



Youth Writing Competition

In collaboration with the
National Writing Project of Acadiana

Winners' Anthology

Fall 2021

Acknowledgments

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Sincerely,

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1st place Fiction—Elementary School Division

By: **Shya Hebert**

Broadmoor Elementary School

Creating Color

Harvey Haden woke from gray dreams to a colorless Friday. He picked at his bland breakfast and groaned at the thought of bells, books, and bullies waiting for him at school.

“Mom, I don't want to go to school! Max will be there.”

“You don't have a choice,” sighed Mom.

Harvey sunk his head into his hands, realizing there was no escape. Yesterday, Max was embarrassed when Harvey answered the question Max was struggling to understand. And today was the day Harvey would pay for it.

Harvey arrived at school to see Max's face through the dull fog.

“Hey, nerd! Today is the day!” Snarled Max.

Suddenly, the world started to spin and before Harvey knew it, he was lying on the ground. When he opened his eyes, they were filled with color. It was like being inside a rainbow! He peeled himself from the purple grass and took in the unusual sights. Fluffy pink trees surrounded him as he moved under a blanket of rainbow-colored clouds. Strangely, Harvey was struck by a familiar feeling.

“Hey, bud!” A high-pitched voice echoed in Harvey's ears.

Harvey examined the figure in front of him. Her eyes were large and curious. Her smile was calming, like Harvey's Mom's was before his dad passed away.

“Who are you?” Harvey asked.

“It's me, Harvey! Your best friend, Riley! You look big for a seven-year-old!”

“I was seven, five years ago.”

“Has it really been that long?” Asked Riley.

“Wait, I've been here? What is this place?”

“This is ImaginationLand!” Said Riley, “You built this place. When you were younger, we would make cool things and solve problems.”

“I don't think I could solve my problems with rainbow clouds.” Harvey responded.

“Never underestimate the power of the imagination cap!” Chirped Riley.

“Imagination cap?” Asked Harvey.

Riley floated over to a tulip-shaped chair and pulled out a cone hat from her pocket. Harvey sunk into the flower. Then, Riley plopped the hat on Harvey's head. “Just think of a problem you want to solve.”

“Okay,” said Harvey as his stomach growled.

Suddenly, a bowl of steaming ramen appeared in his hands.

“That'll solve hunger for sure!”

“I love ramen, but I don't think it will solve my Max problem.” Said Harvey.

“Max? Like Maximus the troll?” Asked Riley.

“Huh?” Asked Harvey.

“Maximus appeared not long before you stopped visiting. He is the troll who lives in the

shadows,” said Riley. “Do you think he would like some ramen? I always get grouchy when I’m hungry.”

“Riley, you’re a genius!” Exclaimed Harvey.

“Duh.” Said Riley.

“I have to go, but I promise I will visit soon.” Harvey said.

Just then, Harvey found himself wrapped in his mother’s arms.

“Hey, bud! How are you feeling?” Mom whispered.

Harvey stared at his mother’s calming smile.

“I’m feeling better,” he replied.

“I am so sorry. I should have listened to you. I plan to have a talk with Max’s mother this evening. Please tell me what you need.” Mom said.

“Mom, I just need some ramen right now.”

“I’m on it,” Mom said.

That evening, Harvey and his mom went to Max’s house. Max’s mom led Harvey into the kitchen and called Max down.

“You two, sit and talk things out. I don’t want anything like this to happen again. Mrs. Haden and I will be in the living room.” Said Max’s mom.

“What are you doing here, nerd?” Snapped Max.

“Do you like ramen?” Asked Harvey.

Harvey put the container of ramen on the table. A soft smile appeared on Max’s face.

“About yesterday,” said Harvey. “I should have tried to help you solve the problem.”

“This ramen is really good,” said Max.

The two slurped in silence for several minutes.

“Why would you want to help me?” Max said.

“We all need a little help sometimes.”

“I think I’m going to fail,” Said Max. “I know it’s not an excuse for the way I treat you. I just get so embarrassed, and everything seems so easy for you.”

“Nothing has been easy for me since my dad passed away. I work hard, because it would make him proud.” Said Harvey.

“I’m sorry about that,” said Max.

“Maybe after we eat, we can study?” Asked Harvey.

As Max replied with a slurp of approval, Harvey noticed a vase of tulips on the windowsill. Behind them, the sun set on a pink backdrop. Color was coming back into Harvey’s world, and he could not wait to tell Riley.

2nd place Fiction—Elementary School Division
By: **Sidney Kidd**
North Lewis Elementary School

Nuclear Diaries, The 3050 Archives

Day 57

I woke up this morning feeling extremely famished. But I know there are still three days until I can eat. Ever since we were nuked by Russia, food has been scarce. We can only drink every 5 days and we can only eat every ten days. We are very lucky we had a bunker in case this scenario happened. A lot of people didn't get all their family in their bunkers in time or they didn't have a bunker. My dad got everyone in our bunker just in time with 20 bottles of water and 20 cans of soup. It has now been fifty -seven days since the apocalypse has started. We only have two cans of soup left and there are four of us. I might take the gas mask and go look for food.

Day 58

I have decided to go out and look for food, but I need to find where the mask is. It took me a while but I found the mask, I am ready to go scavenge! I have been out here for a while, and I found twelve cans of soup and 6 water bottles. I also found a wrench, a key and a lock, and an ax. I also found a medkit to help us. I was on my way back to the bunker when I suddenly saw flashing eyes. I grabbed my flashlight and pointed it at the eyes when I saw a dog. It looked like his leg was injured, so I wrapped his leg in bandages from the medkit and gave him a can of soup I found on the ground. I brought him back to the shelter and showed my parents everything I found. I decided I was going to name my new pet in the morning.

Day 59

I woke up this morning to my dog sleeping on me. In the bunker, we have four rooms: the kitchen, me and my sister's room, my parent's room, and an extra room for storage. I went to the storage room and placed my medkit on one of the shelves. I got a blanket from our stack of fabric and made my dog a bed out of it. He seemed very happy and immediately sat in it. I dragged it to my room and set it next to my bed. Then I got my water bottle from four days ago and took a sip. I gave some to my dog and started thinking of names. Maybe I should name him Biscuit or Lucky. I decided on the name Lucky. I thought this name suited him because he was lucky to survive the blast.

Day 60

I was very happy because today is food day, and we all get to eat, I ate my soup and so did Lucky. I am no longer hungry and we are all happy. I decided to stock up on more food so that we won't have to scavenge all the time. I decided to not bring Lucky as his foot was still injured. I brought the gas mask and a gun so I could protect myself. I was out for 10 hours and found 120 cans of soup, 200 water bottles, 5 medkits, multiple bullets, and 3 guns. I also found some bug spray for the big roaches in the bunker. I found a map, and lots of tools and materials like clay, metal, and plastic. When I came back to the bunker, I realized that we had all of the stuff we needed to last 8 months

Day 61

Lucky and I spent the day roaming around the shelter playing fetch with a ball I found in the storage room. My mother thought I should make Lucky a collar, so I cut off a thin strip of his blanket then sewed it into a collar using a loose thread on my shirt, and a needle from the medkit. I used some chalk to write his name on it. My sister seemed like she was going mad so my parents let her go out on a walk outside. Before I went to bed she was still not back so I assumed she might be looking for something.

Day 62

When I woke up this morning, I realized my sister still wasn't back. Then suddenly I heard a knock on the door. I looked through the peephole and saw a man with a sad expression on their face. I grabbed my ax and hesitantly opened the door. When I opened the door, the man told me that he had found my sister unconscious outside. When he tried to help her, he realized that she had passed away due to toxic air entering her lungs. My family and I were devastated. And suddenly, I blacked out.

Day 63

I woke up and realized exactly what happened. I began to cry, and my parents came in to check on me. My mom started crying too, now I'm sure it was true. I immediately tossed myself in my blanket and went back to sleep. When I woke up again, Lucky was laying on my chest. I petted him then I got up. I gave him some water and then I went for a walk around the shelter, and all of a sudden, The power went out.

Day 63 (Continued)

When the power went out I went to grab my flashlight. Once I found it, I flipped the switch and turned it on. I pointed it at Lucky to make sure it worked and it did. I walked around the bunker trying to find my parents. But they were nowhere to be found, so I grabbed Lucky's collar and made him a leash out of a piece of leather I found in the storage room. Then, we set out for the hunt.

Day 64

We have been looking for ages, but we still have no clue where they went. Then, Lucky started barking very loudly at a tree. Then I realized...There are no trees! I ran up to it and found an open door. Hesitantly Lucky and I headed down the ladder. Then we saw them all tied up and scared. They were trapped down here with no food, no water. The air was contaminated with strange gases, so I put on my gas mask. I found a way to fit a mask on Lucky so that he wouldn't get sick.

Day 64 (Continued)

Then all of a sudden, a group of teenagers who seemed to be about my age tried to attack me. There were four of them so I told Lucky to fight one. Lucky knocked one down and bit his leg. The boy started screaming, he got up, and ran away. I took my gun and hit one in the head, then another came behind me so I shot him in the foot. There was one left but he ran away in fear of my dog. When I was certain they were all gone, I untied my parents and we all went back to the bunker, but this time, I put the lock on the door.

Day 65

When I awoke the next morning the lights were back on and we turned on our radio to see if we could find some news. When we tuned in on one of the stations, we realized that it was the soldier!

They told us that when we wake tomorrow, gather our things and go to Alabama, or what used to be Alabama. They also told us that if we are too far away, to stay in the bunkers but put a marker to mark your bunker. We are on the edge of Mississippi, so we decided to eat some soup and drink some water. Then we head to bed.

Day 66

When we woke up we started packing our things in little boxes. We didn't have much, but we had enough to last us quite a bit. I went outside our bunker one last time before we left. Then I saw a large object, Lucky and I walked up to it. We realized... It was a van! I tested to see if it still worked. It looked like it only had a few busted wires, so I used some of our extra wires to make it work. I called my parents up to see it and they started loading things in the van.

Day 66

We started driving towards Alabama, and the van is working fine. We are almost there.

We arrived in Alabama and a group of soldiers came to greet us. We showed them we had a dog, and they seemed ok with it. They showed us to our tent, and we set up our stuff. It seems like this is the end of this madness. We will continue to build our population, and we will put an end to this. But for now, this is Autumn Sky signing out!

1st place Poetry—Elementary School Division
By: **Shya Hebert**
Broadmoor Elementary School

Mirror, Mirror

Did you know
You and I
Had a dance party
In my dreams?

It was hard to wake up
As our feet slid across
A room with tie dyed walls
And disco balls

The dance floor was a mirror
And I couldn't tell which reflection
Was mine

But that didn't bother me
Because if I have to be like anyone
I want to be like you

I missed you when I opened my eyes
But although you're states away,
Your inspiration is here to stay
Influencing me to do my best
Every day.

Middle School Division (Grades 6-8)

1st place Fiction—Middle School Division

By: **Ryleigh Guidry**

North Vermilion Middle School

Masks

Today

"Let's begin, what is your name?" "Alex. Alex Stone," I replied.

I'm being questioned for the thousandth time today. All they do is ask the same questions over and over again. Did you kill your best friend? Where were you last night? I'm so sick of it!

I didn't kill my best friend, but I may have gotten her killed... by accident. Last night changed everything

Last Night

Today was my brother's birthday. Even though he isn't with us anymore, I still like to act like he is. I go buy his present, set everything up in his room like he's about to walk in. My brother was only 15 when he died, he committed suicide in his room a few days ago, and I can't help but think it's all my fault. He was loved, I don't understand why he would do this.

Anyways, I called my best friend Lyla, who was dating my brother before he, you know, and we agreed to meet up at the cemetery tonight to visit him.

I know she misses him so much, and I can't imagine what she's going through. Before I knew it I was in my car, picking up Lyla and going to the cemetery. It was night already which was creeping me out. Who goes to a cemetery at night?

We arrived and got out of the car, grabbing all of our things to put on his grave. As we walked down the path in silence, I froze.

As I looked ahead at my own brother's tombstone, I saw that his grave had been dug up, with the coffin left open. But what horrified me most, was that instead of my brother's body being in it, it was the body of the groundskeeper.

Lyla was way behind me at this point, she was walking so slowly. I turned back to go find her when I heard a scream coming from the other direction. There my brother stood, holding my best friend's head, freshly cut off.

I screamed in horror watching Lyla's head dripping in blood.

"Don't be so sad, she's not the smartest person in the world. I mean if you see someone running at you in a cemetery, late at night, the smart thing is to run. You don't just stand there," he said.

There was something weird going on. As my brother was talking, his mouth wasn't moving, nor was he blinking. I turned my phone flashlight on and was horrified by what I saw.

This was not my brother. I don't know what kind of sick games this guy was playing but he had stitches on his face. He sewed the face of my dead brother onto his.

I immediately started running the opposite way screaming but his place was so big. There was no way I was going to make it out of here with a maniac chasing me. I picked up my phone and tried to call my mom, realizing I have no service. Of course I have no service. I stopped running and ducked behind a tree, trying to catch my breath.

I needed to come up with a plan, this guy was way too fast. I saw a shovel sitting by a halfway dug up grave and made my plan. I heard loud footsteps rushing down the path so I quickly grabbed the shovel and hid back behind the tree. He started to whistle, sending shivers down my spine.

After a few minutes I heard him approach the tree I was hiding behind so I took my chance. I went around the tree and hit him with the shovel, causing him to fall on the ground. Evidently I didn't hit him hard enough though because he cut my leg with his knife in hand. I pushed through the pain and hit him again, harder this time. He was out cold.

I looked over at the half dug grave and finished digging it. I dragged the killer's body and buried him inside. After about half an hour I was done when my face dropped. I called 911 as I was running and dropped my phone a while back. I heard police sirens in the background and realized that the blood of the killer was all over my hands.

They arrived and I dropped to my knees, hands behind my head allowing them to cuff me.

Today

After hours and hours of questioning, somehow my parents convinced the authorities to release me from custody. I gathered my things, including my phone and walked out of the station relieved.

I turned my phone on, thankful it still had battery, and checked the news. The body of the killer had been found, with my best friend's face sewed on top of my brother's.

2nd place Fiction—Middle School Division

By: **Jeremy Diaz**

Belle Place Middle School

All But One

It was a normal day. We had just gotten out of school and the sun was shining brightly. But soon, we would see that all but one would make it. All but one. That would be how we remember it.

It had happened like this. It was Wednesday and we were taking the bus home from school. The bus driver was a friendly one, but had mentioned to us many times that he would be retiring next month. There were some kids at the front of the bus, talking quietly about a test they would take tomorrow, then others in the back listening to music, talking loudly, and just unwinding. Then there was the kid, James. He sat in the middle of the bus, staring off into space. No one really talked to him, so no one really knew him. He had friends at school, but not on the bus, so most days he sat quietly by himself.

The route was laid out very simply. You crossed the Charles River, then the train tracks, then took a left into the Riverside Park neighborhood. We had just crossed the Charles River on the Fasto R. Clemente Bridge, the biggest bridge in the state. As we were approaching the train tracks, James sat up and looked down the line. He looked to one side, then to the other, excitedly. That's when I saw a train approaching. The bus crossed the tracks, then stalled. The back of the bus was resting on the tracks as the train was approaching. We were stuck.

"A train! We are going to be hit by a train!" shouted a kid in the back. That's when we all ran out of the front doors to safety, including the driver. The last one out was the quiet kid, James. He looked back at the bus, then we could see one kid still on there listening to music and sound asleep. James then dropped his things, said something to himself, then ran back on the bus. The train was rapidly approaching and we nervously watched as James went to the kid, ripped off his earbuds, then pushed him towards the exit. The train was only 30 yards away, the loud horn of the train blew loudly. You could hear the squealing brakes of the fast moving train. The kid got out, but James stayed. He dropped his head down, shook his head, then, impact.

The train hit the bus, which we later learned, at 32 m.p.h. The bus wrapped around the front of the train, and the part that was hit was the part James was in. We looked away from the bus as it was hit, fearing the worst. The train then went on for a bit until it stopped about a quarter of a mile away. The bus driver called the police, informing them about the accident. They showed up within 5 minutes. They investigated the scene, then we could see a blue tarp come out of the ambulance. We then saw an EMT talking to the driver, who was still shocked by the accident. He simply nodded, then he walked away to the scene. We all knew what happened. We stayed at the scene for about 45 minutes until our parents showed up. During that time, the news crews, police, and onlookers showed up to see the case. Most of us were interviewed, and after a while, we all went home.

I got home after a while and my mom and dad asked about the details of what happened. I heard the 6 o'clock news was on in background. I heard the news anchor reporting, "Local kid killed in tragic accident today near the Charles River." My mom turned it off and led me to the sofa where I then filled in my parents on the entire accident. I told them who it was, how it happened, and how strange the whole incident felt.

The next day, I went back to school. The announcements came on with a string of usual messages. Then, at the end, the principal said, "As you may have seen, there was a bad accident yesterday where a school bus was hit by a train. Also, you can see that one kid has sadly died. We do not have the full details on the accident, but this is all we know. Counseling will be provided for anyone who was affected by this. If needed, come by the office." Everyone then went into a murmur, then we went on with the day. It was then announced that at the end of the day, we would get three days off in remembrance of the kid. Everyone wanted to cheer, but we all knew this would be wrong.

The next few days went by quite quickly, and this is what I remember about them. The first day was quiet, then the next day came. We were all invited to his funeral that day, and we went. It was sad, because no one was around to tell the tale of him. No one knew him well, but from what we could tell by his funeral decorations, he must have liked trains. We then had a procession around town, stopping at the local train station. A train was there, painted in his remembrance. It had his name on the side, and a phrase there "All But One, We Will Never Forget". The train was there, and we all were very reverent to the kid. It was a neat ceremony, with the next leg of the procession taking place on a train. I asked one of the people why we were doing this, and he said that this kid was a person that often came to see these trains, and to see him go was very sad. The train trip was slow through town, and took about one and a half hours to complete. Halfway through the trip, we stopped in a town, had a small rest, then came back to the town. After this, we all got back into the procession line, went back to the funeral, and had the service. After he was buried, we all went home. The last day we had off was a nice one, and interesting as well. The funeral planners and the family of the kid had organized an event. This event had it to where we would all sit in an open field by the tracks (which also was by the graveyard in which the kid was buried), and watch the trains go by. Our town was a big town, but no one really paid attention to the trains that went by. There were some interesting trains that went by, including ones with many colors and shapes, ones with loud horns and quiet horns, and even one, which I later learned was special, that had red paint, and said "The Katy" on the side. I found out this was special from someone that I was by. I had asked him "Why is everyone so excited for this one?" He replied that "It is one of a kind, and is owned by the Union Pacific. This was made to honor the MKT railroad that the UP acquired. It is UP 1988, symbolizing the year that the UP acquired control of the MKT." I had no idea what he was saying, so I assumed that it was simply special. It was a good day, with a large turnout.

The next day we went back to school, we noticed something in the school courtyard covered with a white tarp. We were informed by a poster that this would be unveiled during 1st lunch, and we were to all show up here. The 1st lunch came by, and we were all shown to the courtyard. The school had plans if the crowd got too big, so some people were escorted to the auditorium, where they were shown a live feed from a camera. Soon, the tarp was removed, and it was seen that there was a monument under the tarp, and it was dedicated to the kid. It was a bronze statue of him, and showed him with a small train in his hand. Under it was a pedestal with a plaque, talking about him. It truly was a great monument, and I never knew that the school would put money into things like this. After this, things remained quiet about the accident, as finals were approaching fast. But this accident will still be known to the family of the kid, and to his friends that he had. Also a quick note, they recently built a small park by where the accident occurred, and they have moved the statue there. They also have a room with some of his prized possessions, as well as an article written about the event taking up one wall of the building.

3rd place Fiction—Middle School Division
By: **Holden Burley**
North Lewis Elementary School

The Stolen Princess

Once upon a time, there was a kingdom named Titus. There was a castle and in the castle there lived a Queen named Eleanor who was gorgeous, and loyal. The King Charmond, was charming, and affable. They had a daughter named Claire who was very intelligent and kind. There was one other kingdom too. Kingdom Ambrose, there lived King Alex. He had a son named Micheal, who was adventurous, smart and reasonable. Princess Claire and Prince Micheal were the same age. King Alex's wife had died ill. But there was a forest of Ogres who were greedy and thought humans were delectable. Elves and Gnomes lived right outside the kingdom, they were good tradesmen and very benevolent.

The ogres wanted to rule both of the kingdoms, they wanted power over all humans because they were vicious and unlikable. So they did something about it. One night the chief ogre, Orcus sent one of his underlings to kidnap the princess and bring her to him. When he got to the castle, he put a sleeping potion in the princess's drink. Soon after, he took her and brought her back to Orcus. Orcus was so pleased that he paid the underling with bags of gold, locked the princess in a cage, and paid no attention to her distress. Orcus told the underling to first deliver a letter of ransom to King Charmond, and then he got his gold.

When the King received the letter it said, "You must bestow Kingdom Titus to me, or I will feast upon your daughter, Princess Claire." And there signed Orcus. King Charmond and Queen Eleanor were frantic. The King decided to inform King Alex. King Alex said he will send his courageous son, Prince Micheal to rescue the princess.

Soon after, Prince Micheal gathered four of the best knights in the kingdom. Sir. John, Sir. Jack, Sir. Alfred, Sir. Karl. They were the strongest and bravest knights he knew, for they protected the kingdom from dragons, ogresses, and other detrimental things.

They traveled through a forest of Elves. Elves were one of the nicest, generous, loving creatures. Their skin was a beautiful forest green and wore gems and stone necklaces with their long leaf robes. They also had little stone figures with gem eyes and the grass was so green you couldn't even see the outlines. There were elflings running around joyfully. They were so kind and offered the knights and the prince to stay the night and attend a feast since they were their guests, and they did. At the feast they had a green bean stew with a dessert of berries and melons with a pleasing drink called SunFlower. It was pink and tasted like strawberries and watermelon. Once dinner was done, they were escorted to their cots that were hammocks and green leaf pillows.

The knights and the prince were off at dawn. They passed a murky swamp with lots of dark green algae. There were vast mossy trees and they were endless. As soon as they passed through the swamp, they went through a gnome village. There were small mushroom and stone houses the size of hay bales. A pond had little gnomes frolicking and swimming around. The

gnomes were enchanting but they must go because they only had to pass a field. Then they would be to the forest of Ogres.

When they were at the end of the field, they started to see ogres's footprints. They were so big; then they knew they were there. They traveled through the forest and found Orcus.

They told Orcus that he must hand over Princess Claire, but he said no because he was only interested in the kingdom, so they decided to battle the ogres for her. The ogresses were about twelve feet tall and were hideous. They had crooked, sharp teeth and wore ragged crude clothes. There were only three other ogres behind Orcus. But the knights and Prince Micheal were ready. They had shining panoplies and long swords as sharp as daggers. Their noble steeds wore blindfolds on their eyes, so they didn't get frightened by the beasts. They put their helmets on, and they began the battle for the princess.

The knight's longwords pierced the ogres and the ogres ate, crushing the knights gruesomely. Sir Jack died in battle. That made Prince Micheal furious and determined to vanquish all ogres. One by one the ogres died. And the battle was done. Prince Micheal found the Princess and freed her from the rigged cage Orcus had put her in. Princess Claire gave him all her gratitude. He helped her on his steed, and they traveled back to the kingdom.

Prince Micheal stood beside Princess Claire at the doors of the castle and thumped the great doors. The King came out and gave all his acknowledgements to the Prince. Instead of gold, the King asked if the Prince would take his daughter's hand in marriage. Prince Micheal agreed.

At the marriage there was a big long table of so many kinds of foods from everywhere, and the castle was decorated in beautiful flowers and roses. There was a beautiful glass swan, and there was a white carpet that led to the outdoors. The guests walked outside, and there were white aisles and flowers. They invited the elves and the gnomes who wore beautiful dresses and suits made of leaves, mushrooms, and flowers. The other kingdom, Ambros, came too. Everyone started sitting down in the aisles, when the bride and groom walked down. And there they stood Princess Claire in her beautiful dress and Prince Micheal in his suit. They lived happily ever after.

1st place Poetry—Middle School Division
By: **Colin Comeaux**
Delcambre High School

Shrimp Festival Fun

The smell of shrimp is in the air.
Everyone knows it is time for the fair.
Festival fun has begun.
Time to make the shrimp run.
Workers come from all around
to put the rides on the ground.
Venders come and set up their stalls
to make money from it all.
As soon as school lets out
hundreds of kids run about.
Kids and parents come from all over
to experience the best shrimp fair in all of October.
The smell of shrimp is in the atmosphere.
People entering shed a tear.
Fish, jambalaya, and funnel cake,
they are also on my dinner plate.
The ticket booth is very busy
selling tickets to rides that make you dizzy.
Rides like the X-Force make people sick,
while others like The Bullet just make someone move quick.
The Ferris wheel sparks up romance,
while the lights on the Pirate Ship make people want to dance.
Carnival games have scams galore,
but people still try to score.
Prizes are big and small,
someone will win it all.
Bands come to play songs,
people dance all night long.
Judges choose kings and queens,
Adults, toddlers, and teens.
Boats start the parade,
as light starts to fade
the final song is played,
but some of the crowd stayed.
A big bonfire is lit
as the crowd starts to split.
Then as the fire dies down,
people start to leave the town.
As the festival ends,
the waiting for the next one begins.

2nd place Poetry—Middle School Division
By: **Mia Comeaux**
Delcambre High School

Into Another World

Fair skies,
Clouds drifting by,
Wishing for a day without a care,
Knowing those days are rare.

Sighing, I picked up a book,
Giving the first page a look.
Interested, I turned the page,
And I felt the character's sudden rage.

Suddenly the fluffy clouds had turned blue,
The sap on the nearby trees dried clear like glue.
I saw the heroine's wavy, black hair,
Wishing I could warn her that the antagonist is there.

Suddenly I am jerked out of the book,
As I heard the call of a nearby rook.
And I knew I had been hurled
Into another world.

3rd place Poetry—Middle School Division
By: **Madison Lanclos**
Magnet Academy for Cultural Arts

New Beginning

Time for a new
A new me
A new for all
Time for the past to be the past
For today will be tomorrow's yesterday
And tomorrow will soon be today
Throw out the sorrow
And bring forth the cheerfulness
Why be sad
When you can be happy
Why remember the hurt
When you can be set free from the chains of despair
Like a butterfly in the middle of summer
Taking flight from which you once were
Do not fear the unknown
For it is the unknown that you must seek
Take control of the knowing of the past
And start a new beginning

Honorable Mention Poetry—Middle School Division
By: **Neviah Taylor-Larson**
Magnet Academy for Cultural Arts

It's Not Me It's You

Why did I let you lie to me
Why did I pretend I didn't care
You didn't notice 'til I tried to flee
All of a sudden you're aware?

Why didn't I see the signs earlier on?
Maybe I did and I just ignored them
You probably always wanted me gone
Just a mere cure for your boredom

Why did I trust a person as selfish as you?
How could I let you influence my decisions
Why did I console you when you were feeling blue
My guilt for you cut deep incisions

Why did I tell you that my heart bleeds red
My ability to trust heightened and stripped away
When I see you my mind fills with dread
But does it or do I just want to keep you at bay

I'm happier now and I'm sure you'd be mad
Well to be honest I never was really that sad
I left you after all you didn't leave me
And after a little while I'm finally free

But am I really free or am I just fibbing
Of course I'm not lying I'm just kidding
Am I a liar who convinced themselves of their plea?
No no what am I saying that's you not me

High School Division (Grades 9-12)

1st place Fiction—High School Division

By: **Andie Valdetero**

Lafayette High School

Loop through Loop

November 26, 2015

“Through the loop, then twist, and pull. Not too tight because you have to add more loops.” I finagled with the yarn then looked at my mom looping her yarn like it was water running through a stream.

“I don’t get it.” I threw my arms down.

“Here, try this.” She picked up my hands and did it for me till my hands began to remember how to do it by themselves.

“I think I got it!”

“I knew you could sweetie.” She smiled at me and continued on with her chain.

“I did it! 64 loops!”

“Woo Hoo!!” She lifts me up and spins me around, “I knew you would be able to. It just takes pra-” Suddenly, I felt us falling to the ground. I look to my mom laying beside me, her eyes fluttering into the back of her head.

“DAD! Something is wrong with Mom! HELP!” He rushes into the living room and picks up my mother’s limp head.

“Katie go to the phone and call 911. Now! Be quick! Blair, honey, wake up!”

September 20, 2021

It's been six years since the incident. Every day I wake up and just for a second, I don't remember. Just for a second everything is normal. I don't have to go visit her in the hospital. People tell me things like, "It gets easier" and "You'll get over it." But, it's a lie. You never get over it. At least I haven't.

I looked to my white side table covered in trash and homework and pushed it aside so I could grab my phone. The little numbers, 11:32, stared at me like they were judging me for sleeping in so late. I forced myself out of bed, got dressed for the day, and headed downstairs towards the door.

"Dad! I'm going to see mom! Want to come with me?" I yell out not knowing where he is in the house. I hear shuffling from the kitchen and my father, who I swear gets older and more stressed every day, stands in the doorway.

"No, I'm good. I'll come later. There are just a few things I need to do first."

"Okay. Love you," I turn around to grab my keys and head out the door. Every Sunday for the past three and a half years mom and I have had a girl's day. It's not like our old ones before she was admitted, but we make it fun. Before I got to high school I think I saw her every day, but I got busy and just couldn't come as much. These Sundays help us get together and just talk about our week so we don't miss each other too much. I pulled my green tea-colored honda civic, and parked in my spot. I know I have been coming to this hospital ever since I was ten, but it still always feels eerie when I first walk in. I walked into the elevator and pressed the fifth-floor button. The familiar touch of the round, cold, sticky button makes my stomach flip. I stepped off the elevator and headed towards the cancer inpatient area.

"Hey, Katie! We've missed you," Nurse Mary said to me as I scurried past the nurse's station.

“Missed y'all too. Is she awake?”

“Yep. Woke up bright and early, all excited to see you.” I smiled at her and took the path to room 526. I stared at the all too familiar door. I had studied the door down to how many stains it had on it, 87 if you count the tiny chip at the right bottom corner. I took a deep breath and peeked in.

“Mom?”

“Is that my wonderful daughter I hear?” She signaled her hands for me to come in.

“Hi momma,” I gave her a hug and then sat in the chair across from her. “How was your week?”

“Long and boring without seeing you and dad.” She gave a soft grin at me.

“We miss you so much.”

“Speaking of your father, where is that stinky old man?”

“He’s coming in a bit. He had some things to do.”

“Ahhhh. Well, let’s get to crocheting then.” I pulled the new yarn out of the bag, got our crochet hooks ready and we started. We sat and talked for what felt like only 30 minutes, but I looked at the clock and four hours had passed by. Dad showed up two hours in and sat with mom holding her like she was gonna break any second.

“Knock. Knock.” We turned our heads to see Dr. Jones standing in the doorway.

“Please say you have good news.” My dad pleaded. Dr. Jones just smiled and nodded his head.

“You’re going home, Blair.”

“No way. It came back negative!”

“It came back negative!” He repeated. We all jumped up and down looking like monkeys, but this is the news we needed. I couldn’t stand to see my mom and dad's heartbreak again.

“You’ll still have to come in twice a week to continue chemo, but the rest of your treatment can be done from home. I’m so happy for you guys. Nurse Mary is gonna bring a packet in before you leave.”

“Thank you so much, Dr. Jones.” My dad shook his hand profusely. We packed all of mom’s stuff up and headed home together, as a family, for the first time in years.

Two weeks later

I woke up to the smell of eggs and bacon sneaking into my room from downstairs. Mom had been making us breakfast since she got home. She said “it’s to make up for the many years she hadn’t gotten to.” I crawled out of bed and tiptoed downstairs making sure not to wake up dad. He finally was sleeping peacefully.

“Hey, honey. Hungry?” She held up her spatula.

“Ooo, yes please.” I sat down at the bar in front of the kitchen excited to taste another delicious meal.

“Do I smell coffee?” My dad walked out of his bedroom and hugged my mom. It was a lingering hug. He was still worried how long this was gonna last. I mean who am I kidding I was terrified that she would end up back in the hospital as well, but I had to think on the bright side for him. We ate as a family, laughing, distracting ourselves with the reality that mom wasn’t in remission, yet. Dad and I offered to do the dishes so mom could go get dressed for another day out together.

“Dad?” I nervously asked.

“What’s up Katie Cat.” He answered with his ridiculous nickname for me.

“How is mom really doing?” a question I didn't want to know the answer to.

“She’s as good as-” Like it was out of a movie we heard a crash from their bedroom and ran in. I was teleported back to six years ago when she first fell onto the floor and this chaos started.

“Katie! Go get the phone! NOW!” I ran into the kitchen and called 911 in fear of what was going to happen to her.

After hours of pacing in the waiting room, Dr. Jones came out, and slowly shook his head. Everything fell into slow motion. I couldn’t hear the words coming out of his mouth, but I tried to read them as best as I could. Something along the lines of “We tried our best” the words every doctor says to the family who has had a loved one who just died. I ran into the operating room pushing by Nurse Mary and the surgeons who operated on my mom.

“Mom” I cried out when I saw her on the table. I took her hand and cried into it. “Please come back. Please come back. I felt arms grab me. “NO! Don’t take me away from here. Stop!”

“Please, Katie. She’s gone.” My dad whispered into my ear. I finally stopped struggling and let my dad carry me out of the operating room.

“I love you.” I mouthed to my dead mother as I left the room.

October 4, 2042

“Through the loop, then twist, and pull. But, not too tight because you have to add more loops.” I said, showing my daughter.

“I don’t get it.” She threw my arms down, like a little me.

“Here, try this.” I picked up her hands and did it for her till her hands began to remember how to do it by themselves.

“I think I got it!”

“I knew you could.” I smiled at her and continued on with my chain.

“I did it! 64 loops!”

“Okay, now we’re gonna do it all over again till we have a blanket.” I showed her how to start another chain and let her do it by herself. We would finally finish the project *my mother* and I started.

She looked up at me and smiled, “Love you, Mommy.”

“I love you more Blair.”

2nd place Fiction—High School Division
By: **Shayna Chevis**
Magnet Academy for Cultural Arts

2:50 AM

2:50 A.M

I woke up from a nightmare with a stabbing pain in my lower abdomen. I crawled out of bed and crept to the bathroom sink. I looked at my stomach and nothing was there.

2:56 A.M

It was 2:56 A.M when I made it back into the room and under my covers. Wait no, I went to the living room instead. Yeah that's right. 2:56 A.M. Living room. Not my bedroom, the living room.

On my way there, while walking down the hall, I noticed blood. A lot of blood, but whose blood? It wasn't mine was it? How could it possibly belong to me? I felt my breathing become more unstable with each step I took. Why was there so much of it? Confused but relieved, I let out a big sigh when I reached the end. There was nothing there. Not a body, not a knife, not a single drop of that red crimson colored liquid I thought I was following. It was all in my imagination. I turned back to face the hallway and saw that it was also clean, still shining from when I moped it earlier that afternoon. Absolutely no blood in sight.

I glanced back over to the corner to look at the electric clock I placed on the side of the stove. In big, glowing, green numbers, the time read **3:00 A.M**

Nightmare, pain, bathroom, blood, living room, and now bedroom.

That's the order It went in.

At 3:00 A.M is when I finally made it into my bed. My side still ached, worse than it did during my crawl to the bathroom. I didn't pay any attention to it though. I'll be relieved after I get

some rest. On my dresser were the tablets prescribed to me by a doctor over a year ago. Nuplazid for my hallucinations, Braionol to help with memory loss, and over the counter medicine that helps me sleep, all lined neatly next to each other. I reached over for the sleeping capsules, took one, and dozed off.

Nightmare, pain, bathroom, blood, living room, bedroom, and now death.

This is the true order of events.

2:50 A.M.

It was not a nightmare I woke up from, but real life events. A couple of hours prior to this, I stabbed myself with a kitchen knife in my abdomen. It wasn't enough to kill me though. The slash I made could've been fixed with a simple drive to the hospital. With stitches I would've been fine. I wouldn't have bled out as much as I did.

I don't know the reasons or circumstances that pushed me so far to the edge that I wanted to die.

I don't remember a lot of things, and I wish that I could.

Maybe it was the hallucinations taking over my mind, leading me to irrational decisions or possibly even a manic episode.

The blood was there when I went to the bathroom, I'm sure it was, but my mind no longer being mine, caused me to think differently. The blood on the floor wasn't fake. It wasn't my imagination. All of it was real.

3rd place Fiction—High School Division
By: **Alexandra Chistoserdov**
Lafayette High School

Empty Only Sometimes

Jay walked up the narrow flight of stairs to his apartment, looking down at his shoes disinterestedly the entire way up. When he found himself standing directly in front of the apartment door, he leaned his forehead against it, fumbling with a bundle of small keys. He singled out one of the keys, and inserted it into the door's keyhole. Before turning the key, he paused. He let some thin droplets of water slide down his face, and took in the tranquil patter of the rain that fell in slender streaks from the sky above. Collecting himself, Jay turned the doorknob and entered the apartment.

It was barren, framed by cream-colored walls and cream-colored carpet, both of which were stained here-and-there with cloudy, brown smudges. The entry room was flooded with a yellowish light when Jay flipped a nearby lightswitch. He took a few steps forward, closing the door and locking it behind him. Enveloped in a strange, yet familiar, silence, with only the rain rhythmically tapping away outside, Jay paused once more, realizing how utterly drenched he was from the long walk home. He dropped his messenger bag on the floor unceremoniously, stripped off his grey hoodie, slid his ragged sneakers off of his damp feet, and delicately peeled his musty socks off of his wrinkled skin. He noted that the hole in his right sock was now big enough to fit his large toe through it. Jay plopped the clothes down into a moist pile in front of the entrance. He figured he'd dry them later.

Despite his shirt sticking to his skin and his jeans being heavy from the rain, he decided to keep them on; he still wasn't completely comfortable in his new place of residence -- this off-campus apartment he had found for cheap, days before the semester started. Jay hadn't even thought about decorating it yet, but he wouldn't be able to afford any decorations, let alone furniture, anyway. In this ominously empty apartment, there was the entrance room, a slim kitchen area, and a narrow hallway leading to a compact bathroom along with a small back room. The back room could've been used as a bedroom, but Jay never even considered sleeping there -- instead, he'd find himself waking up on the floor of either the entrance room or the kitchen. He didn't want to use that creepy back room at all. But it wasn't only that particular room that he found unnerving. The entire apartment unsettled him. He would always be wary when dressing, eating, studying -- always afraid he'd see something looking at him through a window, from behind a corner, peeking through a slightly opened door. Jay was especially frightened of the dim hallway -- there were no lights installed in it, so every time he needed to use the bathroom, especially in the middle of the night, he'd be forced to rush along the walls, tripping over his feet along the way. He would avoid the hallway if he could, but driving to a nearby gas station just to use the bathroom there sounded like more trouble than it was worth. Jay hated the hallway, but he eventually learned to swallow his fear. However, he still wasn't brave enough to sleep in the back room.

He let out a heavy sigh after a long day of running in circles, same as every day -- from lecture to lecture, from conversation to conversation, from work all the way back home. He was tired, he desperately wanted it to end, but an entire life of endless labor taught him otherwise. He'd gotten used to savoring those short moments of silence, moments devoid of anything, moments where he could just exist alone in an empty universe. That's why, despite disliking the

apartment for the way it looked, the way it was built, the way it smelled, he appreciated it. It was the only place where he could be truly alone with himself. Jay didn't even mind paying extra for the dirty apartment, as opposed to living in a well-kept dorm. The dorm had people in its rooms, and it wasn't his. He didn't like the idea of living in dorms, and he would never be able to explain this sentiment to anyone else. Although, the only people he had left who he could explain this to hadn't talked to him since the summer -- rather, he hadn't talked to them since the summer.

When Jay moved away from his parents, he didn't even look back to say goodbye. Knowing he was the last child to leave the house, his brother having left for college two years prior, Jay figured his parents would be sad to see him go, that they'd want to say goodbye. Yet he didn't have any room left in his heart for those dramatics. He knew his parents loved him, and he knew that, if his life were to go down the gutter, he'd always find his way back to his childhood home and grovel at his parents' feet until they let him back into their life. Yet, he also knew he'd never feel the same love towards them. They were out of his memory as soon as he closed the car door and drove away. After he left, his whole previous life was washed away from his thoughts, with only bits and pieces floating up to his consciousness during silent, brief moments. All the while, his mind was left empty. As far as he was concerned, there was nothing to share about his past.

Jay couldn't share anything about himself, anyway -- he had no friends to share to, but he didn't particularly want them, either. High school taught him that life among people would be difficult without connections and relationships, but he no longer had any energy to talk to anyone. He barely had any energy to open his eyelids in the morning. He knew he was lonely, but he felt lonely only sometimes. He liked being alone. He liked being in empty rooms, because his existence was just as empty. His mind was just as empty. His soul was emptier.

Settling down against a wall, Jay pulled his phone out of the pocket of his damp jeans -- he couldn't wait for the day he'd finally be able to afford a computer -- and powered it on. For a second, he saw his reflection in the black mirror. As always, he hated the way he looked. Then, the screen flickered to life. Jay entered the password and patiently waited for the machine to fully wake up. As the phone pleasantly greeted him with its warm mechanical light, the look in his eyes shifted from bored cloudiness to an invigorated shimmer. His fingers slid across the screen and softly pressed on it every second or so. A shadow of a smile crossed Jay's face. Suddenly, the voices of a million people -- strangers that he's never met before -- started talking to him, introducing themselves, saying hello again, continuing a conversation from before. Suddenly, his soul wasn't quite so empty anymore, and his faint smile crawled its way up into a grin. He'd laugh periodically. He was happy.

Honorable Mention Fiction—High School Division
By: **Miranda Miller-Soileau**
Magnet Academy for Cultural Arts

To the Crow's Knowledge

Flying, soaring, feeling my wings above the wind. Crashing, falling, feeling the wind above my wings. The difference between the two sensations is less than one might imagine. Sometimes I can't distinguish between them at all. When I'm in the air, it's all one blur, a rush of exhilaration and adrenaline urging me on, urging me faster.

Sometimes a glimpse of silver will catch my eye and I'll swoop down to investigate, occasionally finding a valued treasure I'll carry off in my talons, more often finding nothing but sand and dirt. I'm happy either way, whether I'm flying or falling, finding treasure or finding nothing.

There is little to break up the monotony of my days, and as I grow older I find my mind wandering more and more. The idea of something more lingers beyond the reach of my somewhat limited thoughts, but it is still very present, and that presence is felt. I take more risks than I ever did before for reasons unknown to me, fly more often, day and night, do things I had never heard another crow be accused of doing. I am still happy to go wherever the wind brings me, to do whatever strikes my fancy at the time, but I am also discontent in my restlessness. And more notably, my lack of knowledge as to the cause of it. Luckily for me, that all changed, one day.

I was swooping down to grab a silver key lying on the ground, ready to abscond with it back to my nest, when I was arrested by a net being thrown over me. I squawked in outrage, glaring up to see adolescents with wide grins standing above me. I had never interacted with humans before, but I knew that children and adolescents were my least favorite age of human, just from the sheer noise and general pandemonium they created. I didn't know what they could possibly want with me, a little old crow, but I knew that I didn't want to stay long enough to find out. Unfortunately, I had no immediate way out of the net they'd placed on me. It was closely knitted with holes big enough for me to see out of, but not big enough for me to wiggle out of. Pecking at the weaving got me nowhere. I had already learned the futility of trying to intimidate them into letting me go. Before I could attempt any other methods of escape, I felt the net pick up, felt myself flail to find balance before I fell sideways. The young humans carried me off, into their home, and placed me in a cage. I stayed there for many weeks, trying to escape, before I ultimately gave up. I started paying more attention to what the human family which had captured me did in their daily lives, beyond the nightly food they dumped in my cage and the sometimes poking fingers they aimed towards me. They would have lessons in the same room as me, a room filled with many books. I made attempts to befriend them, and they were quite happy to allow me out of the cage to poke around the room with them once I'd gained their trust. Through careful observation, I learned to read the books they would read, gleefully waiting every day to see what the subject of the day would be. Sometimes it was about human events, horrible wars I had no desire to witness, famines, plagues, droughts. Sometimes it was about more interesting things, like fellow members of the animal kingdom or different species of plants. Regardless of the subject, I always avidly paid attention to the lessons taught. Sometimes I suspected I paid more attention than the actual students did.

I loved the room with the books, had grown to like my human captors, and wagered I knew more than any other crow in history. But I still wanted my old life, the one where I was free to do whatever I pleased. I always looked for opportunities to return to it. I had learned what the cause of my restlessness was, a general curiosity about the world around me I had no way of satisfying. Now that curiosity had been quenched and I had no reason to stay outside of my general inability to leave. The days passed, until one day I noticed the window was open. My cage was hardly ever closed now, so I waited until I was alone in the room and hopped over to the window. The cool breeze flowing through it felt nice as it whispered through my feathers.

I spread my wings out behind me and dived out of the window, swooping away with all haste. I was content again, to let the wind blow me where it willed, keeping my knowledge in the forefront of my thoughts. I'd search out the animals and plants I'd learned, see the horrible wars in life, find the beautiful landscapes I had glimpsed in textbooks. I had plans within no plans.

1st place Poetry—High School Division
By: **Carmen Lopez**
Ovey Comeaux High School

What the World Would Be Like

the history of the devil
of a beautiful infant
eating handfuls of honeycomb
rolling off the bed into a colony of fire ants
best seen under a microscope
through carnage-jaded eyes
the door of Heaven slams,
and silence falls around God's feet
like feathers of birds swallowed by beartraps
like a sweet stream of drool
pooling around the roots of a withered tree
dripping down fallen branches of possibilities
of what the world would be like
if God had changed His mind

2nd place Poetry—High School Division
By: **Isaiah Newman**
Magnet Academy for Cultural Arts

A Poem No More

The ink flows from my pen,
Forming letters, words, sentences
Forming nothing
Forming everything,
But everything is still nothing
At least, coming from me.

Sixteen. Seconds, hours,
Days, nights,
Minutes, hours,
Months, and eternities.
After this amount of time,
Which is no time at all,
The ink still hasn't dried
And it'll never dry for me.

I crack my knuckles.
My fingers break,
Or were they always broken,
Just pretending to be whole?
Perhaps I'll never know,
Since I won't check to see,
And I don't want to remember if they were

Or maybe they never broke,
And are pretending to be
Broken, Shattered, and
Bloody on the floor,
Still moving, carrying themselves
Away from me

I pick them up and keep writing.

The words, the lines,
The stanzas, they combine to form everything
They don't combine at all,
They form nothing but chaos,
But discord, but injuries,
And are only visible to me

Or are they?
It's not like I know,
It's not like I can know,
Anyway.

I flip the paper,
Caressing it in my hands,
Crumpling it, ripping it,
Breaking it, holding it,
Discarding it with the trash.

I don't regret the killing of
My own mind's creation,
It was never real anyway,
That's what I think,
Or, that's what I thought.

As the ink pools on the floor,
It is a poem no more.

3rd place Poetry—High School Division
By: **Evelyn Amdal**
Ovey Comeaux High School

Turn Around

Sometimes I feel as if I still hear you
Each time I think of page 28.
Your open gaze, staring at me from the end of the stairwell.
“Turn Around”
That wasn’t the last time I saw you
But for you, it was.
“Turn Around”
I did,
I turn again
You are not there.
I think of the night you left
Vulnerability filling my room,
I had only loved for a few months
But your lips said eternity.
You once said before how
Orpheus was a fool to face Eurydice.
Do you understand now?
Why he had to,
Why I did.
Our sapphic sin we shared could only
Last for the few months I belonged to you.
You have to live,
Experience all that you’ve missed
My dear.
Turn Around

Honorable Mention Poetry—High School Division
By: **Kodi Romero**
Delcambre High School

Writer's Block

Sitting there for hours at a time,
A blank paper ready to have purpose.
An odd drought in ideas,
Has taken over the mind.

Nothing can satisfy the empty slate.
The sweet sound of music,
Nor the hours of television,
Can provide one with inspiration.

Not a single fingerprint to be seen.
The dust begins to form,
As cobwebs take over the body,
And the shadows move throughout the room.

It appears motivation and ideas,
Have been exiled from the brain,
And the writer is punished,
To sit and stare forever.