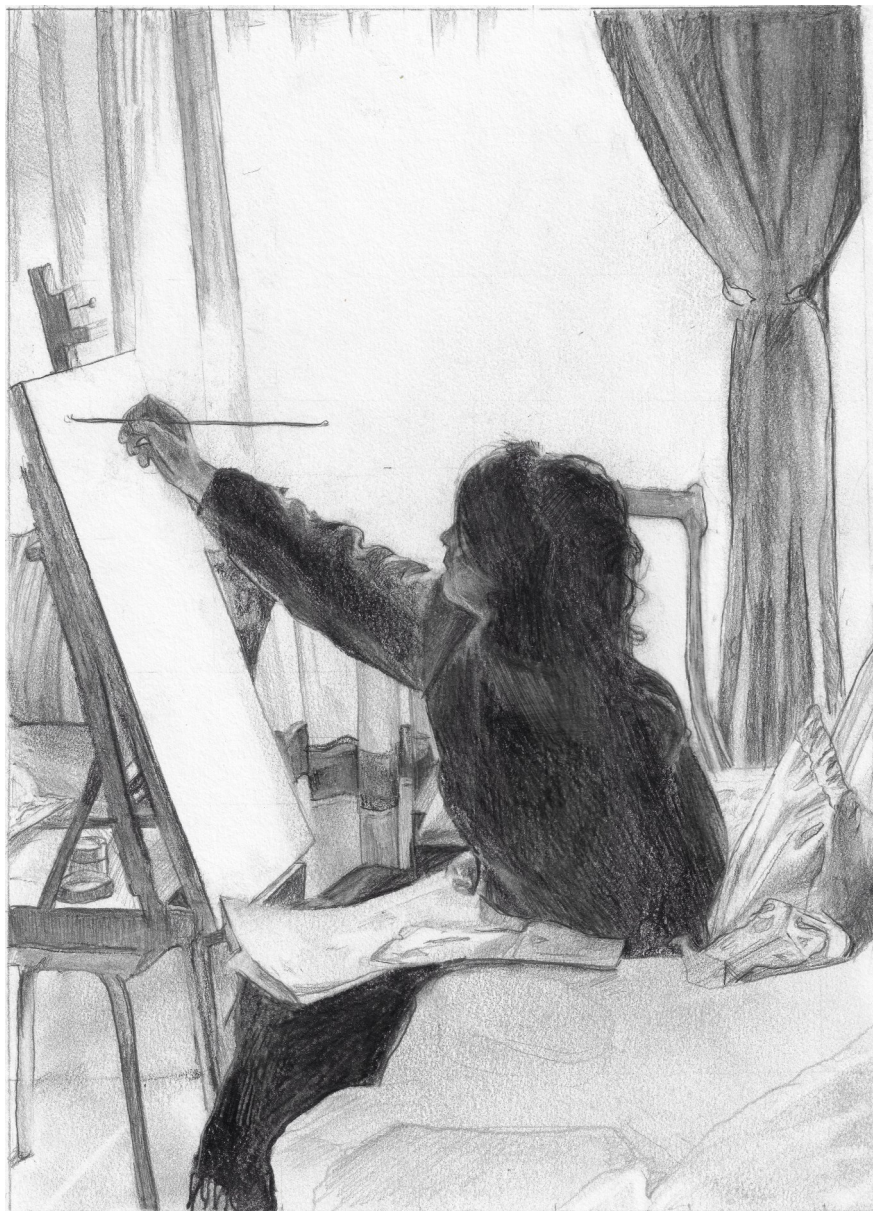
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*General Art—First Place*

Colby Robin

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*Short  
Story*

# *Short Story*

## *First Place*

### A Decision I Regret

Justin Holmes

I was awakened by the screech of the radio sitting next to my head on a nightstand made out of a recycled wooden pallet. After which, it was silent for what felt like an eternity. I was thinking I had just imagined the noise, then the radio exploded: “Nine line, Nine line, Nine line, Medivac, Medivac, Medivac.” I sat bolt up right in my assigned green army cot rotating slightly to the left to see the clock’s bright red numbers 9:17 P.M. Great, I thought. I am still first up medivac for 43 minutes, which means this is my call and I have to go, now. I sleep fully dressed and ready when I am first up so I can wake up to the call and run to the aircraft since our goal is three minutes from call time to wheels up.

I had just made it through the tan flap of our tent when I heard a voice saying, “Be careful out there tonight Holmes, it’s close to zero lumi.” I told her I would and looked up the closest Afghan mountain to see what all I could make out, which was close to nothing. I struggled to make it through both gates to the aircraft due to the darkness and the very large gravel turning under my worn combat boots. Once at the Black Hawk helicopters, I was ambushed by PFC Linder requesting to switch with me so he could crew the medivac versus the chase helicopter. I approved the switch without thinking about the experience level of Linder and his other crew chief under low light conditions. My failure to critically think about this decision would cost us all soon enough.

I jogged to the medivac to grab my flight gear for the switch.



“Holmes, what took you so long?” “You know Johnson, we don’t all live in the pilot seat, some of us actually leave the bird.” “Ya whatever, you’re still slower than my grandmother and she’s 102. Am I clear?” “CLEAR!” With this warning the auxiliary power unit roared to life momentarily spewing a large orange and white flame from its exhaust pipe. “Hey Johnson, I am going to switch with Linder for this flight since he wants to be in the landing aircraft. You good with that?” “It’s your call.” “Ok I’m going to pull the gust lock so you can crank engines in case he is not in time for it. Don’t worry buddy, I’ll be in the chase bird and I promise not to let you get eaten by zombies. If only you had saved me last night.”

“Fuck you, you lost that game! Get out of here so we can get off the ground.” When I turned around, I noticed the chase helicopter’s massive black blades were already starting to turn so I ran to it, passing Linder on the way. When I made it to the chase helicopter, I plugged my helmet in to let the crew know I was on comms. While the pilots finished starting checks, I set up my M-240 how I wanted it and checked to ensure the laser on it worked. Our job as chase is to protect the medivac helicopter since under the rules of war it’s not allowed to have guns on board to defend itself. “Look out Holmes, get in so we can make the call.” “Roger that sir, left rear pulling chocks and coming in.”

As I climbed in the window and buckled in, I could hear the calls being made. “Dust off command this is Liberator 37” “Go for Dustoff command” “Liberator 37 and Dustoff 12 are awaiting launch approval” “Liberator 37 you are approved for launch, heading 179” “Roger, approved for launch heading 179” “Dust off 12 internal” “Ya we got it Matt, approved, 179” “Hey Matt, do us a favor and tell Holmes with you we all agreed he’s still slower than my grandmother.” “Ya, I did notice he was slow” “Man, fuck you guys” “I guess he heard” “Okay everyone, we are off” “Wheels up 21:21.” As we picked up and crossed the ugly brown-gray besco buriers into enemy territory all games were replaced with the reality that we only get called when someone on our side is in critical condition.

“What are we looking at, Matt?” “They say two Americans and one Italian are critical after a daisy chained improvised explosive device went off destroying seven vehicles in their Joint Mission

Convoy. They were a part of that four-day operation in the east. I understand other than these three they have twelve more dead and almost thirty with smaller injuries.” “Sounds like they took a hard hit, how long until we are on scene and what’s the enemy report?” “We are about ten miles out now Homes, and we have no information yet on enemy in the area but we will put them on comm when we are five miles out. Their call sign is Crow 08.” “Roger” For the next six minutes it was rather quiet.

We were just two Black Hawk helicopters flying as fast as possible to a blue blip on our G.P.S. As we made it closer, Crow 08 said they believed all enemy had left the area and they would pop yellow smoke to mark the landing zone when we were one minute out. To be honest, the smoke was a waste. We were still four minutes out and I could clearly make out the fire that was engulfing multiple vehicles along with the long fingers of black smoke pouring off the fire’s tips.

Above the scene I could make out at least seven twisted metal lumps on fire. Try as I might, I could not identify what they had previously been. “I have site of our pick up at 2 o’clock sir” “Roger that Holmes, confirm visual” “Dustoff to Liberator” “Go for Liberator” “We are going in for pick up” “Roger that, call back down and safe.” “Wilco” “Holmes, you have eyes on them?” “Roger, I have them at our 9 o’clock, they are picking up a lot of dust” “Dustoff is go around, go around, go around” “Liberator has visual, Dustoff is go around” “Dustoff clear” “Matt this stuff is like moon dust, it picks up fast and we all lost site of the ground. We are going to let it clear out a bit and try again.” “Roger that, let’s be safe guys.”

We completed two traffic patterns and got the call Dust off was going to try pick up again. I watched them go down to land for a second time. They disappeared below a huge cloud of dust before calling another emergency go around. After completing a few more traffic patterns to let the dust clear out again, our medivac crew was determined they would land this time. I watched them going in to land for the third time. Slowly the dust swallowed them until all I could see was the sparks of static from the dust against the main rotor blades, then I could see nothing but a suffocating dark whitish-tan dust.

“Sir, I have lost visual and I have not heard their down and safe call.” “Liberator to Dustoff.” We continued to circle above the massive dust close to ensure their safety from the Taliban fighters who may be in the area. “Liberator to Dustoff” “I got nothing, do you have visual on them yet Holmes?” “Negative, still waiting for the dust to clear for verification.” “Liberator to Dustoff,” I continued to look into the dark dust cloud trying to will it away. I was praying to see them sitting on the ground safe waiting for their pick up. The first thing I saw was a long jet-black line across the whitish-tan ground that was uncovered as the cloud of dust slowly dissipated. I did not inform my crew of this since I was not sure if what I saw as a part of the medivac due to the low light. As more and more dust created out, I could see a growing number of black dots scattered across the ground.

The dust thinned and I felt sick as I finally saw the buckled cabin of Dustoff 12.” “Holy shit, Matt they balled it up!” “What?” “They fucking crashed, we got to get them off the ground!” “Ok I have to call this in, Holmes and David you are now weapons free. I am ordering you to kill anything within 1,000 meters of that crash site.” “Liberator 37 to Dustoff command” “Go for Dustoff Command” “Dustoff Command we have fallen angel” “Confirm Dustoff 12 element is fallen angel” “That’s confirmed, Liberator 37 is currently on scene commander” “Roger await orders.”

As we flew circles waiting for commands orders, I prayed to see some movement, any movement from the ugly lump of metal that used to be the cabin of a Black hawk helicopter. I could not wait any longer. “Dustoff Command what the f is taking you so long? That’s our boys on the ground.” “Holmes relax, we have already called for Q.R.F., J.T.A.K., and got A.W.A.X. overheat. We also have other assets on the way. We are working as fast as we can.” “Have you informed Captain Washington?” “Yes Holmes, she heard the call and when she heard the closest team was 30 minutes out, she allowed fourteen of the 50 MARSOC (Marine Special Operations Command) volunteers to jump in Dustoff 29” “How long?” “Dustoff 29 just launched they should be there in seven minutes.” “Liberator 37 to Dustoff 29” “Go for Dustoff 29” “In three miles I am going to land about 200 meters from the crash to let two of my crew members out to check on our boys.” “Copy

that Liberator, we will be there as soon as we can to drop our 15 and pick up our boys” “You ready Holmes, it’s me and you out” “I have already grabbed the med bag, crash ax, and fire extinguisher Matt.”

“Ok Jones, you see that jagged rock at our 11 o’clock?” “Got it” I replied. “You are going to drop us there then take back off to cover us. We will talk to you on our c-cells if needed.” “Roger” “Dustoff 29 Liberator is going to drop now.” “Roger that, we are five mikes out.” Let’s do it.”

As we came to the drop we had little dust but it meant we would have to work down 150 meters of hard jagged rock then run across 50 meters of open land on moon dust to get to our downed crew. This was not the movies so it would be difficult without heavy gear on. By the time we made it across the rock to the open land, we could see Dustoff 29 overhead. Our feet sank deeply into the dusty sand that puffed up like someone squeezing baby powder with every step. As We slowly made our way toward the downed aircraft, we passed small and large parts of the main rotor, tail section, and landing gear. I could feel the heat still radiating off one of the turbine engines as I passed it half buried in the sand. “Holmes, you see that long deep gouge coming up?” “Ya” “That’s where the main rotor blades first hit.”

When we made it to the remains of the cabin there was red fluid everywhere. I prayed it was hydraulic fluid, not blood. The cabin was on its side so I had Matt let me climb on his back to reach the top of where the cargo door should be. Pulling myself up I reached a point where I could look in the cargo doors missing windows.” Matt, the main transmission is in the cabin, I can’t get them this way.” “OK try the pilot door.” I crawled toward the pilot’s door making it first to the crew chief window. “Matt, Linder’s body is pinned between his seat and the main transmission. He’s not moving.” “Let’s get to the pilot’s door.” I continued to crawl the last few feet to the pilot’s door. I tried to open it but it had been smashed in place. I continued to crawl forward planning to look through the door’s window but before I could get there I was hit by a suffocating wall of dust. Dustoff 29 had come just above me allowing thirteen of the MARSOC members to fast rope to the ground around the crash before moving out to provide aerial cover

again. Captain Washington and five others immediately started working to cut out the three windshields while the other seven fanned out to provide additional security for us. Once I could see again I found the pilot door window was missing. This allowed me to see into the dark crew area for the first time.

Peering in, I was face to face with what appeared to be a lifeless corpse, then I heard it, "Told you he was slower than my grandmother." This was followed by laughter from the back which filled me with anger and relief at the same time. Before I could respond, the whole windshield area was pulled away by the MARSOC guys. They quickly pulled both pilots out and tied them to the stretcher found in the wreckage. I crawled inside to start removing the pilots' seats in order to reach the crew chiefs.

I used the crash ax to cut the bars holding them in place. As I cut them out, the MARSOC members removed them. Once in the back, I was able to see both crew chiefs were alive but pinned in place by the main transmission. I reached up to unclip their seats since that would lower them by about three inches. That was just enough to get Linder out but I was left to cut Lopez's seat cables. Luckily, one of the MARSOC members had some wire cutters because the crash ax would not have worked on the braided cable. Once Lopez was out, I could relax a bit.

As Lopez was being strapped on a stretcher, one of the L.M.T.V.'s from the Crow element pulled up with their three critical guys in the back. The driver told us to load our crew with them because they had agreed with Dustoff to have them picked up a half mile back up the road. Matt and I climbed in the back of the tall tan truck to help load our crew as the MARSOC members passed their stretchers up to us. We left Captain Washington and her men behind to destroy the helicopter and wait for us to come back after dropping off the injured. At the new landing zone, Dustoff 29 picked up the original three injured and Lopez. Liberator 37 picked up the other three crew members while Matt and I took our places as part of the crew again. We flew back to base in silence landing at the hospital to drop off our guys before going back to pick up the MARSOC members.

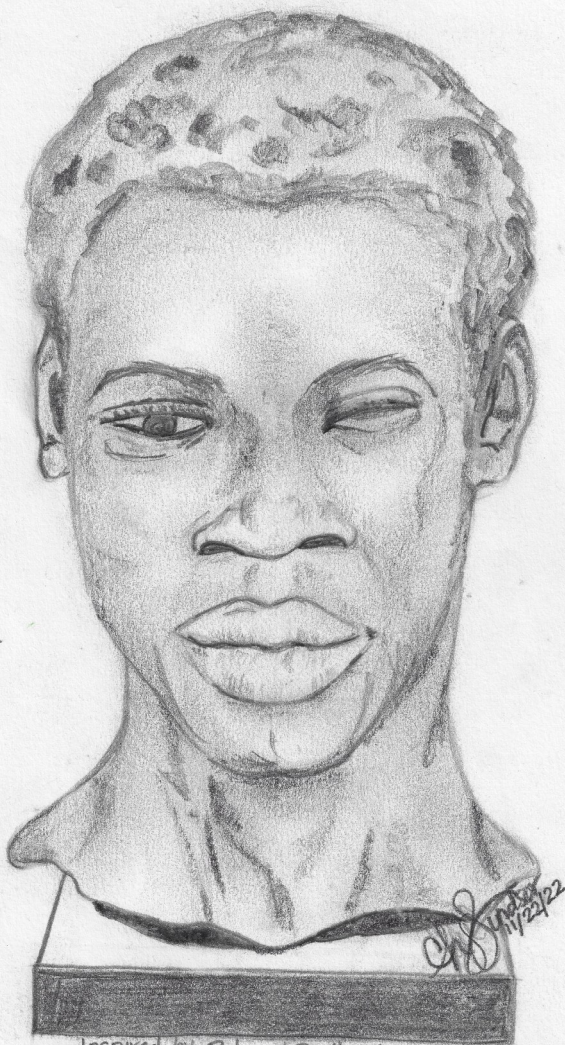
This night resulted in the loss of Army equipment but it could have easily included the loss of life. The outcome of the in-

vestigation recommended a court martial for me. This recommendation was given because I approved the change in positions. The Sergeant Major who chaired the committee made that recommendation then told me his personal thoughts off the record. "Holmes, if you had not made that change Johnson would still be whole. Their injuries are your fault and your fault alone." Matt testified on my behalf during the hearings and said he was sorry for the outcome while handing me a letter from Johnson who was still in the hospital due to the amputation of his leg. I opened the letter and read:

Holmes,

I heard you were the first on the ground to help me. I was also told by Captain Washington herself you are the reason she and her team went to help. She said you had bent a few rules to help her team before so they owed you. Funny how that works. My wife, my kids, and even I want to say thank you for saving my life. I guess I learned in the end even someone as slow as your grandmother can keep their promise to save you from zombies.

Thanks Brother,  
Johnson



Inspired by Richmond Barthel (1901-1989)  
Bust of A Negro Boy, executed c.1934

*General Art—Second Place*

Christina Windsor

# *Short Story*

## *Second Place*

### Cotton: The Biggest Thief

Jerry Burns

It was a cold, rainy day in the Business District of Wichita, Kansas, in the early 1970s. Earlier that day I had been brutally beaten by a man who wore the name Father like a cheap suit. So, at fourteen years old there I was, sitting in the rain in front of a shoe repair shop wondering where I was going to stay for the night. Everything I owned in life was beside me in a paper grocery bag, including the small plastic bag containing smokable drugs. The general public didn't pay any attention to a lone teenage boy sitting on the curb in the afternoon drizzle, so there I sat, quietly watching and thinking.

To my right was Douglas Avenue, the main drag of the Business District and in front of me was Broadway Avenue, a special street for businesses and all the girls who walked up and down it day and night. It appeared to be very busy even though it was lightly raining and no one was paying any attention to me so I pulled out the small plastic bag and the bong and loaded the bowl with the most precious Columbian smoke to be found.

As I sat there smoking, I noticed one of the local girls watching me smoke. I gave her a nod to either accept as a hello or an invite to join me. Little did I realize that this encounter was going to be the first day of schooling into the land of being a true-blue dope fiend. Her name was Racheal and she would teach me the biggest secrets of life imaginable.

Racheal was much older and smarter than me. She suggest-



ed that we get out of the rain and into a local motel room. Several casual introductions were made as we walked toward her motel room. Racheal noticed my swollen blackened eye and asked if I wanted to talk about it. The Golden Rule of the streets was to stay out of other people's problems so that their problems don't become your problems. I felt more embarrassment over my swollen blackened eye than anything else so I shrugged my shoulders. I didn't want to admit that I had allowed myself to be fooled, again, by a man named Father. As we walked, I told her about the pain and betrayal and about the life I lived and experiences I had on a day-to-day basis.

We stepped into her room, shaking off the rain and feeling the warmth of the wall heater. I sat on the only chair in the room while Racheal busied herself towel drying her hair. I loaded the bong again knowing I needed to be at ease with my present situation and surroundings. Racheal and I smoked the bowl and before long the warmth of the room took its affects on me. Before I knew it, I had fallen asleep. Good drugs and good company make every nasty monster disappear.

I slept for a couple hours and when I awoke from Mr. Sandman's land I noticed Racheal slumped over. I called her name but there was no response so I crawled over to see if she was all right. Her arm was tied off and a syringe was hanging from it. I untied the rubber band from her arm and pulled out the needle. I felt the side of her neck for a pulse and was rewarded with a strong beat of her heart. It was then I realized I had been holding my breath and was starting to get dizzy seeing someone in a drug-induced coma.

I stayed by Racheal's side until she opened her eyes and saw this longhaired stranger staring back at her. "Rachel, are you all right? Do I need to get you something?" I asked. She smiled and said that I looked like her shining guardian angel. I smiled back and told her what I had done with the tie and syringe. She sat there smiling while I soaked in the euphoric atmosphere that new life, those reality-canceling drugs, and the heroin high caused. Little did I know that was going to be the beginning of my crash course into becoming an addict. Racheal always told me, "Never waste your dope; the cotton is the biggest thief."

One day shortly after that, I found myself sitting in that motel room alone with her syringe and several balloons of her dope. That little voice in my head kept telling me I wanted to be as high as Racheal always was. I knew what to do. I had watched her and even helped her when she was super sick. They say “Curiosity kills the cat” but, fortunately, the cat has nine lives.

Tearing open one of the balloons, I poured half of it in a spoon. I took the syringe, like she often had, and drew thirty units of water into it. Then I pushed the water into the spoon and heated it until small bubbles started to form. Remembering Racheal’s warning about the cotton thief, I used only a tiny piece of cotton to draw up the dope back into the syringe. Next, I found the vein I wanted to use and inserted the needle.

As I pushed that plunger back into the syringe, I found beauty in the sleaziest mistress. Little did I know, I would have her for a lifetime. Her name is Addiction and she will always be a part of my life. Don’t get me wrong: I have had many favorable encounters with her. She has been pleasurable, and even captivating, as most mistresses are. In the end, though, I always find myself away from her and in prison because of her. That first encounter was forty-eight years ago and here I sit in a federal prison because of my mistress and my addiction to her.



*General Art—Third Place*

Beverly Castillo

# *Short Story*

## *ThirdPlace*

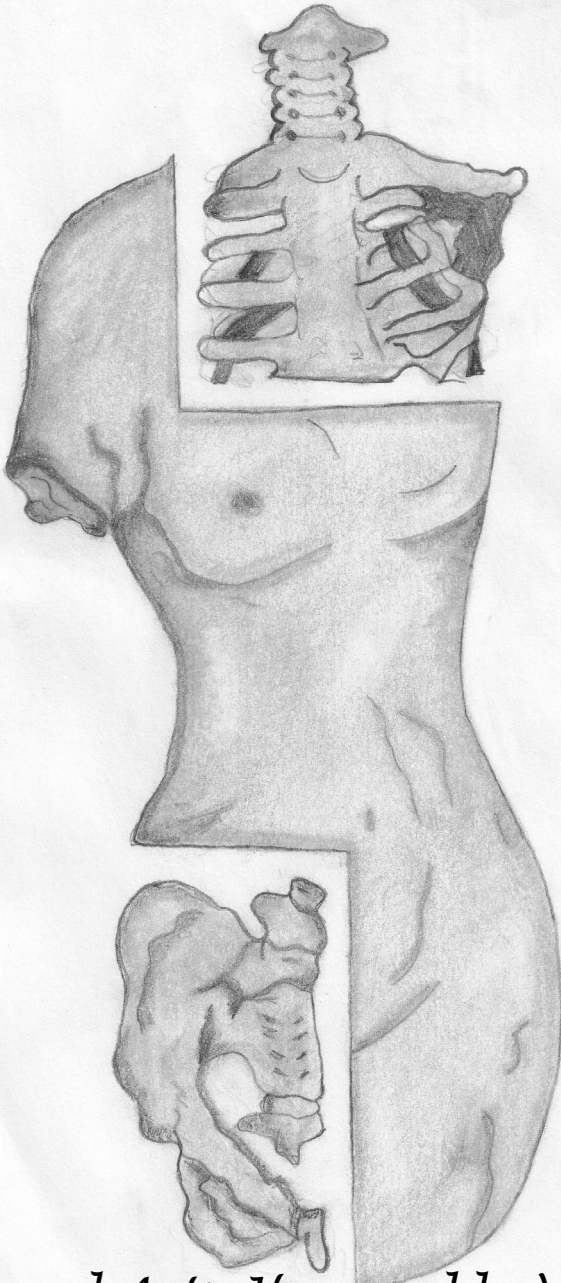
Clarity

Bianca Balderas

Though the world was dark, and time seemed to stand still, everything was alive. Deep breaths through my nose had my chest rising and falling to its own rhythm as the crisp air filled my lungs. The warm sun, as it danced across my cheeks through the trees, kissed promises to keep the chill of the wind out of my bones. As my world became my peaceful solitude, my ears would listen to the joyous sounds of the children laughing as the chains from the swings squeaked as if they were delighted to be apart of such a special moment. The smell of a lit fire as food cooked on the grill made my stomach slightly grumble, but not enough to raise me out of my peace just yet. The families nearby would talk about the simple things happening in their lives and not daring to touch the dreaded topic of reality in hopes of not ruining their day.

The birds that flew with such whispered wings were even chirping melodious songs as they too were preparing their own family for what was soon to happen. Off in the distance, a horn blared from the restless water of the river and echoed throughout the trees as the tugboats and barges made their way throughout the daily route. The waves that the boats had created splashed up through the rocky bank of the river with such force that a woman squealed from the water that landed upon her as her male counterpart laughed with such carefree love that it caused my own heart to swell in my chest. As I lay here, I could only imagine such a future where all of this would be possible for me one day. To have the

love of my life by my side as we faced what ever may come our way with such grace and love that it could only be admired by those who bared witness. To have our own little ones exploring the great big world around us with the promise of possibilities and the security to know they are safe and loved beyond what words can comprehend. The warmth in my chest turned to a slow ache, as if the steady fire that fueled me turned into nothing but the left-over coals simmering to a slumber. The wind that had not dared to disturb me turned into more of a nudge as if it was my own alarm clock saying that it was time to go. The grass tickling my neck, almost like a soft caress of a finger, served as a gentle reminder that everything would be okay. I slowly opened my eyes and acknowledged the world that I was coming back to. As I stared up to the heavens, tracing the tree branches with my eyes, there was a new sort of clarity that I had come to know with no intent of even having such an aspiration. Rising from the ground, I decided then and there to make a promise to myself. A promise that one day, whether it be near or far future, I will have such a loving and fulfilling life with my own family instead of choosing solitude ever again.



*General Art—Honorable Mention*

Balie Provost

# *Short Story*

## *Honorable Mention*

### The Blessing of a Scar

Britkne Gallagher

Laying in bed tracing over the aimless trail of twelve freshly healed incisions with my fingertips, I couldn't stop my mind from racing against the silence of the room. A room I once felt safe and secure in became a prison that I couldn't escape. I studied the details in the patterns of the walls for countless hours a day and I knew exactly when the warm glow of the sunset would be hitting the windowpane next to my bed every evening, only it didn't seem so warm to me anymore. It had been two months since my unplanned hysterectomy had gone terribly wrong. A ruptured artery from my first operation had warranted a second emergency surgery, resulting in a nerve injury that left me unable to walk on my own for several months. These events took place right in the middle of my seventeen-hour Spring semester at Lamar University, with all my courses being in person on campus. Luckily my professors were kind enough to let me finish my semester from home in an online fashion. A blessing, I thought at first, to have the opportunity to complete an already tough first semester at a real university following my transfer from a community college in Port Arthur, Texas. What I didn't expect to encounter was the discomfort that came from an abundance of solitude, the insecurity that manifested from mental and physical scarring, and the strength I would have to find in myself to keep going despite the trials and tribulations I was facing.

Aside from appointments with my neurologist and excruciating

ating rounds with my physical therapist, I did not have much communication with anyone during the long days at home in bed. When my two young children would come home in the evenings, I felt over the moon to have personal connection but even that was a daily adjustment because I had grown accustomed to the quiet and slow pace of my days. I could not hold my babies or pick them up, and my mental health quickly began to deteriorate along with the muscle mass in my legs. While focusing on keeping up my grades from home occupied much of my time, I knew I needed to find something else that could help me balance a healthy mindset. As a natural creative at heart, I turned to my books and my art tools to keep me busy.

One particularly dreary day I came across a forgotten image of my favorite sculpture. “Dog” was sculpted in 1951 by Alberto Giacometti, a Swiss Italian sculptor, along with many others that have always caught my eye in an empathetic and relatable manner. This particular sculpture seemed to be screaming at me right at that moment, as if it were saying “I understand your scars, but can’t you see the beauty in them?” I began to reflect on the idea that every single one of us are walking around with our own scars, battered and bruised from the hardships of everyday life. However, those scars give us one very important choice in life to make: do we let our scars define us or do we honor them by not giving up on ourselves? Alberto Giacometti taught me a valuable lesson that day through the reflection of his artwork. Life is not without its dreadful moments, for without isolation and pain, we would have no way of recognizing or appreciating the joy that comes from hard work and overcoming.

Our scars do not have to be carried as the unwelcoming shadows of negative memories, but instead can be an honorable display of perseverance and grace. Suddenly I knew that there was not just a light at the end of this seemingly never-ending tunnel of darkness, but a very bright light indeed. I began working harder at physical therapy and pushed through my semester with immense hope. I went from shouldering the weight of never knowing if I would walk again to believing in myself and my ability to recover both mentally and physically. I set dreams for myself and those dreams turned into achievable goals the more I progressed. I start-



ed this journey as an almost professional wheelchair driver and graduated to pushing a walker, to finally wobbling around on crutches. Then before I knew it, I was picking up my children again and resuming my role in the world. One of the most joyous moments to come from that time period was the day I took my first step back on campus, one hundred percent recovered.



*General Art—Honorable Mention*

Beverly Castillo

# *Short Story*

## *Honorable Mention*

### The Burial

Camryn Smith

It is a normal day in 2008 for a four-year-old little girl getting ready for daycare. However, this day was different somehow, it has a certain heavy feeling to it. You brush it off and the excitement of seeing your friends again in class, not knowing what is to come next. Your mother dresses you in a particularly different outfit today, it is a small black and with dress and a pair of small black heels. You then notice your mother is dressed in black with a blank face, almost dull and drained of happiness; however, you ignore it. After a relatively long car ride, you start wondering where you are going since daycare is not but a few minutes away. You ask your mother, who is seated in front of you, where she is taking you. Looking at her in the mirror she is staring at you while crying after asking a seemingly harmless question. You think you've done something wrong to upset her, so you sit back and stay quiet the rest of the car ride. You and your mother finally show up somewhere after what felt like a lifetime for a child; you realize this place is not familiar. Thinking there is some kind of celebration happening since you see what seems to be your entire father's side of the family, also dressed in all black, and you go greet them with a hug.

Inside the building your family and you walk into, at the front of a room there is a big box you do not recognize. Your mother then asks if you want to see that big box you have been staring at since entering the room, so you say yes. Being a curious child wondering what could be in a giant box such as that one, you walk clos-

er holding your mother's hand feeling that heavy feeling again from earlier that morning. You and your mother stand in front of the box, but you cannot see what is inside since you are so little, so your mother then picks you up holding you on her hip. Lying in the box there is an all too familiar face.

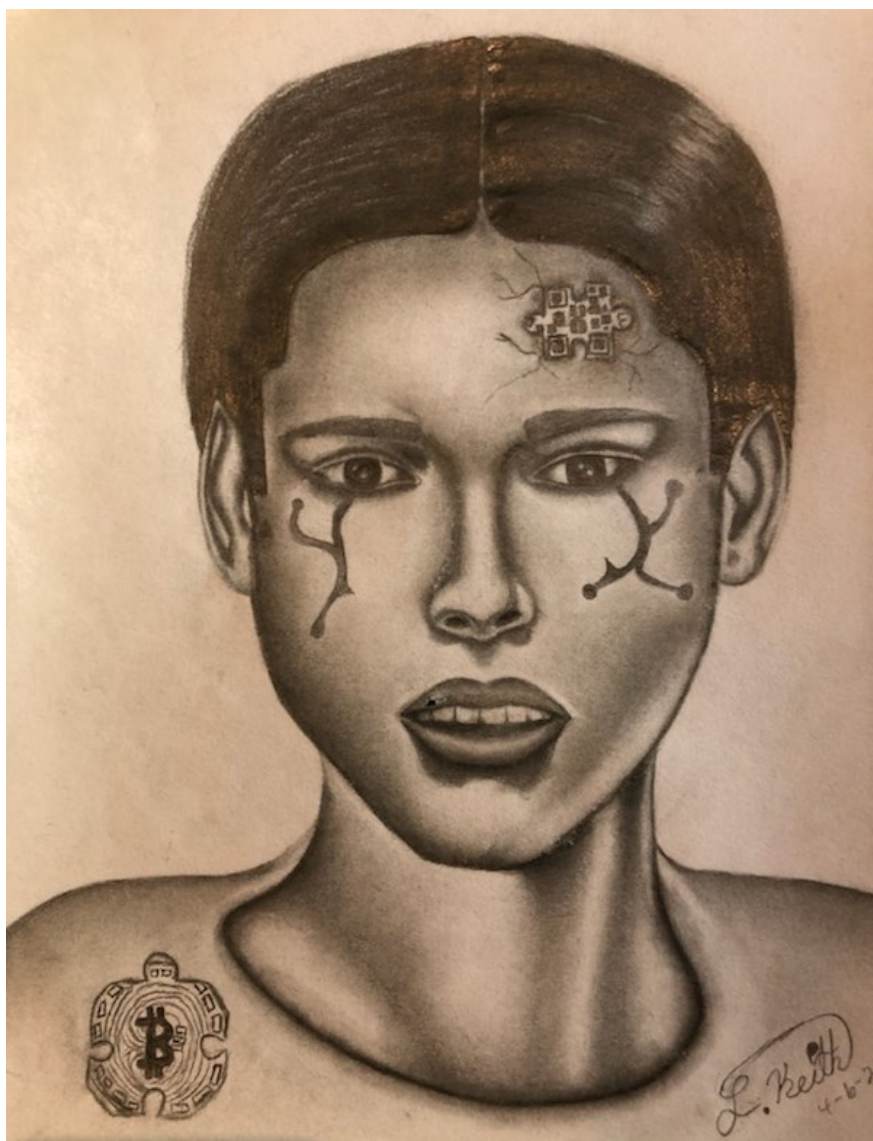
That same familiar face is someone you have seen every day since the day you were born, your best friend....it is your father. Lying motionless in that big box. The cruel reality finally catches up to you, your mother sets you down and you fall to your knees crying knowing you have just lost your favorite person in the world. Your hero/best friend/ dad is dead. After the visitation is over, you and your mom get into a limo along with a few other family members leaving once again. Everyone that was there at the visitation arrive at the cemetery after a few minutes. As they start lower the casket that contains your father's body in it into the ground, you cry harder than you thought was possible. Your mother crying as well, picks you up holding you in a hug tight to her as she sees you crying harder and harder.

They have finally placed the casket into the hole, it is now time to place the dirt to bury your dad underground. You then start screaming for everyone to stop, hoping somehow your dad will open the casket to hug you once again. Family and close friends then surround you while hugging and consulting you while crying for what feels like a lifetime. Your mother then decides that it is time to leave and go home in fear of you jumping into the newly buried grave as they continue to fill it with dirt. You are placed in your car seat once again. As your mother is driving off, you stare out of the back windshield turned around completely hitting the glass the entire way out of the cemetery.

The whole way home you think to yourself why, why my dad? Why did he have to leave me so soon? Questions that are never to be answered. Walking back into your home after another long car ride back, your older brother gives you the biggest hug you have ever received as he cries with you for a while. Later that night you sleep between your mother and stepfather, feeling safe enough to finally fall asleep after the hardest day of your life so far.



# *Essay*



*General Art—Honorable Mention*

Lorenzo LaSalle

# Essay

## First Place

### Young Goodman Brown: An Analysis

Reanna Panelo

German philosopher Karl Marx has once referred to religion as “the opium of the people,” giving place to those who strive to find true meaning behind human life and existence. Religion, for many, is the basis of their livelihoods, as religion itself serves as both the embodiment of human essence and as an answer to life’s unknown. In Nathaniel Hawthorne’s short story, “Young Goodman Brown,” he talks about a devout Puritan man and his journey into a dark forest on the outskirts of town. While it seems as though it’s an average story about a man and his journey, much like an iceberg, it hides more below the surface. Hawthorne utilizes allegory, symbolism, and irony to display the flaws and hypocrisy that religion can entail as well as humanity’s struggle to balance good and evil.

Hawthorne introduces the audience to Goodman Brown, a heavily religious man on his journey into the woods outside of the village of Salem. Brown departs for his journey on “a dreary road, darkened by all the gloomiest trees of the forest,” as he begrudgingly greets his wife, Faith, goodbye. Throughout the story, Brown encounters many things out of the ordinary, such as an old man with a serpent-like cane and the townspeople all headed for a sabbath-like ceremony. After witnessing the ceremony celebrated by “a loathful brotherhood, by the sympathy of all that was wicked in his heart [,]” despair and fear plagues him. While all of this seems like it’s just about a man who encountered real events of witchcraft, Hawthorne is meant for all of it to be an allegory for the flaws of

religion and how humans are naturally tempted to sin. Brown, representing humans and humankind, falters from his beliefs as his curiosity gets the better of him and decides to leave Faith's side. With him straying off the path to righteousness into the depths of the forest his devotion to God is challenged as he continues to descend further into chaos and sin.

Hawthorne, to achieve this allegory, uses a lot of symbolism in the story as well. While Brown, again, is supposed to symbolize humans and humankind, there are many more examples as well. Faith, so appropriately named, is meant to symbolize Brown's faith and religious devotion. The pink ribbons she wears are representative of purity and innocence, so when Brown leaves her side, it's as if he is abandoning his own innocence and religion. The old man Brown encounters in the woods is meant to symbolize the devil, as he carries around a staff "which bore the likeness of a great black snake, so curiously wrought, that it might almost have been an ocular deception [.]" The idea that the old man is the devil is heavily supported by this snake imagery, where snakes are commonly associated with the devil as a snake is what tempted Eve to sin in Christian beliefs. Throughout their journey together, the old man constantly offers Brown his staff to help himself walk, implying that the devil is constantly provoking him and testing both his tenacity and devotion to God. The woods themselves are meant to symbolize evil, as Brown strays off the road to righteousness out of curiosity and is corrupted by the natural follies of humans.

While the audience may take everything in the story at face value, there is quite a bit of irony used to display the true meaning of this story. In the beginning of the story, Brown tells Faith to "go to bed at dusk, and no harm will come to thee [.]" wishing that she stays behind and not follow him. What is ironic is that Brown, leaving behind both his religious faith and wife Faith, later sees her at the ceremony as she is one of the converts being used. Another instance of irony being used is all the events that happened in the story. Hawthorne gives the reader a slow burn, building up the events leading up to the ceremony in the woods and all of the people he encountered on the way. After witnessing the madness and horrors of the ceremony, it is revealed to the audience that everything was nothing but "a dream of evil omen for young Goodman



Brown.” While all of the events seem to be part of a fictitious dream Brown had, the audience is taken by surprise as nothing happened in real life with the forest or townspeople. However, while everything was a part of Brown’s imagination, the fear and dread he experienced are now a very real feeling, as he is now completely wary of the townspeople and even his own wife. The ending of the story is left ambiguous, as it is presumed that Brown now lives the rest of his life in a constant state of paranoia and a shaken will.

Religion is a very tricky concept, as there are many interpretations of beliefs and the origin of humankind. Hawthorne’s “Young Goodman Brown” displays just that, the complexity of Puritanism and the many flaws and hypocritical thinking it presents. Hawthorne also reveals a message to a contemporary audience, that all decisions to be made will soon have an impact in one way or another on life. “Young Goodman Brown” displays not only the natural state of humans and the fine line between good and evil but also the intricacies religion entails.

# Essay

## Second Place

### Etymology of Tree

Devanny Gloria

Like any living creature words have a life of their own. They are born, they change, they reproduce, and some words just grow old and cease to exist. Over time a word can acquire different meanings or new words can develop from the original source. Scientifically this is known as etymology, the meaning and historical development of a word. Through this study we get a more in-depth understanding of our culture and origins. With a simple online search one can find the denotation of millions of words. For instance, to many a tree is just a woody perennial plant with a trunk that develops branches at a distance away from the ground, or at least that's how the internet defines it. Rooting back to the 12<sup>th</sup> century was when we first got a glimpse of the modern word tree, in *The Canterbury Tales* by Geoffrey Chaucer. However, things were different in Old English, around 450 to 1150 CE the word 'tree' was known as 'treow' which held a separate meaning. To people back then it also meant 'trust' or 'promise'. Although they might appear distinct there were alternate versions of this word in different languages, like 'albero' in Italian, or 'arbre' in French.

Words matter more than we think, they hold our history, and like they hold our history they also possess a much deeper meaning than the one website can give. A tree is much more than just a trunk with branches, they are the possessors of life. Through photosynthesis, the leaves on a tree pull in carbon dioxide and water. These two elements plus the use of solar energy convert into sugars that feed trees, as a result oxygen is produced and released

from the plant. Such chemical element is crucial to human existence as it is the one element needed to survive. Many people expect gifts on holidays or their birthdays, yet they do not realize that a simple plant fills us with the gift of life every day, just feeling your lungs grasp onto the oxygen that trees create to perfection should be enough for others to open their eyes and see beyond their materialistic ways. A world with no trees is a world doomed to death, there would be no such thing as pretty colors to light up the planet. There would not be a sunset or a sunrise, or the feeling of waking up and opening your window to take a deep breath, being delighted to the perfect pitch that birds feed our ears would simply not exist.

Learning how the words in our language came to be is knowing your past and where you came from. Words like tree should be displayed in a dictionary with more credit. Though it may be a small and simple four-letter word, in reality it means our whole existence. Without trees there would be an empty hole of nothing, no humans, no animals, and no life.

# Essay

## *Third Place*

### Virtues and Vices Explored in “Sweat”

Ashley Victoria Desmond

To what extent is one expected to endure racial segregation and being valued as the less superior sex? To what degree can an individual be beaten, both emotionally and physically, before ultimately collapsing? How and where does one obtain the power to overcome such a war? In the 1926 short story, “Sweat,” by Zora Neale Hurston, protagonist Delia Jones is a hard working, religious, and faithful African American wash woman. Antagonist, Syke Jones, is an evil, aggressive, unemployed, and unfaithful man. Through the use of symbolism, irony, and foreshadowing, Zora Neale Hurston illustrates the classical theme of good versus evil with an ironic twist of fate in her nail-biting tale of karma.

There is a wealth of symbolism detected in Hurston’s story revolving around deeper meanings of endurance, righteousness overcoming wickedness, and the belief in cosmic karma. The title of the story is significant because it refers to Delia’s sweat, a symbol of her devotion as a wash woman, along with all the tribulations she has suffered as a victim of an abusive husband. Delia describes her marriage to Sykes as, “Sweat, sweat, sweat! Work and sweat, cry and sweat, pray and sweat” (Hurston). After declaring the significance sweat serves in her life, Delia grabs the “iron skillet from the stove and [strikes] a defensive pose” (Hurston). Delia’s choice of the skillet symbolizes a woman’s stereotypical responsibility of cooking, so this action could very well represent female empowerment. Clean white clothing is fundamental to Delia’s employment and the dedication she puts in to provide for herself and her narcis-

sistic husband. White also symbolizes the genuine pureness of Delia's character. Sykes demonstrates his disgust and ungratefulness of her difficult labor that Delia takes pride in when he steps, "roughly upon the whitest pile of things, kicking them helter-skelter as he crosses the room" (Hurston). It's clear that the abuse and trauma Sykes inflicts on Delia is not enough to satisfy the evil inside him when he brings home a six-foot-long snake. A religious symbol of evil and deception, the snake is a constant presence throughout the entire story. Delia is terrified of snakes and by the third paragraph, Sykes frightens her with his bull whip that resembles a snake. Hurston illustrates, "Just then something long, round, limp and black fell upon her shoulders and slithered to the floor beside her. A great terror took hold of her," and Delia screams, "You know it would skeer me-looks just like a snake, an' you knows how skeered Ah is of snakes" (Hurston). The depth of Syke's evilness is shown when he points out, "Course Ah knowed it! That's how come Ah done it" (Hurston).

Irony is a tool employed by writers that serve to intrigue and enthrall their readers. Hurston uses several different types of irony, which in return contributes to the build up to the climax, where righteousness finally triumphs over evil. Delia reacts to Sykes' bull whip stunt by remarking, "Some day Ah'm goin' tuh drop dead from some of yo foolishness" (Hurston) As the story concludes, good prevails over evil and Sykes ends up dying to his own foolishness. Psalm 23:5 of the English Standard Version (ESV) Bible states, "You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows" (ESV Bible, Psalm 23.5). After Delia calmly speaks, "Ah hates you, Sykes. Ah hates you tuh de same degree dat Ah uster love yuh," the caged anger that's been trapped inside her for fifteen years is unleashed when she powerfully declares, "Ah'm goin' tuh de white folks about you, mah young man, de very nex' time you lay yo' han's on me. Mah cup is done run ovah" (Hurston). Here, Delia deploys it as a sarcastic way of expressing that she's had it with Sykes, but in the biblical verse, one's cup is overflowing with euphoria and a great magnitude of joy.

Through analyzing the deeper meaning of words, readers can use foreshadowing to predict what's going to take place within

the story. According to my Composition professor, Caitlin James explains, “Authors do not use words without reason” (James). I feel that the author's ability to establish the proper setting, season, or mood are fundamentally necessary in the mastering of storytelling. Zora Hurston's choice of words for the setting gives evidence of a hopeful transition in life for Delia. For instance, the story's introduction reads: “It was eleven o'clock on a spring night in Florida. It was Sunday” (Hurston). By the third paragraph, I sensed something bad was about to happen when Delia was sorting clothes and “humming a song in a mournful key, but wondering through it all where Sykes, her husband had gone with her horse and buckboard” (Hurston). After the horrific fight with Sykes, Hurston is quick to remind readers of the inner strength of Delia when before falling asleep loudly states, “Oh well, whatever goes over the Devil's back, is got to come under his belly. Sometime or ruther, Sykes, like everybody else, is gointer reap his sowing” (Hurston). Right before the conclusion, Delia's moment of victory is hinted at when she awoke to a “faint gray sky” that desperately tried to spread but “Delia descended without fear now” (Hurston).

Incorporating religious symbolism, dramatic and irony, and foreshadowing Zora Neale Hurston presents a classical story of good versus evil. Delia is introduced as a physically and mentally fragile character at first and is unable to live an enjoyable life in the presence of her husband Sykes. When life gets tough, humans either continue to spiral into madness or blossom into someone they didn't realize was hiding inside them. Delia's personal trials and tribulations shaped her into a morally stronger woman. Since the dawn of time, in countless stories, how is it that most of the time righteousness prevails against wickedness? In his 2014 novel, *Mentor Me: GA=T+E: A Formula to Fulfill Your Greatest Achievement*, author Ken Poirot explains, “Light can devour the darkness but darkness cannot consume the light” (Poirot). The concept of karma is the idea of the natural law of cause and effect and chain of events and every act of free will produces a specific outcome. The seeds of pain are spread when we behave out of selfishness, hostility and ignorance, while prosperity and joy are spread when we engage out of kindness, compassion, and understanding (Reshel). De-

lia's faith in God and the genuineness of her character is what gives her the power to preserve and win the war against the evil Sykes.



*General Art—Honorable Mention*

Ted Burdell



# Essay

## Honorable Mention

Honor

Azrin Landry

Etymology has always been an important aspect of the world. Without it thousands of words that make up the basics of human language would have been lost to time. One of those words is honor. In the dictionary, honor is defined as adherence to what is right or to a conventional standard of conduct. The first utterance of the word was in the mid-13 century, originating from Old French and was mostly used in medieval Europe, spelled *honour* there. It had the same definition but meant a whole lot more to their society. Medieval knights, scally wags and thieves alike all forged their entire life by the code of honour and some would be exiled if they broke it.

As time would go on, however, the code would eventually crumble apart. In today's world, honor generally has a much less significant meaning. The average person in today's society has morals and beliefs built upon completely different ideals. There are few left that still even know what the word means. Henry Louis Mencken once said, "Honor is simply the morality of superior men." To reiterate this, only the most sophisticated, or those with a good heart, still hold that word to a high standard. This isn't to say that it that it doesn't still exist.

Although the word has basically dissipated, the meaning of it still holds some weight. As previously stated, people have a set of morals and beliefs they live by, and although they don't call it "honor", it's the same thing. In example, I have a set of beliefs I abide by, but honor isn't particularly one of the ones I would in-

clude in it. I do believe however that I have a standard that I must meet, which is helping whoever I can, whenever I can. This would be considered part of the honor code back then, but that's not what I like to call it. What would it be called today?

What would be a different word to use in today's day and age instead of honor? That's a question few can answer. There are many "unspoken" rules and codes that we live by, and I suppose honor would be one of them. It's one of the many contrivances that someone should integrate into their life by default. There is really no word to use it in the 21<sup>st</sup> century since it's just one of those things everybody knows. If someone were asked to define what honor means to them, they honestly might not be able to explain the exact definition, but each and every person could give you their own definition of the word. It's evolved passed just meaning high respect or great esteem, it means so much more than that, and that's what makes the word so different than what it used to be.

# Essay

## Honorable Mention

### The Etymology of Life

Jasmine Figueroa

Etymology is the evolution of words from their roots to their contemporary meanings. It is fascinating how words and languages can change over time. The importance of understanding etymology is we are more likely to be able to use words in the way that we actually mean them, and to be able to better understand things that we ourselves say. For example, the word life dates back to an early medieval Anglo-Saxon kingdom called Northumbria (around 700 AD). Northumbria was a dialect of Old English, in which the word life was pronounced as *hlif*. Around the 1800s in Wexford, the Irish English pronounced the word as *lief*. Wexford was an Old English settlement in the Medieval Period, and its Anglic language was known as “Yola.” In early Middle English, the word was pronounced as *liuen*. The transition from Late Old English to early Middle English occurred during the 12<sup>th</sup> century. Languages and certain words gradually developed in the decades following the Norman Conquest mostly through linguistic influences. In Modern English, the denotation of life is defined as “the condition, quality, or fact of being a living person or animal; human or animal existence.”

We all have diverse ways of defining life. The subject is way too broad and complex to pinpoint a solid definition. Life is something we are all trying to figure out and taking it day by day. Personally, my definition of life is living life to the fullest and cherishing every moment because one never knows when their last day is going to be. On June 13, 2016, my mother and I were in a terrible

car wreck that resulted in me having a near-death experience. On that day, we were going to Wal-Mart to pick up some household items: paper towels, dish soap, laundry detergent, and dog food. A simple drive that resulted in tears and pain. As we were leaving the parking lot, we noticed the lights at the intersection were blinking red resulting in every car having their turn to go one by one. When it was finally ours to go, a bright red Ford truck crashed into the passenger side of the car where I was sitting. Before going unconscious, I could vividly see and hear my mother's screams and glass shattering everywhere. Three days later, I woke up to tubes, monitors, and nurses surrounding me. I was told of everything that happened and was assured that my mother was in stable condition. While seeing my family gave me the relief that we were alive, all I could think about was my near-death experience.

I remember my vision was filled with crystal-clear scenes from my childhood that I have forgotten. These memories must have been locked in my subconscious. These flashes and scenes came at high speed, almost all at once. There were sad and happy scenes. Scenes such as my sister and I swinging on our new playground set to scenes of crying in bed hearing my father's and mother's arguments. After these flashes of scenes, all I could see was an endless color of white surrounding me with bright lights and a white door about eight feet away from me. I thought if I took one step I would fall into oblivion. As I continued to walk, I opened the soft white door and there I witnessed my physical body lying in the hospital bed. I turned my head like a confused dog; I couldn't believe what was happening. In a blink of an eye, I was returned to reality. When I physically and mentally healed, I started doing research on near-death experiences. I did not feel crazy or alone anymore. I now appreciate the fact this had happened to me, because now I live life to the fullest. I try to cherish each and every moment the best I can.

I believe 'life' happened to us, but it's important we make life happen *for* us. If we sit day to day contemplating our goals and dreams, we are never going to make it there. We must achieve what we want to do before it is too late. One never knows if it's their turn to go six feet under.

# Essay

## Honorable Mention

### The Yellow Wallpaper : An Analysis

Reanna Panelo

For many years, society has, for the most part, been centered around men and their ideologies of the universe. Being a woman in a male dominated world has proven to be harsh, as women have to experience bias, inequality, harassment, and violence on a daily basis for simply just existing. In Charlotte Perkins Stetson's "The Yellow Wallpaper," she talks about the cruelty and mistreatment women experienced through the eyes of an ill Victorian woman. Stetson uses allegory, repetition, and symbolism to display the aspects of inferiority and subordination of women and also how important it is to express one's self.

During the Victorian era, women were not seen as equals to men, they were seen as property. Women were expected to be innocent little housewives who needed to be protected by their male family members and/or husband. The idea of feminism was seen as a 'radical' ideology, as even Queen Victoria herself claimed that feminism was an attack on daily life. When women were seen as 'ill' or 'acting out,' they were known to be prescribed something called "The Rest Cure," where they would essentially be placed in total isolation and not to be given any kind of stimulus. This kind of situation would be detrimental to one's mental health, as having no stimulus to encourage brain activity and to remain isolated while being fed fattening foods could pose serious implications. Women were supposed to be docile, so any kind of display of extreme emotion or action would merit them "The Rest Cure." This 'cure,' especially proven by today's modern health and science advance-

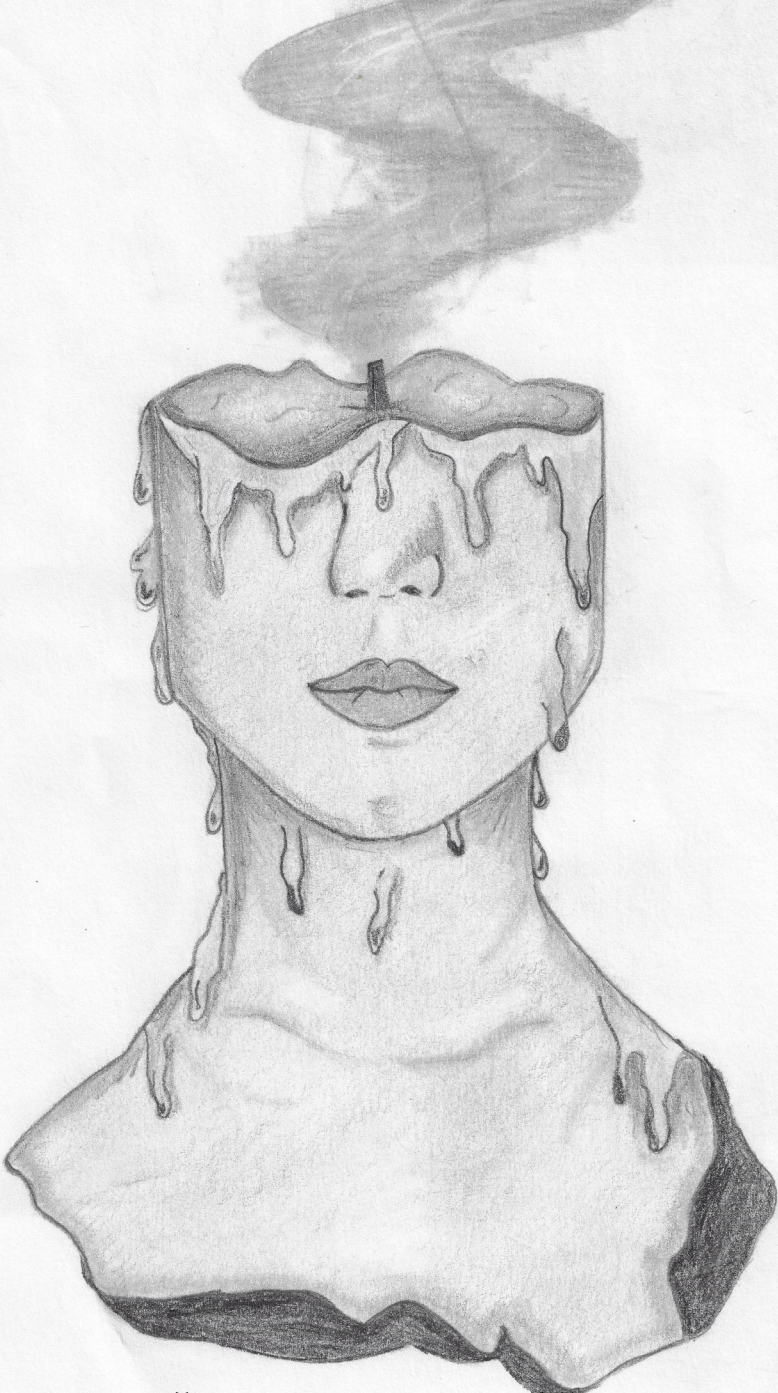
ments, was shown to be very ineffective, and in some cases, even worsen the situation. Stetson uses her personal experience as a woman living in the Victorian era to display this concept through the narrator, a woman experiencing post-partum depression and how the “rest cure” slowly drove her insane because of impractical and unethical medical treatments.

Throughout the story, the narrator is placed in isolation in an old nursery room located in a colonial home three miles outside of town, prescribed by her husband, John, and watched over by her sister-in-law, Jennie. The narrator notes that, while the room is quite spacious and has windows where she can enjoy the natural lighting and garden view, the walls are an absolute eyesore. The disheveled wallpaper is described as “a smoldering unclean yellow” and the pattern to be flamboyant, not displaying any symmetry or niceness. The narrator makes note that even though the wallpaper is an abomination, the audience finds her going back to the same wallpaper both in curiosity and frustration. The constant repetition of the narrator going back and forth with this wall is significant, as it is the only “stimulus” granted to her, seeing as how she even has to keep her writing a secret from John and Jennie. However, the more she finds herself hyper fixated on this wallpaper, the more the audience sees her descent into insanity and madness.

The entirety of the story contains many elements of symbolism as well, especially in the wallpaper. The narrator describes scenarios of the wallpaper that lead the reader to believe it’s haunting her. She states she can smell the wallpaper everywhere in the house and that it even lingers in her hair. The longer the narrator stays in her room, she begins to hallucinate, imagining up figures and women who seem to “creep all over the house.” While, yes, she does seem to be going crazy due to the lack of outside interaction and stimuli, this is symbolic of the narrator’s wanting to get out. In the story, the narrator sees a woman behind the wallpaper as she “takes hold of the bars [in the pattern of the wallpaper] and shakes them hard.” She begins ripping off chunks of the wallpaper in an effort to free this woman, where this can be seen as symbolic of the narrator wanting to free herself as well. Her character begins to fall apart, as she is now obsessed with the women and figures she is “seeing” everywhere. At the end of the story, John decided to

check up on the narrator at the end of her three-month isolation. Much to his surprise and also dismay, he finds his wife crawling all over the floor, almost as if she assimilated herself with the woman trapped behind the wallpaper. Once John is on the ground unconscious, the narrator does not rush to him like a doting wife would. She, instead, refers to him as “that man,” and proceeds to simply crawl over him. This is symbolic in the idea that the narrator, a woman, has finally found power over man as she simply disregards his existence, yet at the expense of her own wellbeing.

Stetson, herself, was a woman during the Victorian era, having had similar experiences to the narrator, in that she was seen as “sickly” and was immediately put in isolation to be on “rest.” Stetson uses her own experiences to tell both a previous and contemporary audience to portray just how unfair and unequal women were treated at this time. While much of her story seems to be a thing of the past, there are many ideas that women are inferior to men that trickle down into today’s society. A major takeaway of Stetson’s story is to remember that women are humans as well and that, while many are still stuck in traditional views, it is important that we treat them as such.



*General Art—Honorable Mention*

Balie Provost



# Essay

## Honorable Mention

### Hemingway's Portrayal of Life's

### Difficult Choices

Sarah North

Everyone comes to a point in their life where they must make a life-altering decision, forced to choose the path of their future. "Hills Like White Elephants," by Ernest Hemingway begins with a vivid description of the setting and quickly introduces the two young travelers that seem to be having an awkward conversation about something that is unknown to the reader. The man seems to heavily push a solution to the problem while with the woman, Jig, seems to be looking off into the background for an answer to the uncomfortable situation that she is in. One must read between the lines to understand how Hemingway's excessive use of symbolism, setting, and dialogue display one couple's dilemma of making a choice.

Although it seems like Jig is merely admiring the beauty of the hills when she says, "They look like white elephants," this statement means much more. The hills could illustrate the shape of a pregnant woman's belly and the mention of the color white is a symbol of innocence which could be in reference to Jig. In some cultures, a white elephant represents fertility, wisdom and a valuable, but costly possession that one cannot toss aside. It could be in reference to the idiomatic expression, "the elephant in the room" that is referring to a huge topic or issue that people attempt to ignore. In an attempt to end the painful conversation Jig begs for the

man to stop talking and in response, “He did not say anything but looked at the bags against the wall of the station. There were labels on them from all the hotels where they had spent nights.” This excerpt is important to the story as it gives the readers an insight on the couple’s past. The label covered luggage illustrates their fun, fast paced past and how a certain choice could make it all become a distant memory. In the beginning of the story, the description of the luscious growing piece of land opposed to the barren side on the opposite sides of the train could be referring to the growth of the couple’s relationship if a certain decision is made about the possible baby growing in Jig’s stomach.

The story takes place at an outdoor café train station that is in Spain. The setting plays a significant part in the story as its surroundings are symbolic and tells us a little bit about what kind of people the characters are. The couple seems to consume multiple alcoholic drinks in an attempt to avoid the awkward conversation about their taboo issue. Hemingway’s decision to make the story take place near a train station, a temporary location, tells us that the couple most likely did not plan to have a baby are most likely travelers that up until now have been living a carefree lifestyle. It would be a different story if they were having this conversation at a house that they own together which would make their ability to make a decision less difficult. A train also could also be portraying the act of moving forward in life and their quick stop could be representing a halt on their relationship until the two figure out which road to take whether it is going their separate ways or hopping on the train together. The description of the green grass and barren area surrounding the train station illustrates that their “issue” has two possible outcomes.

Hemingway is known for giving readers the tip of the iceberg, enough information for them to infer what is going on in the story. The dialogue reveals that the man is assertive as he maintains a manipulative tone when talking about the “operation”. In the story he states that he loves her and how he cares about her yet he contradicts himself when he attempts to oversimplify the operation. In the story he says, “It’s really an awfully simple operation, Jig,”. “It’s not really an operation at all.” He seems to be selfish and apathetic about how Jig feels when he states that everything will be bet-

ter once the operation is done. The unfinished ending leaves readers wondering what Jig decided to do but her final words may be a clue as she seems to be dismissing the conversation in the ending when she says, "There's nothing wrong with me. I feel fine." Her quick dismissal and the way they talk to each other is far from being fine as she claims. If everything was fine, they would've had a more in-depth conversation and the man's tone would be a bit more sympathetic.

Ernest Hemingway's use of multiple literary devices help the reader figure out what the story is truly about and how many factors can influence a person's decision. The setting is surrounded by symbolism while the dialogue allows the reader to think on their own what the couple's dilemma could possibly be. Despite what the unknown topic of their conversation may be the woman, Jig, is faced with a life altering choice to make which is why I decided that the theme would be choices. It shows the internal struggle and balance that Jig faces when it comes to being responsible or deciding to get rid of the situation all together.



*General Art—Honorable Mention*

Beverly Castillo



*Historical  
Analysis*

# Historical Analysis

## First Place

### Life and Inequality in the Unfree Antebellum South

David Hicks

America is known as the land of the free, but that is not how everyone experienced the history of this nation. In the days of the antebellum South if you were a slave, free black, woman or even worse, a slave woman, there was little to no equality. White men were the overpowering authority over all and although our constitution may say all men are created equal this was not the case in this dark era of American history.

Black people faced unbelievable discrimination and hardships during the antebellum period. Free blacks had few rights and privileges and were often no better off than enslaved people. To be free in the antebellum era did not mean you were truly free. Many free blacks were harshly discriminated against and there were many times they had no way of receiving education. There were numerous discriminatory laws put in place to hold back the free blacks. White woman although free and never under such harsh treatment as a slave had a received had little to no rights even as a white. The only true free people of that time in history were white men.

White male superiority was the dominant force that drove the south. They ruled over their slaves with iron clad fist and usually very harshly. As documented in *Race Relations and the Ideology of Domesticity*, the sexual misconduct against slave woman was one of the most brutal and horrible aspects of slavery and was very common. They often beat their slaves and used the selling and splitting of slave families as a form of punishment. They treated

their own wives as property there to pro create and take care of the household. In the eyes of the white man, they were superior to everyone else.

There were many underlying beliefs that drove the ideology of white male superiority. For the most part they used their biblical beliefs as the basis of this ideology. Many white men believed they were the manhood of Christ. They believed that if God wanted women and slaves to be their equal God would have put his will into them through Christ. Many men believed woman were not equal to men because of the first sin of Eve the first woman. Men believed they were better than women because they believed they were physically and intellectually superior.

In the video *Teaching Hard History: American Slavery*, white slave owners saw slavery not only as a means for profit but also to control the blacks. As we learn in *Home, Sweet Home: Gender in the Antebellum Household*, an example of the white male supremacy, a South Carolina judge ruled that men had power over all members of their household. This included their slaves as well as their children and wives.

The ethical issues towards women and people of color were countless. Let's start with what was the most heinous in my opinion and that was the sexual misconduct and often rape of black slave women. In reading *Race Relations and the Ideology of Domesticity* we learned that Sexual relations between slave owners and his female slaves was not even an issue in the white men's minds. Although the wives knew about these affairs usually, there was little they could do about them as they were subject under the men as well. The sexual misconduct against slave woman was one of the most brutal and horrible aspects of slavery and the mistress for the most part turned a blind eye to their white husbands violent and sinful ways. So not only were the men in the wrong so were the wives of these men. Women and people of color were never treated equal as white men. This country stood on all men created equal but was not the case. Most often the slaves had poor living conditions and were not treated medically the same as their white counter parts. The life expectancy of a slave was roughly 30 years, as disease, and hunger ran rampant on plantations. Men were supposed to honor their wives according to the Bible they read, preached out of, and supposedly lived their lives according to, yet

they often did the very opposite. Men often considered women were less than them in many ways. They treated their slaves with even more unfairness as they saw them as property even though the blood, sweat, and tears of these people is what built our great nation. *The North Carolina Slave Codes* show this very thing of unfair treatment, as slaves were not even allowed to enter into a lawful contract such as simple marriage.

History is in the past thankfully, and although in many ways the dark time in this nation has been an example for future generations on how not to treat people. Although there are still things that could be better when it comes to equality among genders and race the changes have been immense. More and more you see people of all walks of life and all races and genders coming together for the common good. Whether it's helping their fellow man after a horrible natural disaster or something as simple as toy drives at a local store to help those less fortunate. We as nation finally had our first African American president and woman as vice president. Women are taking more of a leadership role in business, and politics. African Americans through business, entertainment, and sports have become some of the wealthiest people in our nation. A far cry from the hungry and poverty-stricken horrors of the slaves from antebellum era. Our nation is not perfect by any means, and in a lot of ways we still have things to work on. I know in my house I have always taught my children that we are no better than anyone else and we treat everyone with kindness and respect. We help those that are in need when we can, and we try to spread smiles and love. I believe if everyone took this approach this country and this world would be better off for it.



# *Historical Analysis*

## *Second Place*

### The Reality of Antebellum America and Its Effect on Modern Times

Sophie Tarver

In antebellum society, women and people of color were seen as lesser than white men. This belief had been around since before the creation of America, and it was extremely obvious in American society that the oppression of people of color and women was a pillar of life in the United States. Freedom was exclusive to white men and people of color, and women had no role in society except to do what was expected of them by white men.

Freedom in antebellum America was designed to be exclusive to white men. Women and people of color were never a part of the discussion surrounding freedom and rights in America at the time because white men saw them as lesser and undeserving of the same rights as them. To be free in antebellum society was to be a white man that owned land, but even the poorest men had more rights and freedoms than women and people of color because race and gender transcended economic classes, which is displayed in “Home, Sweet Home: Gender in the Antebellum Household” where it was stated, “A poor man’s power came from his status as household head and control over his dependents and not through wealth.” The act of being free in the antebellum period was the ability to sell, farm, get a paying job, have protected rights, make your own choices, and have bodily and mental autonomy; everything that a white man had a right to and what people of color and women were not allowed. Even white women, who were more socially accepted than women of color, were denied the ‘God-given’

rights of white men. In her speech “Ain’t I A Woman?” Sojourner Truth said, “Then that little man in black there, he says women cannot have as much rights as men, ‘cause Christ was not a woman! Where did your Christ come from? Where did your Christ come from?” These questions highlight the contradictory nature of white men’s thinking associated with their argument against women’s rights.

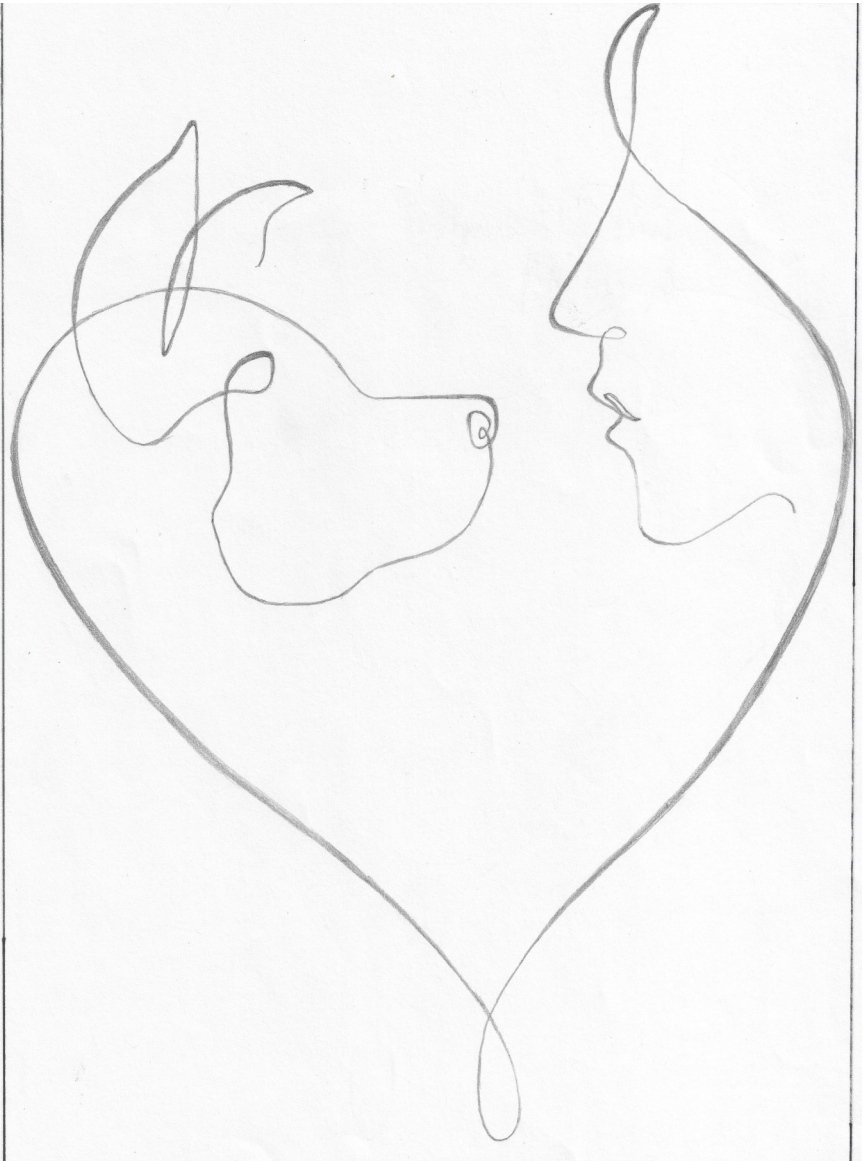
The mistreatment and oppression of people of color and women is inherently unethical. At the time, the treatment of marginalized communities was seen as gracious or ‘for the best’ as seen in “Race Relations And the Ideology of Domesticity.” “It was clear that Van Hook’s master and mistress viewed their roles under the ideology of domesticity as that of the benevolent masters who cared for their slaves so much that they were not worried that the slaves would use their literacy against their masters...” The oppression of people of color and slavery was seen as a morally correct and ethical because it was ‘saving’ slaves from having to live in a world that white people thought they did not understand. While it is now not morally acceptable to oppress people of color and women, antebellum America had seen it as a good thing to society. In actuality, slavery was an institution that ruined lives and destroyed everything that an enslaved person had. This is displayed in “The Everyday Life of Enslaved People in the Antebellum South” with the explanation of the horrors of slavery and how it affected anyone that was enslaved. The innate idea of oppression breaks modern ethics rules, as does the idea of slavery and violence culture that was widespread in antebellum America.

In antebellum society, the belief that white men were better than any other person, both strength and intelligence wise, was extremely popular and prevalent in American culture. The institution of white male supremacy was upheld by the belief that white men were the most intelligent and strongest members of society and were most fit to run and choose things for their households. The ideals of white male supremacy were solidified by laws, institutions that only benefitted white men, and society accepting the white male supremacy ideals. The North Carolina Slave Code of 1855 demonstrates how white men would use laws to keep their societal place above people of color with laws that control what people of color could do, act like, and what would happen to them if they

committed any offenses. The idea of white male supremacy was also supported by society viewing women as weak and lesser than men. White women were viewed as frail and delicate and not able to participate in politics, labor, or really anything that their husbands or fathers were allowed to deal in. Black women were not seen as fragile or delicate, but were seen as lesser still. They were still forced to commit to a life of labor and hardships that white women would never have to. Overall, women and people of color and women were seen as lesser, weaker beings than white males and were not allowed the same rights or privileges because of systematic white male supremacy.

In conclusion, there have been many changes in relation to rights for women and people of color, but I do not believe that we are at a place where we can really believe that all women and people of color are being treated fairly in all aspects of life. Racism is prevalent in almost all aspects of society that we can see every day and misogyny is still rampant, though these issues are not as bad or obvious as they were 200 years ago. There are many unequal practices towards people of color that are inherent to the law, like unequal enforcement of crime and subsequent imprisonment, which causes the prison population to be unequal towards black men. In "Teaching Hard History: American Slavery," they mention that the ideals of racism and slavery were built into historical documents, "So, the Constitution of the United States, and some people would say in contravention, of the ideas of the Declaration of Independence, protected slavery." This displays the historical practice that white men uphold where they deprive people of color through lawful means and how it has evolved to fit modern times in comparison to laws passed hundreds of years ago. Even without the restraints of law, racism is still obvious in American culture if you look long enough. Instead of the obvious oppression towards people of color, there is covert racism, which could be anything from racial discrimination barring someone from getting a job to a statement in a conversation that contains racist viewpoints. Prejudice against people of color can be uncovered in many modern sayings and symbols, which displays the casual racism that has been solidified into American society by white people. Many white people still hold extremely racist views that are upheld by modern society and media as we know it. Women have continued to be oppressed by

men's ideals of misogyny and male supremacy even if they have the rights that they have fought for. 1 in 5 women are sexually assaulted in their lifetime, and many women are still controlled by the idea that women belong in the home, living a life controlled by a man. Societal pressures are still put-upon women to stay in the home and take care of children, which is unrealistic and damaging towards women and society's view on where women fall in relation to societal status. Things like films, books, and social media can affect people's views on race and gender, and there are a lot of racist and misogynistic views that are easily accessible on the internet. As a community, people can rise up and educate themselves and others on their behaviors towards oppressed groups and how to treat people in a way that is equal to everyone. We can begin to break down the oppressive systems that have been built for women and people of color by interrupting the normal flow of society and demanding that marginalized groups be heard, and their ideas be applied.



*General Art—Honorable Mention*

Iris Alexander



*Thankful*  
*For*

# Thankful For First Place

Brittney Moore

If someone had told me fifteen years ago in Kirbyville, Texas, that I would be where I am now, I would not have believed them. Growing up in a low-income household with no way of paying for college or any type of higher education, it made going further in life difficult. Never did I think that I would be a homeowner, with a family that loves me, and the ability to focus on school and bettering myself without financial stress. **I am thankful for my family, my home, and my higher education.**

My husband and children are the most important people in my life. When trying to pick one specific person to be thankful for, I could not choose that one was more important than the other. I am thankful for my husband, Travis, because he is an extremely hard worker with a calm, steady personality who keeps me grounded. When my anxiety becomes too much, I can always count on him to calm me down. He is a phenomenal father who would do anything to help them become the best versions of themselves every day, and loves them unconditionally. He is my best friend and I could not imagine doing life with anyone else. Our children, Kaydon and Amelia, are by far the best in the world. I do not feel like that is a biased observation at all either. They are smart, funny, driven, and most importantly, kind. They care about everyone they meet and are not shy about making new friends. I have never had a problem with them being in trouble, every teacher or coach they have ever had has complimented how well behaved and sweet they are. I really could not have been blessed with better children or spouse.

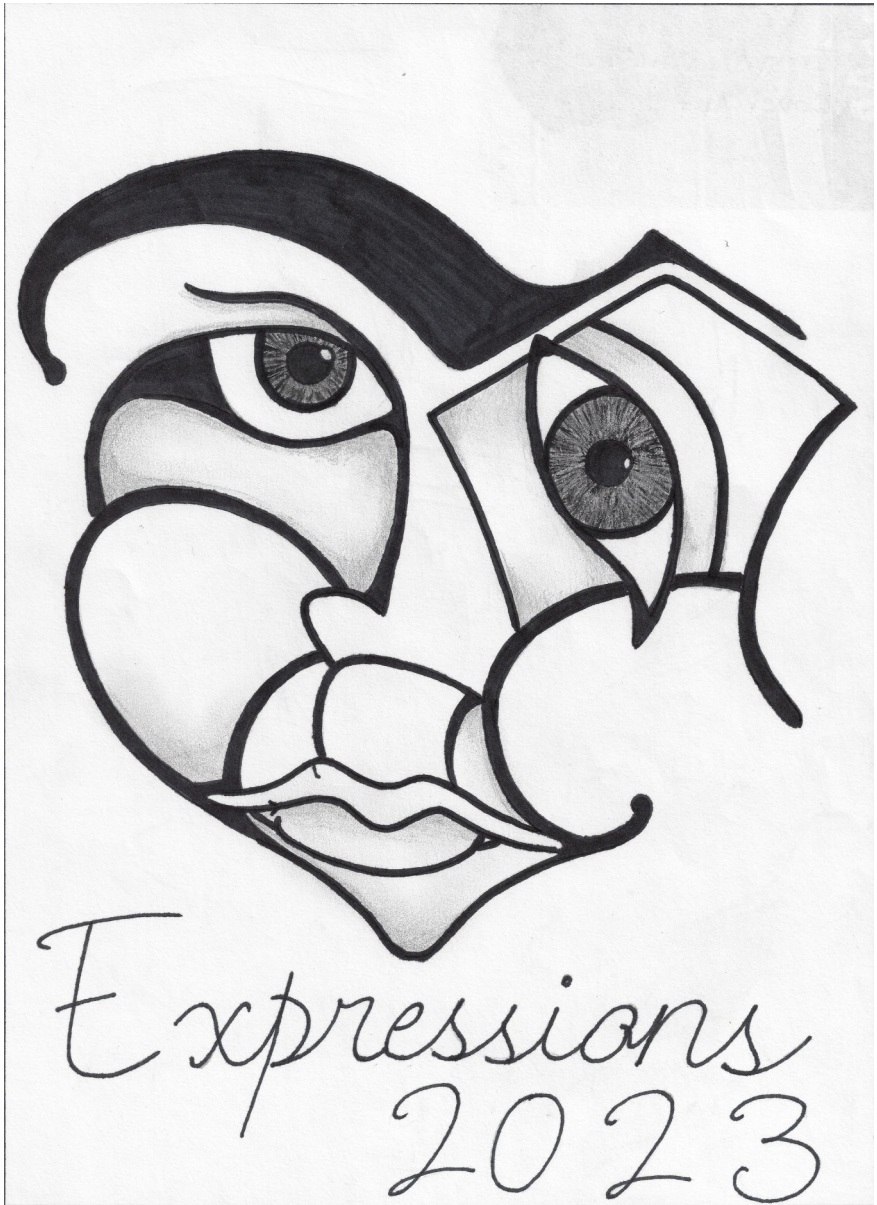
I am thankful for the house I call a home in Hamshire,

Texas. Growing up, we moved a lot from rent house to rent house. I lived in eight different houses before I turned eighteen. From 18 until 24, I lived in six more houses. Moving around so much has grown to make me hate moving and uncertainty. Travis and I bought our first starter home in Fannett, Texas when we were twenty-four. We sold that home this past year and bought our forever dream home. Signing the papers on our home was one of the best days of my life, knowing I may never have to move again, and I would have that consistency for my children.

I am thankful for my higher education. I should say, I am thankful for my ability to have an education. I absolutely hated school growing up, it felt like just something I had to go through to move on to the next phase of life. It took until I was thirty to really change my mindset about higher education and the benefits of having a college degree. It seemed like every time I would try and go back to school I would come up with some excuse on why I could not do it. I realized that not everyone has the opportunity to go to school every day, there are countries where it is not allowed for women. Now that I am within months of graduation with my first degree, I never want to stop learning. I will be a first-generation college graduate and that makes me extremely proud. I think that the part I am most excited about is hugging my children on graduation day and showing them that they can do whatever they set their mind to, they just have to put in the work.

It is easy to think about what we are thankful for this time of year with an entire holiday dedicated to it, but I can honestly say that I feel grateful for my life every day. My family is an absolute dream that I am incredibly proud of. I am super thankful that I have a house I can come home to every day and feel safe and secure there. I have the ability to go to school every day, without having to fear for my life, and without financial strain. It may not last forever, but I am going to keep counting my blessings every day until then.





*Cover Art—Second Place*

Iris Alexander

# Thankful For Second Place

Govinda Le

Just like every other person in the world, I have experienced many hardships in my life and will continue to do so in the future. With such experiences, I am lucky and thankful to have ways to manage my stress. My friends helped me keep myself mentally sane. My schools helped me keep focused and communicate with other people. My iPad allows me to break out of the real world for a moment to rest my mind. **I am thankful for James and Roberto, my two friends, my schools, and my iPad.**

I am thankful to my friends who keep me sane. I have had many friends in my life. Some have lasted for a year, only for them to move away for reasons I don't know. I wasn't a social person before, and I always felt so lonely when my old friends had to leave. Two of my friends have a special place in my life for being the longest friends I have. Those two will be named James and Roberto. They became my friends during middle school and have been with me up through high school with one of them I still communicate with even after. When I am with them, I never feel alone during my school years, and I can talk to them about any random topic that comes to mind. They became especially important during my high school years, when my personal problems became even worse, and I needed a way to vent. They would listen to me as I ramble about my life and how depressing it was and help me sort out my emotions. There have been many opportunities that I would have mentally fallen apart and might not be here today if not for my friends, and as such, I am forever grateful for their presence.

I am thankful to my schools for shaping me into the man

that I am. Going to school and receiving an education is important to everyone, myself included. Not only did I receive an education for my adult life, I was also able to distance myself from my harsh home environment for a moment. During my middle and high school years, I had a rough family life with my dad being the main problem in all of it. As such my mental health was in a rough position, but thanks to schools, I was able to leave home for a moment and compose myself. Without school, I would have continuously wallowed in my negative thoughts and might have come out as an entirely different person. Going to school also allowed me to communicate with other students and made me open up more to people. With school, I was able to make friends that I would never have made anywhere outside of school. Some of my friends I still talk to even outside of school such as Roberto. Because of the opportunities school has given to me, I am thankful for them.

I am thankful for my iPad for keeping me entertained, shaping me into who I am, and allowing me to, momentarily, ignore what is happening in my life. Home life wasn't easy during my middle and high school years. There were constant arguments, unwarranted threats, and violence. It felt like everything was about to fall apart at any moment, and I couldn't do anything about it. With such a stressful environment, I am glad that I have my iPad with me during those harsh times. While I do understand that ignoring my problems will only end badly in the long run, I just couldn't handle that stress and needed to escape from it for a while. Eventually, the problems at home resolved themselves and my family and I are finally returning to a more normal life. My iPad also allowed me to access the internet as well. With it, I was able to entertain myself through videos and games, and learned about politics as well, influencing me to be who I am. As such, I am thankful for my iPad and what it has done for me.

To conclude, I am thankful for my friends, school, and iPad. I thank my friends for being there with me, and for allowing me to vent my frustrations with home life. I am thankful to my school for letting me leave home for a moment so that I can sort out my thoughts and give me a proper education. I am also

thankful for my iPad, for allowing me to escape from my rough home life and granting me access to the internet turning me into the person I am today.

# Thankful For Third Place

Allam Jaimes

Toward the end of the year, I like to look back at what impacted my life the most. I use this as a way to practice my gratitude and to keep a positive mindset going into a new year. I find gratitude to play an important role when it comes to keeping a healthy mind. During each day, I find something to complain about. This negative energy can be very draining on my mind and soul. This buildup of negative energy can lead to an unhappy life and can easily be avoided by sitting down and reflecting on the joys in life. **This year what impacted me the most and what I am thankful for is my mom, my job, my music.**

My mom, Cecila, plays a huge role in my life she is my center piece. I love my mom and the many ways she supports me. One example of her support is when I first decided to go to gym and work on my physical health. The next day she bought healthier food and helped me organized my meals for the week. I am also thankful for how she always attempts to cheer me up when she notices I am having a bad day. One example of this is when I came back from a bad day at work tired and exhausted. She baked me a batch of chocolate fudge cupcakes so we could decorate them later and I brewed us hot coffee. She asked me about my day at work and so I went on to describe to her about what was bothering me. I appreciate my mom and she will always impact me every year.

I work at Panda Express in Port Arthur, Texas, and I am thankful for this job. I actually like working there. I first applied to the job last year in around late October in 2021. I heard about how hard the job interview was and the chances of being hired were low but I decided to take a chance. Before the interview, I

watched two 15-minute videos on how to better my interview strategy and the type of questions I would be asked as a way to prepare. When I arrived to the interview and sat down with my soon to be manager, Lizabeth, I noticed that the other three interviewees were staring at me. This made me a little uncomfortable, but tried to shrug it off. As soon as I sat down, I shook Lizabeth's hand and introduced myself just as the videos said to. I tried to make myself stand out and the only way that I could think of that would achieve that would be to make them laugh. With the help of a few jokes here and there, I was granted the job later that week and now I am working with amazing people who have impacted my life in a positive way and taught me lessons that apply to life.

I listen to music on a day to day basis and I am very thankful for it. There is not a day that goes by that I do not put on my headphones and jam out to my playlist that correlates to my current mood. I strongly stand by the fact that music brings people together no matter the situation. Everyone loves music. I can not think of anything that could replace the amazing feeling of a good song. Whenever I introduce myself to someone, I walk up to them, and then ask what type of music they listen to. It is a great conversation starter that can branch out to many other topics of interest. I also use music to try and gather a small understanding of a person's personality and their way of thinking. Just by using music I can tell if the person I am hanging out with are going to be laidback or more upfront. When ever I am not having my best days, music takes my hand a lead me into the light. I can always fall back on music to feel better and improve my mood. I do not particularly have a favorite song or genre everything I listen to is mood base, but a song that I can always listen to no matter my mood is "Nights" by Frank Ocean that is what I would consider to be a perfect song.

With Thanksgiving around the corner, I would like to give thanks to mom, my job and to music that taught a lesson in life. We can find meaning in everything; there is always a lesson to be taught. I am glad I realized this at a young age. I can thank my dad for this mindset of always trying to be better day by day. I hope to pass this way of thinking to my future kids as it is one

way to appreciate life. I try not to be too serious as one thing I learned is that life is to serous to be serious.



*Cover Art—Third Place*

Beverly Castillo



# Thankful For Honorable Mention

Maria Morales

Thanksgiving is approaching and my family is communicating to see what location we will spend this holiday at. It is a holiday where my family members surround each other with love and gratitude. On Thanksgiving Day, my family and I always arrive at my Aunt Elvira's home that is filled with posole, tamales, potatoes, and sweets. It is a great day to celebrate because we begin to visualize what we are thankful for. This is the time where my thoughts begin to surface on the many objects and people in my life I'm grateful to have. **I am thankful for my son, Noah, my grandmother's home, and my health.**

At the age of twenty-two, I brought a little miracle to this world whom I will forever be thankful for and his name is Noah. Noah was born on March 1, 2022, at three in the morning. Since the moment I carried him, I knew this was my forever person; someone who I would deliver all of my love too. I am glad I was granted the honor to have Noah in my life because I am certain he will always be there for me and will make me feel less alone. Noah has been my motivation in succeeding in school and working harder to provide us with a brighter, fortunate future. Before Noah was born, I was in a difficult part of my life. I viewed each day as the same boring, repeated schedule and my health was not doing so great. Once I found out I was going to have baby Noah in my life, everything became better. For instance, I began to put more effort in my work and initiated more care towards my health by eating right. I am grateful I have someone like Noah that makes me happy and gives me the purpose to live life.

My Grandmother Teresa's home in Mexico is the most loving place that I am truly grateful exists. A small background of

my Grandmother Teresa is that she is eighty years old and has a total of eighteen kids. She was married but her husband died at an earlier age so she lives by herself in her home. My Grandmother Teresa is able to come live in the United States but she prefers to live in her home in Mexico. What makes her home special is that every holiday or summer vacation our family meet up in her home. Her home has two floors, is painted with a beige color, and is full of pots with flowers. For example, every Christmas Day around twelve of my grandmothers' children, and around twenty of her grandchildren visit her home to celebrate Christmas. Her home is known as a loving, safe environment to be at. Now when anyone goes to my Grandmother Teresa's home, they know they are going to be greatly cared for. I also have a Chow-Chow dog named Ronnie. When Ronnie and I go for walks in my grandmother's neighborhood, I let him loose and he always tends to run into my Grandmothers home because he knows it's a safe home where he can be provided with food and water.

I am thankful to have a clean bill of health. Throughout the years, I have struggled with my health. I viewed the clinics and hospitals as the main place I resided in. My hospital visits began when I was at my lowest. For example, my first hospital visit was when I was around nineteen years old. It was the time when my mental state was horrible and I felt less of myself. I tried to take my life but didn't succeed. I was helped by nurses at the Medical Center for about a week and received motivation to continue with my life. My mentality then healed and blossomed. In addition, a few years later in my pregnancy stage I suffered from COVID-19 and was diagnosed with pre-eclampsia (high blood pressure). Most of my days were spent at the UTMB Clinic in Beaumont because I had to be observed carefully since I had a hard time breathing and felt light-headed. Everything turned out fine and I was safely able to bring my bundle of joy Noah into this world. My health went back to normal after I had my baby boy Noah. My blood pressure dropped back to a normal pace and my mentality was better.

Overall, I am glad Thanksgiving Day exists because it brings my family joy, food, and love. My family and health take

on a big impact on my life and I am grateful they are doing great to this day. Knowing I have a place to give thanks, besides my son Noah and being able to live with a clean health of bill brings me happiness. I will always be thankful for having Noah in my life, for the existence of my grandmother's home, and for my well-being.

# Thankful For Honorable Mention

Megan Venable

In my lifetime, I have faced many struggles. The last two years of my life have been some of the hardest. Luckily, I have multiple ways to help me guide myself along. My Nana, the lake, and my dogs help me always look at the positive side. **I am thankful for my Nana, the lake, and my dogs for helping me.**

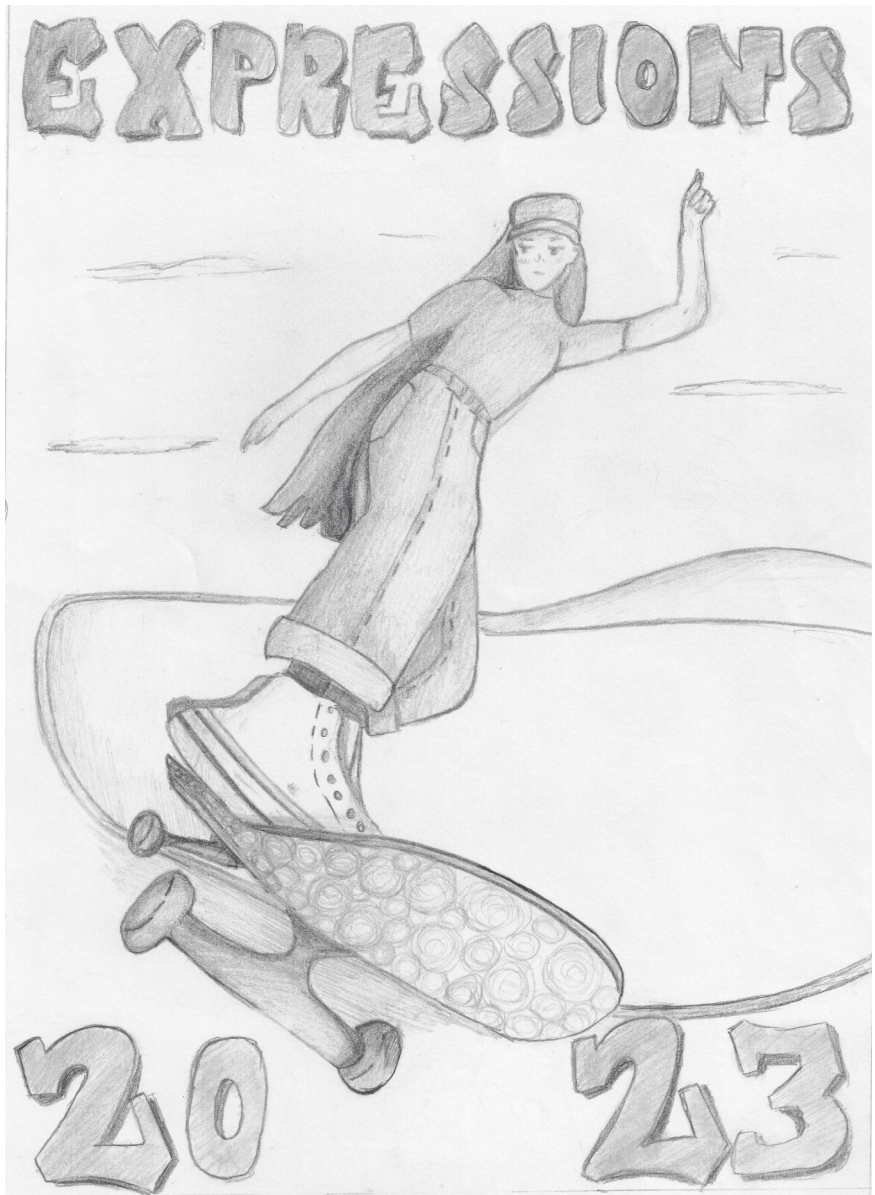
I am thankful for my Nana. She is crazy, funny and outgoing. She has been my biggest role model my entire life. She is one of the strongest women I know. She has gone through many hard times, but has overcome them all. In 2021, my family lost two of our loved ones. The loved one were my Nana's soulmate and mother. In her time of struggle, she helped us overcome ours. Nana is the type of woman to help others before she helps herself. As a result of helping us, Nana is still struggling. Nana will never show she is hurting. Nana is the strongest lady I know, and I hope to be just like her. She is always there when I need her. She has been one of my biggest supporters in everything I do. For example, I was on my high school drill team, and she was my loudest supporter. When it was time to perform, I would know I would hear Nana screaming my name. Having Nana as my biggest supporter was a blessing. In any event I know that if I need a cheerleader, help, or just a hug nana is always there. Nana has held me as I cry and guided me to happiness. She has had my back in all situations. I know that even if I make a bad decision Nana is there if I need to fall back on someone. Everyone needs a Nana like mine. It never fails when I need Nana she is there. I am beyond thankful that I have her in my life.

I am thankful for my getaway place at the lake Toledo. I know that if I am struggling or super stressed, that I can always

go to the lake and relax. Going to the lake helps me forget about all of my worries. When I go to the lake, I sit in a chair and look at my beautiful view. I am so lucky to have a lake house and be able to relax. When I would feel stressed about all of my assignments or any other task I would go there. One time I became super overwhelmed with everything going on in my life, so I took a trip down to the lake and just sat there and relaxed. Watching the waves crash up on the shore is so relaxing. Everyone needs a getaway place to help them destress. This is why I am so thankful I have the lake.

My dogs are also a huge reason I am thankful. I have two dogs. One is named Bentlie and one is named Bailey. They are the sweetest dogs a girl could have asked for. My dogs always know when I am sad, and are so quick to cuddle me. In the summer of 2021, I had my appendix taken out. I could not do anything in my healing process. My dogs sensed that I was hurting and they laid by me every second. They made the recover process so much better. They love to watch television with me and take naps. They are some of the biggest cuddle bugs. Their cuddles are so warm it is an instant relief. They make me feel better the instant I feel them. My dogs are my best friends. I tell them all of my secrets, because I know they will not spread. My dogs help me get through some of my hard times without even knowing. My pets have my heart and I love them so much. I do not know what I would do without them.

My hard times are made easier with the people and places I love most. I am where I am today because of the people in my life. Nana and my dogs make me grateful for every day I live. Life without them would be impossible. My life is amazing due to my three ways of happiness. The lake has brought peace into many situations of stress. I am beyond grateful for my Nana, the lake house, and my wonderful dogs.



*Cover Art—Honorable Mention*

Beverly Castillo

# Thankful For Honorable Mention

Zeadrianna Flores

As Thanksgiving comes around we are reminded to give thanks for all that is great. We gather around a table and share with others the many blessings we have received in the past year. The blessings could be a person, a place, or an item. These could be many blessings or simply one blessing. I have received many this year, but there are only three that I am most thankful for. **I'm most thankful for my grandmother, the track, and *Naruto*.**

The person I am most thankful for would be my grandmother, Marie. She is the strongest woman I've ever met. She is always there for me and has been my backbone in life since I was born. The reason I am most grateful for her would be because she has stepped in to be a parent figure to me when my parents separated. My grandmother took me in and raised me as her own when I was eight years old. She went to all my games for sports, brought me an iPhone, fed me, and put clothes on my back and shoes on my feet. She is the person whom I idolize the most and want to be like when I become an adult. Everything I do is for her, so when I become older with a great job, I will be able to take care of her like she did for me. I will always be thankful for everything she has done for me because she didn't have to provide for me or step up for that matter, but she did, and I will always love her for that.

The place I am the most thankful for is the Nederland High School track. The track has been my safe space since I was a young child. I am thankful for this because it's where I can finally have time for myself. The track is also the place where I can finally unleash my anger by running. I usually have quite a

lot of trouble controlling my anger, so when I become angry, I will drive to the track to run. This helps a lot because running releases endorphins that cause a positive and energizing outlook on life. I've also lost a ton of weight due to running that I am thankful for because my body is in the best shape it has ever been in. The track has also brought my brother, cousins, and me closer because we often gather on the field inside the track. We will usually compete in a game of soccer, football, or ultimate frisbee. My friends and I will also play a game of manhunt on the track, and we would compete in this game for hours while all having a great time. The track has brought a lot of happy memories that I will cherish for a lifetime.

The item that I am thankful for would be television show *Naruto*. This show has brought me nothing but happiness in my life. At times when I was upset and didn't want to move out of bed, *Naruto* gave me that push. The show's story line is the best story line ever created in the anime world. It's about a boy that grew up without any parents and was looked down upon in the village that he lived in. Instead of joining the villain ark he decided to become as strong as he could so the people in the village had no choice but to love him. *Naruto* had a never giving up attitude that I strived to have. It also gave me hope that my life will become great like his did. It also pushed me to work out because I wanted to be built like him. At times when I would work out my mind would tell myself to give up. When this happened, I would think back to the show and remember how *Naruto* would never give up I then would continue to push myself.

When this Thanksgiving comes around and my family and I are gathered around the table to say what we are most thankful for, I'll wait my turn and remember the three reasons why I am thankful and what has brought me so much joy this past year. I will be delighted to discuss and inform my family why my grandmother, the track, and *Naruto* are the reasons I have smiled so much this year. These reasons have brought me so much joy and comfort.





*Poetry*

*Poetry*  
*First Place*  
Stone Covered Well  
Anthony Tinsman

Up on the shaved top hill  
Encircled overgrown by tortured oaks  
Choked in prickly wait-a-minute vines  
A mighty slab of stone  
Red as the earth  
Lay over the old farms well  
Sense tells that a palm pressing  
To the stone could not  
Reveal buckets drawn  
Laughter, toil, silence  
Of mouths, hearts, lives past  
Flows the vein of sulfury  
Water, beneath the clay  
Soapstone and dirt  
Circles the sun above, stars  
Shifting without pause  
Like insects we are replaced  
Chancy, our having lived encoded  
Through the permanence of earth, stone  
Moved in the wake



*Photography—First Place*

Beverly Castillo

*Poetry*  
*Second Place*

Ancient God of Moabites

Ashley Victoria Desmond

Illustrate, demystify, the solitary darkness of your betray.  
Clutch your torch and follow, we can skip as we slay.  
Macabre thoughts inhumed in my grave.  
Dimensions ripping the fabric of the once brave.  
My eyes see not cherished adventures laced with rose smiles.  
Only rotten sorrows laying like leaves among piles.  
The even creeps softly, it bathes in my pain.  
I wait with arms distorted, smothered in vain.

# Poetry

## Third Place

I Am From

Kaitlyn Bleakley

I am from a mother and father that I love, separately. Big happy family? Unlikely. Practically impossible.

I am from divorce. A broken home, they call it. A mother who loves me and a father who loves me, but could hardly stand the sight of each other.

I am from remarriage. A step mother who loved me like her own. Taught me to cook, taught me to ride horses, taught me about life. Until she hated me.

I am from a life turned upside down by a hormone imbalance. A step mom who once loved me like her own, then suddenly a house divided and she can't stand me anymore. Living under the roof of a malicious, selfish, narcissist.

I am from the United States Marine Corps motto. "Semper Fidelis" is how I was raised. "Always faithful." Faithful through alcoholism, mental abuse, emotional abuse. When is enough, enough?

I am from a house that was built in love with a hope for the future. A house that is now in ruins with haunting memories of hate, disgust, and ugliness.

I am from bleeding purple. Sports that I would give almost anything to play again. Friendships that got me through. Cherokee still gives me goosebumps even though Disney wants it gone.

I am from Dr. Judice's Composition II class where I figured out that I really can do this. I can be successful because I AM talented. I may be the oldest student in her class, but she believes in me enough to root for me. I can't ask for much more than that. I am from alcoholism and Svedka as my drug of choice. Being drunk at work every day. Stealing. Lying. Passing out on the couch every day. Hiding bottles of vodka in under my mattress.

I am from a cry out to God for help. "I can't do this anymore."  
"Please just save me."

I am from almost two and a half years sober. 883 days of recovery. 883 days of trying to be better than I was before. 883 days since I realized I couldn't make it on my own and needed a savior.

I am from a class full of 4-6-year-old Bible students that make my heart soar. Always trying to teach them what it took me too long to learn.

I am from a home with three dogs that may as well have hung the moon. Jude and his little feet make my world keep spinning on days that I wish it would just stop. Skyy has been by my side for almost nine years. She's getting gray around her eyes, but I stare into them every chance I get. Rogue isn't the brightest crayon in the box, but he has a heart of gold and a butt that never stops wagging.

I am from friendship. Kelly, Nicole, Jeff, Caitlyn, Jessica. Friends who loved me when I didn't deserve the love they gave.

I am from Spurlock Road Veterinary Clinic. I've grown up trying to save four-legged lives, and knowing to let them go when it's time.

I am from there's no vision too big. It took me nine years, but I can do this. I can graduate. I can get a degree. I can make a better life. I can be better than I was.

*Poetry*  
*Honorable Mention*

Prison Dream

Tyler Castle

I saw a seagull flying,  
High above a prison yard  
One day in late November.  
Was bittersweet to see it fly.  
My daughter came to mind,  
A precious child who once  
Was mine but now is gone.  
The little girl I left behind,  
She's there upon some  
Other's shore, as surf swells  
High and tide comes in,  
And all about her seagulls soar.  
The smell of salt is in the air,  
The scent of Scarlett's hair.  
Together we are there.  
My daughter by the water  
Near the shore with gulls  
A flight above a prison yard.

# Poetry

## Honorable Mention

Love Me? SLAM

Scarlette Pine

Love in this generation is a joke. There's no real effort, no romance, no fighting for the person you want to be with. There's no opening the door, no planning romantic dates, and no getting to know anyone beneath the surface.

I have fought for a relationship before. Am I proud of it? Yes. Would I do it again? Only if I know they would do the same for me.

But that's in the past. It is time for a new love. A better love. A love that is unconditional and has equal amounts of effort.

To my next partner,

Be patient with me. Understand that when I love, I love hard. I take everything to heart, and I will always put my all into our relationship. I want to build with you and have a meaningful connection. I want to understand you in more ways than I could ever explain.

I want to know what you like and dislike. What makes you happy and what makes you sad. I want to know about your past and plans for the future. But most importantly I want to know what makes



you the person you are.

Why do you carry yourself a certain way or why you don't like doing certain things?

Who are you closer to your mom or your dad?

But most of all why me?

Why out of everyone do you choose to be with me?

I'll ask for reassurance to make sure you're still in it and are still sure about your choice in choosing me.

Please understand the type of love I want I've never had or seen before in my own life. I want a relationship with all the ups and downs the good and the bad.

....

But who knows when I'll have the type of love I desire. In this generation it's

"You're not my type."

"You're too big for me."

"I am not looking for a relationship." ..... (at least not with you).

But this generation's biggest problem is doing relationship quality things with the title of being "just friends".

This generation needs to learn to be open and honest about what they truly want. Do you want a relationship? Say it. Do you want to be friends? Say it, but also mean it. Do you want to be friends with benefits? Say it, but do not get you're feeling involved.

I've struggled with saying what I want. But now that is all I do. No more, no less. I deserve the love that I give to others, one day I will get just that.

Patience.

Love in this generation could be beautiful. Only if people begin to be honest. Begin to be vulnerable. Begin to be open-minded. Love eventually in our generation will have meaning and depth. And it will be a beautiful thing.

I want to be loved and appreciated and in return, I will give the same. Until then my guard is up and I will give myself the best form of love there is.

Self-love.

*Poetry*  
*Honorable Mention*

Japanese Style Haiku

Brian J. Marsh

Cool autumn wind stirs,  
Orange, red, and yellow falls-  
Beauteous cascade.

Magical snowscape,  
Serenely pristine, pure white  
A blue jay rejoices

Liquid glass in spring  
A cherry blossom drops-in,  
Rippling azure sky.

Verdant summer wood  
Bees meander lazily,  
Honeysuckle sweets.



*Photography—Second Place*

Abby Reeves

*Poetry*  
*Honorable Mention*

Modern Phylogenetics  
Ashley Victoria Desmond

Prodigy of an entity that dwelled in the past,  
Wanders in armonia because she surpassed,  
The monsters residing under her bed.  
Morte, disperi is all they will spread.  
No matter what clouds may be in your life,  
Countless torments, the nights you will cry.  
See through the fog, lies are untrue.  
Hyperion shrines vibrant, glowing for you!  
Never outgrow your natural state of curiosity,  
Bound to the cosmos for all eternity.

# Poetry

## Honorable Mention

### I Am From Keenan Garcia

I am from a single mother who raised seven kids all by herself, six boys and one girl.

I am from a happy marriage of eighteen years gone wrong. My father and mother tried their best to raise us.

I am from a father who tried to provide the best for us. Those decisions led to a life of crime. Not to do harm to others but to afford a better life for his family.

I am from growing up in a low-income neighborhood -----  
-----?? where it was easy to get in trouble because that life is all we knew. An area most wanted to escape from.

I am from where making it out of the neighborhood was always the goal. Going through school learning to see the world for how it is. Getting an education was important to be able to support my family.

I am from a supportive family, where all our hopes and dreams centered around providing for future generations. Raising the children the main concern.

I am from being the first person in my family to go to college. Al-

ways was a fast learner growing up and maturing early.

I am from making mistakes in my past that I continue to pay for.

Some things I wish I could change but I have to accept.

I am from being in a relationship since I was fourteen years old, a lady's man but all that changed with time and age.

I am from committing a crime at nineteen and going to prison at twenty-three. Another learning experience like college is.

I am from trying to raise my son while in prison. He knows I love him; as time goes by I see more of myself in him, kind, easygoing and generous. He is the joy of my life.

I am from still trying to continue my education while in prison.

Learned to be resilient and overcome any adversity and obstacles. I will complete my degree.

I am from a troubled past but with an optimistic view on life. I pray for better days ahead. What I have been through makes me stronger.

I am from being the epitome of "it's not how you start, it's how you finish" mentality. Being a loving person in this often hard, cold, and unloving world.

Poetry  
*Honorable Mention*

What Lay Out There

Anthony Tinsman

Fog locked trees lines  
Silhouette sharp against  
Rising mist  
Mans past I glimpsed there  
Afraid to meet  
Other creatures  
Across green fields  
After heavy rain  
The misty darkness  
Primitive  
Everything blackened with green  
And the fog tugged  
At memory  
Demanding bravery  
And respect grew  
For those who  
Picked up the frightful challenge.



*Poetry*  
*Honorable Mention*

Haiku

Anthony L. Damron

Seasons trade places  
Cool winds over the earth,  
Danger always near

Mice play in wide fields,  
Man claims his broad castle grounds.  
They argue in walls

Poetry  
*Honorable Mention*

Flow of Zeros

Ashley Victoria Desmond

Great was the fall, this is a circus.  
The ozone is bleeding, please pray for the Turkish.  
We are to blame; greenhouse gases are venting.  
It's up to us all to keep on inventing  
ways to populate Mars, the skies not the limit.  
Although, that does not guarantee a golden ticket.  
First, let me apologize to our Dear Mother Earth,  
taking for granted all she is worth.  
We owe it, she's what's allowed us to thrive.  
Yet, we evolved into hate, there's war all the time.  
We are all just senseless top-notch polluters.  
Don't act like I need to pull up, be your tutor.  
We didn't forget about The Regulation of 1979.  
RIP Environmental Protection Law,  
That was a lie.

*Photography—Third Place*

Dagan Lott



*Poetry*  
*Honorable Mention*

English Style Haiku

Brian J. Marsh

A steel gray mist parts,  
Light- prismatic reflection-  
Magical rainbow

Make believe is truth.  
This is what I'm meant to be,  
A child's dream comes true

The broken silence,  
A startled reaction- flight,  
Synchronous ascent.

Sunlight on chrome.  
Wind- a speeding landscape- free,  
Bass power echoes.

# Poetry

## Honorable Mention

### I Am From

### Daniel Wilson

I am from a military family: mother Navy and father Marines. Met and married in service, Result, divorced: one girl, one boy

I am from birth in California, Arizona raised. Navajo Nation always in my head.

I am from boarding schools, staying in a dorm during the week and home on weekends. First through fifth grades then moved on.

I am from drug addiction and alcoholism. Working, stealing and dealing to stay on the level. Missed school, work, and events when sick.

I am from six years of high school, two and half years of drugs and fights, then dropped out. Three and half years of passing grades.

I am from the United States Marines. Needed to break away from toxic cycle, smarter, deadlier, and in good shape. Six years later still an alcoholic.

I am from a warrior society, outstanding work ethics. Highly decorated and respected. Alcohol still affecting.

I am from around the world, Okinawa, Philippines, Afghanistan. Can be anywhere and still feel like nowhere.

I am from back to square one: older, wiser, but still falling in same steps. Drugs, fights, alcohol, repeat. Near death many times but didn't care.

I am from opened mind and eyes, only took thirty-five years but finally a true adult. Sober, healthy, and family first. Helping more people behind bars than ever did free from them.

*Poetry*  
*Honorable Mention*

Haiku

Dustin Spell

Snow upon a mirror:  
Pungent smell of new cut grass.  
Sting of forever.

Sun rises on grey,  
Skeletons of winter groan.  
Leaf is tenacious.



*Faculty*

*&*

*Staff*





Doneane Beckcom Reese

# Shining Star

## Tina Capeles

My beloved son  
My shining star  
As a baby, you taught me love  
And filled my heart with bursting joy.  
As a boy, so sweet and full of life  
The smiles that shined, lit up the world-  
And as a man, so tender and thoughtful

My sweet boy, the star that shined  
Your light has dimmed, it shines no more  
My heart is broken  
It beats no more  
I long to see my star so bright

You give me strength, hope, and courage  
Even if your light has dimmed.  
Forever in my heart,  
With memories still bright,  
Forever my shining star  
My love and light.



Michelle Judice

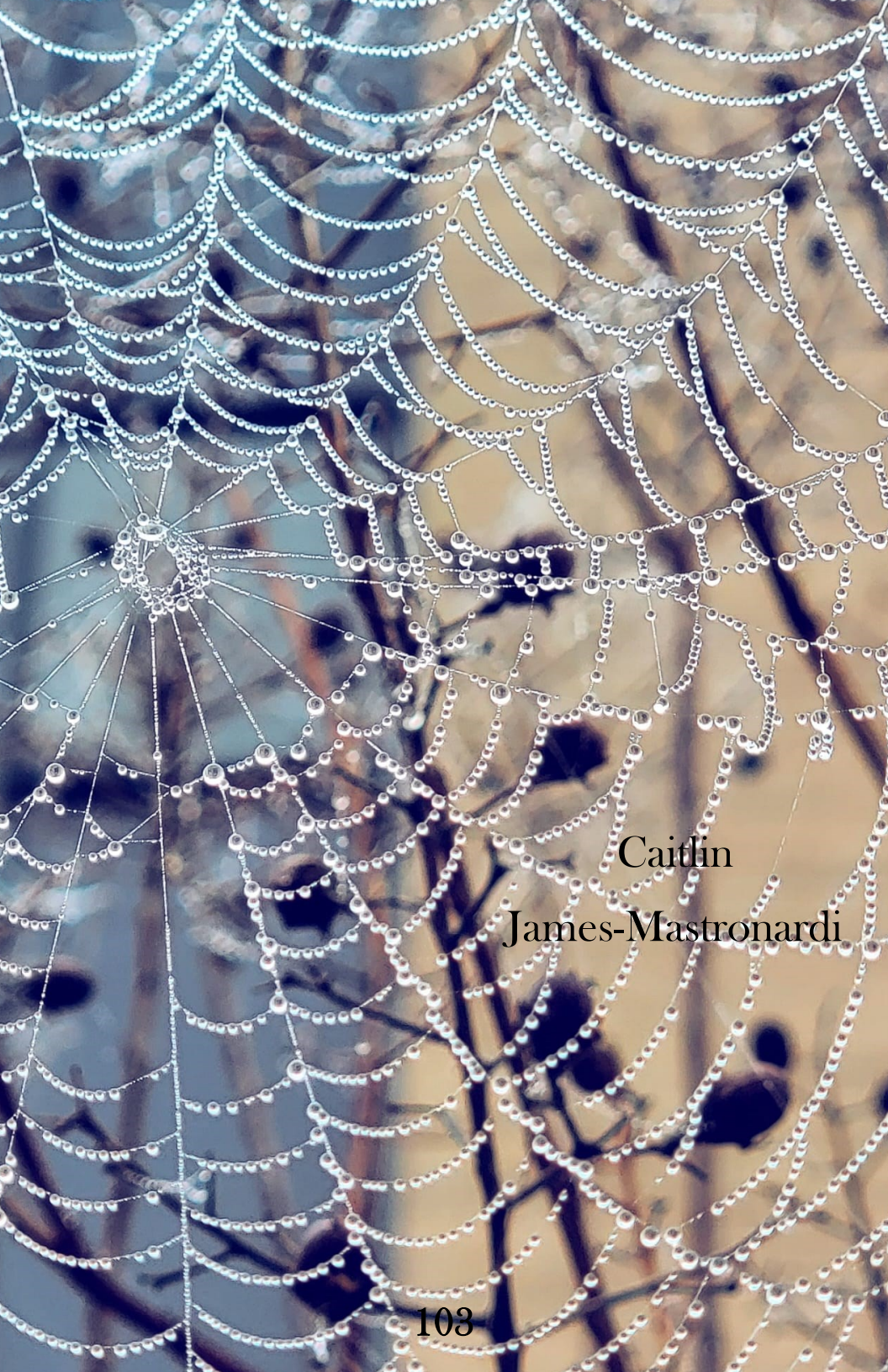
# The Moose

## Chad Belyeu

Hunger-brave, he's come to lick salt  
Kicked from the road; his rack of plows  
Furrows the melt. The crown, galactic—  
Each tine wreathed in nebulous vapor.  
Half a ton of life, the steaming hide  
Sap-matted and tight across raised ribs,  
Yet cowled around the bull neck  
As comic incongruent waddles.

Jacob's ladders, freed  
From passing prows of thundersnow,  
Refract the corona of steam.  
False spring fools dilettantes:  
Tourists amok, mushing forward, cameras poised.

Winter suns make lovers' promises.  
Tonguing greedily, the moose knows better.



Caitlin  
James-Mastronardi

# I Am From

## Caitlin James

I am from Viking blood  
The Pagan lands. Armies  
Of raiders and the  
Last Scandinavian king.  
I am from brain surgery survival,  
Hawaiian house fires and  
All roads lead to the ocean.  
I am from wicker furniture and mango trees  
It was the late seventies.  
I am from traveling bleeding-heart hippies  
Forty dollars and nothing to lose.  
It was the coldest December on record.  
I am from lake lovers and Texas summers,  
Willie Nelson and real bar-b-que.  
Shot gun outlaws bathe babies in Igloo coolers.  
I am from sleepy pothead university,  
Neighborhoods with lifelong friends.  
I am from liberal arts, integration, open minds  
And 90s kids.  
I am from the Occult. Gypsies trained in Tarot,  
Heirloom sage and alchemy,  
Alice and the white rabbit.  
I am from Beautiful Mountain transplant,

Bloom where you have fallen.  
Easter baby, first-born son.  
I am from messy divorce and multiple college degrees.  
The reinvention of self and pulling up bootstraps.  
I am from professor of English,  
Flood lands and the carcinogenic coastline.  
Cajun living, romanticizing resilience  
And hurricane reconstruction.  
I am from an Irish dive bar  
Italian lover and one thousand plane tickets,  
'I do' in Central Park.  
I am from a baby on your 40<sup>th</sup> birthday,  
Daughter of the century.  
I am from timeless strength,  
and warrior women building fires while giving birth.  
I am from the earth,  
All that ever was and shall be.



Michelle Judice



# More Similar Than Different

Michelle Judice

I asked my students to write a narrative of a time they were resilient. Below are the opening lines, in order as they are in the gradebook. In class, we discussed what it means to be “resilient” and other than instructing them to have a good “hook” with details and dialogue, and certain word count I left them alone. Their stories are excellent; several brought me to tears. What struck me most, however, was how similar the students’ stories are. It did not matter origin, ethnicity, age, religion, gender, or socio-economic class. (I asked them if they wanted to share these stories with each other; they said no, which disappointed me but as personal and poignant as they are I understand.) I wish they could read their classmates’ narratives. They would see how much they have in common and how much more alike they are than they realize. More importantly, they would grasp that they are not alone in the struggle.

\*\*\*\*\*

I knew what was happening at the time was awful, yet no one in my family addressed it.

My mom did the absolute best she could at raising me; she had the help of her two sisters so I was raised by all women, very strong and smart women.

“I know mom,” I responded, “I am looking forward to going back to school. These past two years of just working at a place that won’t benefit my future made me realize that if I get an education, I wouldn’t struggle so much or be so physically tired all of the time.”

Towards the end of the night, the storm water began to slowly enter our house; it started at the front door entrance and made its way through the rest of our house.

I saw my mother standing by the front door and for the first time in my life I saw her with tears in her eyes.

Suddenly, my face and chest broke out in hives and my heart started racing; I had the urge to burst out in tears without reasoning.

We never know what to expect when dealing with siblings; we either love or hate each other or come to an understanding of where we stand in our relationship.

When I was seven years old, I was faced with my first experience in dealing with the passing away of a loved one; this emotional hardship not only affected me, but the rest of my family as well.

It was a Thursday morning in May of 2022 when I found out; I awoke with the overwhelming feeling of loneliness, and I knew he was gone.

I was sixteen years old when I was first diagnosed as having an eating disorder; I knew something was wrong when all that went through my mind was, “How many calories should I consume today? Should I go work out for three hours today? Is that enough?”

My father worked out of state in order to pay bills; my mother was left alone to raise four daughters by herself.

I didn’t know that I was losing the life I had imagined and carefully built for myself because I was blinded by my love for her; the disintegration started slowly and without warning.

It wasn’t simply a general sense of anxiety/anxiousness: it was a tangible sensation I couldn’t get rid of with worst-case scenarios running through my mind, making my palms sweat and my heart race.

Growing up school was something that always came easy to me and I feel like I never truly struggled at all when it came to my school work and my study habits; entering my sophomore year of high school everything drastically changed for me.

My father always told me, “Son, there is a hard road ahead, but keep your head high and you will make it in life.”

I remember looking up at the sky and feeling as if time had stopped because it realized that the person I was closest to and had known all my life, had just unexpectedly passed away.

I was the quiet girl who would always do her work and earn good grades; without trying, I managed to pass all of my classes and make all A’s, until I started my senior year.

I remember waking up one morning to absolute silence; the silence lasted for a few minutes, and then it was broken by quiet sobs coming from my mother’s bedroom down the hall.

People don't  
care how much  
*you know*  
until they  
know how much  
*you care.*

Theodore Roosevelt



# Night Class

## Chad Belyeu

The packet provides space:

NAME\_\_\_\_\_

Above the line, the student writes his

And underneath, unprompted, his number.

Federal issue: five digits—a dash—three more.

A phone number in Europe?

One short of a social.

Nomenclature new to unprocessed eyes.

Intake: twenty-five men shuffle in khaki,

Ochre scrubs, sweats, gray paintshirts

Unpainted, anthill-brown

Tees. Poor man's pajamas.

Unwanted guest clothes.

*Do you think*, the prompt reads—

“Lockdown!” Bell. “We’re done here.”

*Do you think*, I type, with soft hands,

In soft light, fluorescence snuffed, and the tapestry

(Left by an ex, “Tree of Life” from the hippie place)

Brightening up the cloister, a window

In my eight by ten; monkishly, I write:

*Do you think...*

(The impossible vermillion blood orange shades smiling,  
leopard-coat bark, rose-golden-green macaws and monkeys danc-  
ing, reminding every visitor of sex)

*Do you think we are doomed...*

In twelve-point Times New Roman since we're told to  
*...to repeat the mistakes...*

“Chow call! Shut it down.”

*...and struggle...*

“Eight to ten, conspiracy to commit...”

*...with the imperfections of our parents...*

THOUGH I HAVE SEEN TWO OF MY THREE KIDS,  
*...in our own lives?*

THEY DON'T KNOW ME. AND I DON'T KNOW THEM.  
I CAN SEE THE PATTERNS FORMING.

Five digits—a dash—three more.

The three at the end: five-five-five

THEIR MOTHER'S DRINKING HAS ME APPREHENSIVE.

His suffix, a made-up telephone prefix

From a bad movie, refusing to end.



Caitlin James-Mastronardi

# Historical Context for 17th Century Literature:

## 17th Century Scientific Revolution in Europe

Ana Cristina Rudholm

The 17th century in Europe marks the beginning of a significant historical movement that undeniably influenced subsequent centuries, including the one we currently inhabit. This movement is usually referred to as the "Scientific Revolution." This term, coined by historians centuries after the fact, is a rather misleading one as monumental changes occurred during this time on numerous levels of human existence and were not limited to the scientific realm. It is interesting to note that the word "science" was not used during this time period; rather, what we think of as "science" was referred to as "Natural Philosophy." This was an exciting time that set things into motion that were later solidified during the 18th century Enlightenment.

The Scientific Revolution involved transformation of a varied and colossal nature. There was a fundamental shift in human consciousness and in the way people saw and experienced the world. The collective *Weltanschauung* shifted from operating as Supreme Being centered to more "human" centered. There was a growing emphasis on humans and on human achievement that posited the idea that maybe we weren't the scourge-like pathetic species we imagined ourselves to be, and that we were indeed capable of great things without divine assistance intervening at every turn. This encouraging and fruitful mindset fueled numerous great discoveries, inventions, and the creation of artistic masterpieces.

For example, alchemy—that peculiar sort of magical pseudo-science that allegedly transformed base metals into gold with a few oddball ingredients and arcane incantations—became what we know today as chemistry. Astrology, another kind of esoteric, non-

scientific based practice that is still widely popular today became what we now refer to as astronomy. Various occult-like practices sprinkled with magic and spells developed to the point where they became bona fide "hard" sciences. In short, there was a departure from the metaphysical realms of religion and magic to what could be proven, measured, quantified, and weighed in concrete and empirical terms. Not that religion was eschewed, far from it. But there was indeed a shift from complete reliance on the unseen and otherworldly to what one might comically yet aptly refer to as "humans doing it for themselves!"

A growing skepticism in religious authorities was also prevalent during this time. People were losing patience with being told: "Oh, if your life here on earth sucks, don't worry about it because you will be rewarded for all your sorrow and suffering in Heaven after you die." This sort of counsel was no longer a viable option to a growing number of individuals employing the use of reason. The burgeoning practice of critical thinking enabled people to see the lack of logic in such platitudes wherein they could no longer find comfort. And really, what better way to control those who are suffering by promising them a better time in the afterlife if they would only learn to behave themselves on earth despite being saddled with starvation, poverty, and disease.

These fundamental shifts in the way human beings experienced the world contributed to what is known as the *Carpe Diem* literary movement or trend. Literature exalting the here and now became popular. The howl of the day became: Let's live while we can here on earth because nobody really knows what happens after you die anyways! This idea and its variants took hold as the blossoming thought of the time. And even though incredible feats of early technology, early engineering, and medicine were also occurring, the church authorities of the day had no love for this movement. In fact, they did everything they could to destroy it. One can clearly see why, as it stripped them of some of their power over the minds and hearts of people. Galileo was put under house arrest for simply stating that the earth was not the center of the universe, and furthermore it is round! At any rate, the *carpe diem* concept did indeed influence the literature of the day, as the writers of the time were invariably well educated, brilliant individuals who were acutely aware of their changing times. The writer, John Donne, was one



of these remarkable individuals. He was still quite religious in some ways, yet his religious mindset was interwoven with non-religious aspects of his being and existence. Throughout most of his life, he very much enjoyed the more earthly pleasures of the human condition and thus believed in love and romance. However, he also possessed a strong spirituality, yet he understood and perceived his religious beliefs through what he knew best— his sense of his own physicality and its accompanying desires. He managed to interweave the spiritual and the physical in his literary body of work. Instead of compartmentalizing these two realms as is the Western tradition (not found in various Eastern sources, for example), he unified the two, creating a powerful new paradigm in literary tradition which has remained influential and popular to this day.

In short, the 17th century was an incredible time on numerous levels. Progressive changes in governing structures, society, politics, economics, and just about everything affecting human life were manifested through innovation, creativity, and newly implemented methods of inquiry.

This era also marked the beginning of the concepts and practices belonging to what we know now as the social sciences. The terms "social sciences" and "psychology" were not used at that point in time as they were fabricated at a later date. These areas were born from the desire to heal the collective, to assist those on the margins of society through progressive and prove-able methods and not mere guesswork or ancient religiously sanctioned methods. Psychiatric institutions were becoming much more humane. Again, we must note the fluidity of language in terms of how we discuss these issues. The terms "psychiatry" or "mental illness" were not used; instead, "maladies of the mind," "melancholia," or "touched by the gods" constituted the diction of the day. Even prisons were becoming somewhat more bearable as a growing number of authorities began to understand that anti-social and criminal behaviour was often the result of abuse, neglect and pain, and not from demonic possession or satanic vengeance. Much of the population still believed such things, but began to see it as the exception rather than the rule. Thus, treating individuals with a bit more mercy and understanding became a new trend, and this dramatically improved the overall quality of life for many. Of course, ending up in one of these places would still not prove a desired destination, but the


chances of survival were somewhat better than in previous centuries.

Remember, however, that these grand historical movements bleed into each other, and that these terms/labels such as "Scientific Revolution," "Age of Reason," "Medieval," etc. are terms that historians coined many years after the fact in order to explain things in a coherent way. In other words, you would not fall asleep one night during the "Scientific Revolution" and then wake up the next morning and shout, "Oh! I'm in the Enlightenment era now!" No, that is not the way human history unfolds. Civilizations rise, fall, rise again, and movements are organic outgrowths, building upon what came before them. We must not forget that all the benefits we enjoy in the present day are due to the accomplishments of prior human beings, of their efforts, sweat, and ingenuity. We benefit from all the centuries of innovation and genius that occurred long before we were born. Hopefully we will continue to build upon that brilliance and accomplishment, as we are united by our love of all that is life-affirming and beautiful in our world. We in fact live in an unprecedented time wherein we have opportunities to affect transformation—or an alchemy if you will—of the lead wrought from recent historical events into the spun gold of a new awakening and re-claiming of our lives, our souls, and all of our grace remembered.



Caitlin James-Mastronardi





*Thank you to all  
contributors  
and  
Congratulations  
to those  
published in  
Expressions 2023*



# Expressions 2023

We would like to acknowledge our judges:

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## Statement of Editorial Policy

The editorial staff would like to thank all of the students who submitted work for consideration to EXPRESSIONS 2023. Unfortunately, not every entry can be published. In order to insure fair and impartial judging and publication selection, a copy of each submission without the author or artist's name is sent to the judges. The judges at no time see the copy which identifies the individual.

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 James-Mastronardi, Editor in Chief

Lamar State College-Port Arthur, a Member **Texas State University System™**, is an equal opportunity affirmative action educational institution and employer. Students, faculty, and staff members are selected without regard to their race, color, creed, handicap, age, sex, or national origin, consistent with the Assurance of Compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964; Executive Order 11246 as issued and amended; Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Inquires concerning application of these regulations may be referred to the Vice President of Academic Affairs.







