



WRITING CONTEST

***IN COLLABORATION WITH
THE NATIONAL WRITING PROJECT
OF ACADIANA***

***WINNERS' ANTHOLOGY
2018***

Acknowledgments

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This anthology is dedicated to Steve Domingue, whose support over the last several years has allowed us to not only survive, but thrive, in difficult financial times.

Sincerely,

Toby Daspit
Co-Director, National Writing Project of Acadiana

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Elementary School Division (Grades 3-5)

1st place Poetry – Elementary School Division

By: **Katelyn Guilbeaux**

Cankton Elementary

A Rainbow of Color Leaves

I like sunshine

I like trees

I like dancing in the breeze

I turn orange

I turn brown

I go sailing to the ground

I am crisp

I am a crunch

I get raked up in a bunch

2st place Poetry – Elementary School Division

By: **Zyah Alexander**

Cankton Elementary School

Thanksgiving Day

turkey

Thanksgiving

apple pie pumpkin cake

brown red yellow and tan

drumstick

3rd place Poetry – Elementary School Division

By: **Sophie Inzerella**

Cankton Elementary School

The Best Season Ever

Autumn, yellow, brown leaves

Jumping in big leaf piles

Snuggled in bed with pajamas

Blankets

1st place Fiction – Elementary School Division

By: **Riley Mitchell**

Green T. Lindon

Hope Dances

There lived a girl named Hope. She had a double life which was her softball life and her dance life. Her dad wanted her to play softball, but her mom wanted her to dance. Hope liked both, but she couldn't do both. So, every day she showed up to dance practice with a hat on, and softball with a bun. It was just too hard.

Her dance teacher announced there was Nutcracker auditions soon for the part Clara. It was a big deal and only one person can be Clara. Everyone will put all their time and effort to the audition, except Hope. She would have to do softball and the Nutcracker; how could she possibly do both? "Hope," her mom said, "it's time for dance." "No, Hope, it's time for softball practice", her dad said.

There were all kinds of directions for Hope, but she didn't know what to do. So, she sat there thinking about what she should do but, at this rate, when she figured it out practice for either sport would be done. And, she was right. There was a decision to be made; it wasn't an easy one. But, it was what she had to do. Hope decided that she would choose dance. Dance was just more important to her.

So, she had to tell her dad. She took a deep breath and knew she had to tell her dad, but sometimes she wished it was already done. "Dad," she said, "we need to talk." "What hunny?" said dad. "I just want to say I don't want to play softball anymore," explained Hope. Her dad did not understand, "What? But, you love softball!"

"I know, but I like dance. It is way more important to me" said Hope. "I can't believe this after all these years when you have played and now they're gone," her dad said. "They don't have to be we can still play in the back yard". "No, it's ok. I'll just give up altogether." Now Hope feels bad about what she did to her dad, but she knew it was the right thing to do. "Mom," Hope called, "I think I need to quit softball." Her mom understood and replied, "Ok hunny. Well you chose a good time to do it because it's time to go to dance practice."

Hope arrives at dance practice.

"Alright everybody. Today is the day you meet the owner of the national dance academy Phill Harry" (applause).

"I am the person who is going to judge you at your auditions in three days" said Phill.

"Well, let's get started" said the dance teacher. "You are going to be working on your solos for the auditions."

"Hope you need to start working on your pirouettes," her dance teacher coached. "Ok," said Hope. So, when she got home all she did was practice, practice, practice and nothing else. "Hope," said her mom "it's time for dinner." That's the first time she saw her dad after she told him about when she didn't want to play softball anymore. "Hey, Hope how was dance practice?" her dad asked. She knew his was disappointed so did not want to hurt his feelings and simply replied, "good, I guess."

After Hope finished dinner, she went to the garage to fix her bike. “Hey, Hope you need help,” her dad asked. “No, I’m good,” she said. Her dad tried asking her to let him help her, but it was not working. She knew he did not want her to dance. “Please let me help,” he had begged. Hope refused, “I said I’m good.” Her dad tried to stick around by saying “ok, but those are the wrong tools.” Hope just looked at him and finally said what she was thinking. “Look I’m sorry for dumping softball, but If your here to make me change my mind it’s not going to work.” Knowing that is why he was there he decided to leave her alone about it.

After Hope went to bed, she thought about we she had done to her dad. She also wanted to be a professional softball player, but dance was more important than softball. So, the next day she woke up and knew today is the day of the nutcracker auditions. She wanted this moment more than ever. “Hope,” her mom called, “there is something you need to know. I can’t drive you to the nutcracker audition.” Hope was mad, “What? Who is going to drive me?” She knew after choosing dance over softball her dad never would. Then her mom surprised her, “what do you mean? Your dad is going to.”

So, Hope’s dad did try to bring her to the auditions, but they were detoured in traffic. “Dad, we need to hurry.” He explained, “I’m trying my best. I have a friend who owns a helicopter he can take you.” So once hope got to the auditions it was just her turn and she danced wonderfully, but was it enough?

In fact, the judges said she was not good enough to be Clara, but the ballet teacher of the academy said that she could get another chance. He wanted hope to go to the national ballet academy. Hope ran to her mom and dad to hug them.

The next day she started at the academy, and she was so tired after. “Mom, that was the most tiring practice ever.” “I can tell,” her mom said. “Hope,” said Phill, “you have your second chance tomorrow when they announce who is Clara.” Hope understood responding, “I know, and I’m going to do my best!”

“Today’s the day that they announce the Clara role”, said Hope. When Hope went on stage to dance her last chance, she saw her mom and dad. They were excitedly saying good luck in hand motions. The judges said, “and the person who is going to play Clara is Hope!” Everyone stood up and started clapping. Hope, on the other hand, ran to her mom and dad and gave them a big hug. And the day she played Clara was the happiest day of her life.

2nd place Fiction – Elementary School Division

By: **Callie Savoie**

Green T. Lindon

Foxy and Duck

Once there was a fox named Foxy and a duck named Ducky. Ducky was Foxy's best friend, but Foxy liked to play tricks. One day, Foxy came up with a new trick to pull on Ducky. Ducky was doing his chores when Foxy came and asked him a question. "Hey, want to play a game?" Foxy said while laughing. "Sure," Ducky said. "Ok, let's play hotter and colder." Alright, you go first." Ducky said. Foxy covered Ducky's eyes and started the game. But what Ducky didn't know was that the game WAS Foxy's new trick. Foxy's plan was to lead Ducky into a river and get him sopping wet. Foxy lead Ducky to the closest river and said, "Just keep your eyes closed and continue walking forward." So that's exactly what Ducky did. But it only took about 15 to 20 seconds for him to fall into the river. When Foxy saw him fall in, she couldn't stop laughing. But when she looked up, she realized that this was the river that had the waterfall! Foxy stopped laughing and ran to help her friend. But by the time she got to him, he thought he was a goner. As Ducky was about to fall over the waterfall, Foxy grabbed him by the wing in the nick of time and pulled him back up. "I'm so sorry I almost got you killed Ducky, I'll never do that to you or anyone else again. The next day, instead of a trick, Foxy and Ducky played hotter and colder. But this time, Ducky covered Foxy's eyes and Foxy had to find Ducky's treehouse. "So, no hard feelings about the whole waterfall thing, right?" Foxy said. "You don't have to worry, I forgive you," Ducky said. "Just don't do it again, ok!" "I promise, I won't ever think about doing that ever, ever again." THE END.

Middle School Division (Grades 5-8)

1st place Poetry – Middle School Division

By: **Brooklyn Orr**

North Vermillion Middle School

Three Poems

Mindful Galaxies

Another day,
Another string of Thoughts--
Spiraling Inquiry,
Bursting Questions,
Pondering the existence of the stars.

For some,
The Quest for Truth
May seem a trivial Trek.

Yet,
I'd call it extraordinary.

For those who Question the cosmos,
Form galaxies within their own Minds,
And every star within those Mindful galaxies,
Represents a sense of Wonder--
Otherworldly Curiosity for Concepts
We have yet to Comprehend.

Shattered

Do you feel
the pull of your chest?
The oxygen
being ripped from your lungs?

The world
crashes at your feet
First, shattering to
shards
Then to
diamonds of glass
Into
nearly invisible needles

You step
It pierces

It's Cold

I don't remember much

but I can recall
the cold bite and surge
from that milkshake we shared
and the clacking of arcade buttons
smashed into their metal frames
and the fireflies dancing around the field

Your warm hand in mine

It felt like forever
but the warmth
didn't last long

Not long enough

2nd place Poetry – Middle School Division

By: **Tasia Louviere**

North Vermillion Middle School

Class Voices: The Story of a Broken Girl

Voices whisper
Constant Cycles
In her head.

Whispers,
Whispers,
Whispers,
No one hears.

Pain no one notices--
Like overlooked reflections
In the murky pond,
Like roots of the dead tree,
Like seasonless leaves falling--
Dull, dry, decay.

Like outstretched branches--
Arms reach for helping hands,
But the whispers bring her back
To her head.

Back to cycles
Of lonely
Numb.

Yesterday,
She was
Intact.

Today,
She feels
Cracked.

The whispers
Drown out
The world,
As the fissure

Drags itself
Down her soul.

The tears fall
Like the rain
Outside her window.

But just before
She shatters,
Sun peaks
Through
Her
Curtain.

She realizes
Her voice
Is powerful
Enough
To shatter glass voices.

3rd place Poetry (tie) – Middle School Division

By: **Collin Arnould**

North Vermilion Middle School

Golden Levee

The beautiful early sunlight,
Frames an image from the blind:
The golden grass levee wrapping around
Strings of decoys in the clear water,
Luring hope.

Ears hold silence in the area
Opposite of the sun.
Eyes directed toward the pond,
Catch a dragonfly landing on the gun.

The early dawn
Turns hope to reality,
With silent breaths.
Fingers on the gun
Take a shot
In the golden levee dream.

3rd place Poetry (tie) – Middle School Division

By: **Brookelyn Romero**

North Vermillion Middle School

Two Poems

A Dance with the Wind

From the brick house
On the hill,
I watch
The wind
embrace the candle's flame
For a soft, slow dance.

From the brick house
On the hill,
I grin as
The wind tangos
With buttery biscuit aromas.

From the brick house
On the hill,
I see
The moon shine
Brighter than the stars
And I wish the wind
Could convince it to dance.

From the brick house
On the hill,
I stand tall and proud,
And twirl
Like the dancing flame.

That Minty Air

Porch steps
Lift me
To HER door.

A cool minty breeze
Grabs my nose
As her world
Is opened to me.

She shares her
Life with me
Leaving me breathless
In the cold, minty air.

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1st place Fiction – Middle School Division

By: **Anthony James Leard**

Edgar Martin Middle School

Dance of Words

Among the horizon, you can see the dance of a billion words. Glimmering in the sunlight, endless possibilities of syllables fill the warming air of the rising sun. Though there are old words that collect dust, some words that were popular back then are now used by a glimpse of the population. A pile of syllables that is never used anymore describes a dead word, they sit in cages that are filled with rust.

There are some words that can make someone motivated, excited, and happy. In the dance of words among the horizon, only happy words are allowed. The words dance in lines, circles, even in odd shapes that they have made up. The happy words sometimes join together to create a new word, these words have enough power to motivate an army.

Except for the words that nobody should use. They are locked up tight inside of imaginary prison cells, these words should never be used because they could make someone unhappy. This is not allowed inside the dance of words, so the terrible words made their own dance. A dance full of syllables that create terrible words to be used by terrible people.

To combat this, the happy words kept joining together until they made one large word that could exterminate all of the bad in the world. While this happened, the force of terrible words created their huge word, a word that could terrorize a universe. Both of the words met and with one compliment from the happy word, the terrible word smiled with a huge grin. The terrible word lost its color, as it joined with the more powerful happy word. From there on out, the one large word graced others with happiness for eternity. The one word was to be remembered for the rest of eternity, it would never see a rusty cage, nor would it get a single piece of dust on its syllables. The word went on to bigger and better words, creating a universe of happiness for the rest of time.

2nd place Fiction – Middle School Division

By: **Aaliyah Jones**

North Vermilion Middle School

Summer Nights

Jake and Sarah were an unstoppable duo. They had been best friends since they were babies. There was nothing or no one that could break them apart. They would have never thought that they would develop feelings for each other, until the summer of 2015. Both of their families decided to take a trip together just for a fun vacation. One summer night, both Jake and Sarah's parents went out to dinner. Their parents left them some money to go to the carnival together.

When they arrived at the carnival, all they wanted to do was ride roller coasters. At the end of the night, they decided to ride the Ferris wheel together. As they handed the employee their tickets, they both started to feel a little nervous. The Ferris wheel slowly began to rise, causing the wind to gently caress their faces. They sat in the wind fairly quietly, not sure what to say. As Sarah's brunette hair fluttered in the wind, it was as if ribbons had just taken off into the starry night. Jake turned to look her into her bright blue eyes. Suddenly, words that he never thought he would say, flew from his lips: "I am falling for you, and I don't know why or how." Sarah started to blush. She had to catch her breath before she could reply. "I am falling for you, too, Jake. I have been since summer started."

As the Ferris Wheel brought them down to earth, they stared into each other's eyes. Jake leaned in for a kiss, and Sarah didn't stop him. She soaked in the magic of the moment as Jake's fingers tenderly laced their way into the waves of hair that hugged his face with the sudden force of the wind. When they realized the time, they loosened the embrace enough to notice two dandelions dancing in the wind. Both of them took it as a sign, although neither of them said it aloud.

The next day, they met up at the park. Sarah and her parents were invited to an upcoming gala, and she wanted Jake to come. As they strolled down the path of the park in complete silence, Sarah couldn't build up the courage to ask him to the gala. Her mind was clouded with the stress of picking a dress and her mother's prodding her to choose strange colors.

As the sky began to drip hues of a watercolor sunset, Sarah noticed a patch of dandelion flowers and sat among them. She plucked two from the ground and nervously braided the stems. When Jake sat next to her, she suddenly felt silly for being nervous to tell her best friend anything. She stared into the eyes that she had trusted for her entire life, and she just blurted it out. Jake laughed, "Of course I'll go with you, Sarah." As Sarah's cheeks flushed with happiness, Jake noticed that they were the same color as the pink clouds behind her.

A day before the gala, Sarah woke up and quickly texted Jake to see if he had everything planned and prepared for the following evening. Although they shared a magical kiss, Jake was her best friend, and she knew that organization was not his strong suit. Of course, he was playing Fortnite and talking to his friends. Sarah's nerves took over. However, she did not know that Jake knew how important it was for him to go with Sarah. He already had his tuxedo, and he custom-ordered the perfect bouquet for the occasion.

The night of the gala, Sarah was wearing the most alluring dress of anyone there. She looked as if she had stepped right out of a Cinderella story. Her twilight blue gown had rhinestones that wrapped around her waist above a full skirt. She looked absolutely ravishing, and people were wondering what lucky guy would find her glass slipper.

As Jake entered the gala, his eyes directed straight to Sarah. He thought she was the most stunning girl in the entire gala. He couldn't help but keep his eyes on her as he maneuvered himself through the crowds of people. The most elegant music played, and everyone danced. However, Sarah was waiting for a particular song. She couldn't help but wonder if Jake would ask her to dance or if he would even know the song that she most favored.

When Sarah's song began to play, she looked across the table at Jake as he stood up from his chair and quickly approached her. "Would you like to dance me lady." Sarah laughed and quickly said "Of course, my king." He grabbed her hand and spun her as he led her to the dance floor. The lights dimmed, and Sarah placed her head on his shoulder. She felt his breath down her neck as he said, "You look absolutely sensational, tonight." She replied, "You are. by far, the most strikingly handsome boy here tonight." Sarah felt her heart race and butterflies flutter in her stomach as he pulled her closer. She looked up into his hazel brown eyes as if she had fallen into a muse. She had never felt the way she did with Jake, with anyone else.

It was as if they were the only two people in the gala, and all they were thinking about was each other. He was her happy place, there was no place either one of them would rather be except right there in the moment. As they stared into each other's eyes, the song ended, and they stood there in silence. Jake had no idea what to feel except astounded because he never knew he could feel this way. He leaned in for a kiss, and it was absolutely phenomenal. It went on for what felt like hours.

Sarah pulled away when she felt a soft brush on her elbow. She looked down to notice her little sister holding the most perfect bouquet of summer wildflowers. She struggled to hold back tears as she took it from her sister. She watched Jake as he softly pulled two dandelions from the bouquet and placed the braided stems behind her ear. Sarah knew, in that moment, that she was not the only one who noticed the magic of summer nights. The crowds of people clapped as the unstoppable duo continued to dance with the summer moon on their faces and forever in their eyes.

3rd place Fiction – Middle School Division

By: **Ayden Lee**

North Vermilion Middle School

The Elementalist Project

Max blinked the grogginess from his eyes, in the early morning sun. He shuffled sleepily to his bathroom, brushed his teeth, flushed water over his face, and stared at his reflection as water scurried down his cheeks. The reflection showed him was a boy with dark brown hair, light green eyes that glinted in the glass, skin as pale as a whiteboard, and a freckle or two here or there. As he was thinking about what to do when he got out, the loudspeaker interrupted his thoughts, “Specimen 124, please step out of your containment chamber and prepare for placement with Unit 25 at Hall C.”

Obediently, Max went to his bed, gathered his belongings, which would include a suitcase full of clothes, his drawing notebook, and the photos of the family he loved before they turned him in. He stepped out of the prison that the scientists lovingly called the “containment chamber,” rounded a corner, opened a door, and joined the group of the three kids he had known since he was six years old.

He said “hello” to Soda Pop, a kid with dark skin and the hair to match it. Soda Pop’s real name was Jake, but they called him Soda Pop because he could make soda fizz without even touching the bottle. Soda Pop was standing next to Emma, the smartest girl in the lab. Her light blonde hair was woven with bright red ribbons that offset her lightly tanned skin and the freckles that glittered near her nose. She was able to spark electronics, and, on a good day, even make lightning form. Emma waved, and Max returned the gesture. The only other person Max knew was Ruby, the person that he first met in the lab. She introduced Max to everyone in his group and helped to make him feel at home in the facility. Ruby had one bright red eye and a light blue one, hence the name Ruby. She had light brown skin and hair as black as a midnight sky. Her “power” was to summon gems from the earth and even use them as a defensive shield. As Max venture

deeper into the room, he saw a few adults in lab-coats who were gesturing for him to sit down at a table with a few chairs.

As he sat, the adults began to speak, “Soon, you will all be assigned to one room that will test your current ‘abilities.’” The male adult framed that last word with air quotes. “As usual, you will be tasked with improving these ‘abilities’ to prepare your defense in the war.” The war. Max remembered how element users, the scientists’ name for those with powers, would go rogue and use their powers to rob banks, kill others, and, in extreme cases, cause natural disasters. Some of the worst natural disasters caused by rogue element users, that he could remember, were Hurricane Katrina and the 2004 Indian Ocean earthquake that triggered twenty-six tsunamis that killed approximately 277,898 people. Max shuddered. He did not want to become one of the rogue elementalists. In fact, he swore that once he broke out of the lab, he and his three friends would fight off the rogue elementalists who tragically ended so many lives.

“So, we will now transport you all to your new room and provide you with new jumpsuits that provide more flexibility and allow you to practice more freely.” With that, Max, Soda Pop, Emma, and Ruby were led to their new sizeable room. As Max glanced around the room, he saw so many strange devices. He couldn’t even imagine what half of them did, but he had no time for any of those contraptions. As soon as the lab workers locked the door, their plan would spring into action.

With sound of the lock, Emma pulled out the floor plan to the lab. In the same instant, Soda and Max took hold of the nearby vent and pulled with all their might while Ruby kept watch. Within a couple of minutes, the vent snapped, and Soda Pop grinned. “We’re finally getting out of this dump!” exclaimed Soda.

“Well, the plan isn’t over yet, Jake,” said Ruby. “And keep your voice down, too. We don’t need any attention from the guards.” That made Soda Pop shut his lips faster than he could rip open a bag of Oreos.

When they were ready to leave the room, Emma summoned sparks then shot them dead-center at the cameras that were monitoring them, effectively lowering their chance of being caught. One by one, they crawled through the open vent. As they shuffled through it, sharp clanking noises rattled until they got to another enclosed vent that lead to the roof. Then, Soda Pop and Max ripped it off with brute force, excited to know what path lay ahead. As they all scrambled to get out of the vent, a mouse scurried over Emma's back and onto the roof. She held her breath to smother a scream.

The next step of the plan would begin as soon as all of their feet were on the roof. Soda was to summon a wave and lower them all to the dock, from which they would escape to a small speedboat that they had stocked with enough supplies to last for at least a week. At least, that's what would have happened if the strongest guard would not have materialized as the last set of feet hit the roof. The guard was an elemental user who had the ability to create wind power which could knock his foes back, if needed.

"You little rats really thought you would escape without a problem, didn't cha? Well if God so help me, I will not let you disorderly beasts go without a fight!" the man yelled this with a snarl at the top of his lungs, charging the group with the force of a thousand hurricanes. What the guard didn't factor in, though, was that a head on charge was not the best idea against a group of people with electricity and water on their side. As Soda Pop summoned up a small amount of water, Emma shocked it, with just enough force to knock the guard out. It hit him head on with a deafening ZAP! Stunned in place, the guard convulsed violently and fell to the ground with a large thud. Checking his pulse, Max said "He'll be fine. I'm sure people get hurt here all the time. The medical staff should be totally prepared for this, right guys?" He nervously searched his friends' facial expressions for a sign of relief, but he found nothing but shock. "Let's just go." Ruby said with steely determination in her voice.

"Come on, Max. Let's go," Emma said as Max looked back at the guard with worry, "I'm sure he'll be fine." Tugging against regret, he followed the rest of his friends, while Soda Pop

summoned a wave to get them down safely. As they swooped down, they looked towards the dock to see that their boat was still intact. When they landed on the ground, the group ran towards their speedboat. With their feet pounding on the wooden boards of the old dock, they sped onwards. As Max quickly took inventory of all their supplies, Emma started up the boat. While the engine whirred to life, Max, Jake, Emma, and Ruby took one last look at the wretched laboratory. As the sign reading, “The Elementalist Project” faded with the ever-growing distance, Max knew that this was merely a race to justice, disguised as an escape.

1st place Creative Nonfiction – Middle School Division

By: : **Briona Guidry**

North Vermilion Middle School

Grandpa and the Sticky Situation

Kids get a bad rap for choices they make when they're just trying to learn about the world. I mean, what better way to learn about the force of gravity than by throwing something breakable into the air? What better way to learn about electromagnetic radiation than by putting a little aluminum foil in the microwave often? Experience is an important part of learning, but kids often get in trouble for seeking those experiences. Well, I am going to share a true story which shows that curiosity doesn't end in childhood!

When I was younger, I spent the day at my grandparents' house. That morning, I found a tube of super glue in the cabinet. It sparked my curiosity, so I started playing with it. When my grandmother noticed what I was doing, I was warned to put it away and never to play with super glue. So, of course, I obeyed. Not long after this, my grandmother had to leave for work, so I spent the rest of the day with my grandfather.

Grandpa must have been just as curious about what made super glue so "super," because he used it to glue my grandmother's brand-new sheets together! When I saw this, I felt bad for Grandpa. I knew that he was going to get into so much trouble. It made me sad, because how else was he supposed to learn if super glue really was super? And it is really super. Still, I had quite a dilemma ahead of me. Grandma said not to play with the super glue, and Grandpa broke the rules. For a brief moment, I thought about taking the blame, but I couldn't lie. So, when Grandma called to check on us, I let her know that Grandpa glued the sheets together.

B. Guidry

Grandpa taught me many lessons that day, aside from the power of super glue. First, he taught me to never make Grandma mad. Second, he taught me that adults get curious, too. To this day, my family still reminds Grandpa of the sad choice he made. *Poor Grandpa.*

High School Division (Grades 9-12)

1st place Poetry – High School Division

By: **Christina Castellanos**

Academy of the Sacred Heart

Multiple Poems

We Burn in the Tongues of Others

This flavorful anguish that drives me to madness,
inexplicable and infinite pain
Pain, fly
Fly blindly ...

The taste of 100 butterflies coming out of my mouth,
with tints of red through my lips
Marks that will stay forever ...

The beach has its sand,
the sand has its grains.
And I,
I had you.

Beleaguered with Enchantment

My desires,
All the choir was evoked by their delicacy

Those passionate carnations stating
Their canorous poems,
Constellated with laughter

The heavens of my mind are like erroneous fantasies;
Thoughts;
The dreadfulness of my bloody thirst
Forced my soul to squeeze into dainty cavities

Increasingly cramped,
Like a fat woman would feel in a baby's crib
Through my interior self,
It was concealed so profoundly
Depriving my spirit to discern its existence

Its languor made its value evaporate across the flaming fire
In which pieces of carnal wishes
Conflate into murmurous sins.
The nemesis was prancing

Felicity aroused
For his cravings where fulfilled, To that extent
I couldn't feel alive no more.

The Eternal Trail

She is looking through the horizon,
Searching for something
Wearing a red dress with white polka dots

There was a green path
It was like Christmas;
Warm and tender.

The light was bright as shooting stars falling from another galaxy

She was laying her hand on the bicycle;
Asking herself what her next journey will be
The path seemed to be long but she stood there amazed by what she was seeing

Her father,
The view allowed her to imagine her deepest aspiration,
For her dad to come back from the Promised Land and tell her he loves her

Her hair looked like the reflection of the multi-colored sky in the ocean,
Hallucinations; the rays from the sun were revealing through the straight blonde lines
Pulled by gravity through her head
There was nothing she could do,
Her path had finally ended.

A Palm Tree in the Darkness

The moon foreshadows my destiny,
A tree curved perfectly into desperation.
Watching its reflection in the water,
Caused the soil to moisten.

And the roots still shaking,
From the fear that was already expired.
The remembrance of the intriguing ave was gone,
It had slowly disappeared
Vanishing all away with son-ow and tears.

The ephemeral hope for serendipity
Like an astrophile glancing through a telescope
Yet, the wind was still gazing towards the unknown.

Scattered in mystery
The coco went cou cou
And fell from behind.

Blue Resonance

Glamour flows through the ocean's currents
An exuberant Splashhhhh

Patterns within the sapphire water
And the white effervescence
Fused into a perfect assemblage
Cheering for me to dive in

How the ripples kiss the grains of sand
The epiphany of grace
Resembled in a mellifluous echo
Splashhhhh

That seashell laying on the waterside
Formed a spark of tranquility in my heart
The presence of my grandmother

My soul was willing to inhale

Particles of modest foam elated towards the sky
Crashing with one another
Splashhhhh

The perfect symmetry of the water
Like the chords on a fresh guitar
My hands were open,
Waiting to receive,
Drops of diverse colors diffusing
Splashhhhh

2nd place Poetry – High School Division

By: **Camryn Scott**

David Thibodaux STEM Magnet Academy

Solace

I speak in soulful rhythms, breathe Nina's blues,
My heart is the sweet drum, yo Sweet Honey's tunes.
My blood pumps ancient honey, my skin holds its golden hue
For my hair there is no greater currency, my soul reminisces every move,
Whilst my eyes play its windows, precious Earthen jewels.
My head, constantly filled with Martin's very dream,
Allows my hands to pertain to the passions within Malcolm's every speech.

Within my culture, I've rediscovered my self-worth.
Ascended past metamorphosis, Slipped into my rebirth.

Within that cocoon, I shed my fair share,
Cried tears as any poor child,
Who with self-spite dared
To question their culture's prominent style.
Despised my colour, with its prismatic wings,
As though it were some uncomfortable embrace,
A shameful staple to a shameful race.
I saw no reason to push forward, no reason to love,
Sought no assistance when my rainbow was enuf.
I hated my skin, and everything it represented,
Prayed for Morrison's Eye to see a new perspective.

Growing older, I saw that the implementation of hate,
Came not from my own mind, but from those of different traits.
It was not merely jealousy nor sheer disrespect,
It was easily greed and a need, to feed insecurities and gain superiority.
Oppressors of no specified race, who shed offensive slurs and toxicity,
In their own paths to self-hate, shed venom to others like themselves and of different kinds,
A terrible release from such poisonous minds.

Well, let me tell you,
Even when you can't find self-value in your own skin,
You won't hinder me from finding solace in mine.

My Nana's house harboured no mirrors,
Yet my reflection of myself couldn't be any clearer.
Instead I've recognized my real beauty through her truthful eyes,
Her endurance and her strength has been transformed into mine,
I was raised by a single mother, who with restless dedication
Put her children before herself without a moment's hesitation,
I shared my struggles with my sisters, those by blood and by skin,
Who continuously struggle to see past their individual pigments,
Which has so clouded the judgement of the world we live in.

My lover, despite how pale, saw that within,
Past my body, flaws, and first impressions,
That I hold true beauty, beyond my culture and race,
He respects and he loves me for it, fills the empty space
That thieves of my past never cared to replace.

Don't misunderstand my intimacy, there is no race I could ever prefer,
Despite our diversities, we all bleed the same crimson colour.

No lessons nor joys can be had with an obscured mind,
I sincerely hope, that you'll see that in fair time,
That just because I find love in skin of a different kind,
Doesn't mean I don't find solace in mine.

3rd place Poetry – High School Division

By: **Diego Lopez**

Carencro High School

I remember....

I remember the sun scorching my skin as I played soccer with my cousin in our old, dirty, and beat up soccer park, making my skin darker and darker by the second.

I remember those sunny Sundays at the park where our local team would play against our nearby rivals and the earth shaking roars of the crowd that formed every time a game was played.

I remember those hot and sweaty San Pedro nights when my uncle and grandmother would take me to the city to explore its never-ending trail of concrete and dark neon lights.

I remember during those rainy days in the summer, when the rain was at its worse, when my cousin and I would run outside and run around in grey storm shirtless, jumping in the mud without a care in the world.

I remember the look on my grandmother's face as she scolded the two of us for coming in the house covered in mud and dirt.

I remember the metal of my uncle's truck burning my hands and buttocks as I rode in the bed of his truck in order to go to shopping for supplies and groceries in the business district of San Pedro.

I remember the stench of fruits and sewage that would obliterate my nostrils as soon as we entered the business district of San Pedro.

I remember those days at the beach in Tela, relaxing and letting the sun do its job on our bodies as we forgot about all of our problems.

I remember those nights at the beach where we would all gather in a small tourist bar and watch the Jamaican dancers dancing along to our native music of ranchera and smooth, tropical jazz in front of a balcony that was facing the ocean with our only source of light being from torches that were lit and hung on the walls of the bar.

I remember staring at the moonlight reflecting off the calm ocean waves as I listened to the soft tunes being made from the jazz bands big, golden saxophone and their old, worn out bongo drums and the soothing voice of their female vocalist who was singing about a long-lost lover in a very thick Jamaican accent.

I remember waking up to the strong smell of eggs, beans, and tortillas being cooked in my grandmas old and rusty but functioning stove.

I remember San Pedro not being all fun and games.

I remember those fearful nights where I would lay in bed alone, holding my teddy bear tight as gunfire rang out and pierced the night sky.

I remember getting used to the sound of gunfire off in the distance as it would occur often.

I remember the worry my uncle had for me as I would walk to school, hoping that the neighborhood thugs wouldn't try to lay a finger on me.

I remember the crowds of tattoo-ridden criminals that would occasionally crawl out from their dark caves in order to harass anyone they deemed fit.

I remember the nausea and the burning sensation of vomit in my throat as I watched a news report about a graveyard, filled with dozens of bodies and souls, that was discovered in our local river.

I remember the chaos of rush hour as the roads were filled to the brim with cars, commercial trucks, police, soldiers, and people trying to get home for the night.

I remember the heartbreak and sadness mixed with relief and happiness as my grandmother told me the news that I was moving to America with my mother and father who I hadn't seen in years.

I remember the tears of joy that ran down my eyes as I stepped into the airport and ran to hug my father who was missing from my life since I was a baby.

I remember the mixed emotions of sadness, joy, anxiety, nostalgia, and relief that overtook my entire body as I waved goodbye to those who had took care of me my whole life leading up to this point in time.

I remember the excitement I felt when our airplane took off as I stared at the dark neon lights and gritty streets of San Pedro Sula out of the small, oval window of the airplane one last time.

I remember the pressure being applied to my ears as the altitude of the plane was at its max.

I remember seeing the sun rise on the American horizon for the first time as the plane was close to landing in Houston, Texas.

I remember breaking down into tears of joy once again as I felt the warm embrace of my mother for the first time in years soon after landing in Houston.

I remember the arriving at my new home in America, knowing very well that things will never be the same and that my new life was about to begin....

1st place Fiction – High School Division

By: **Gavin Chesteen**

Acadiana High School

Blueberry Pie

I wake up to the smell of mama's blueberry pie hitting my nose swiftly and everyone knows that blueberry pie is my favorite. Mama never really makes these pies because money is a really big problem in this house. I walked downstairs to go grab a mouthful of delight before I head to school. "Hey mama" I said as I kissed mother on the cheek. She gave me no response and walked in to her room. I decided I'd shrug it off and go make myself a plate. I walked to the open cabinet and reached for our round floral plates when I saw the round yellow school bus pulling up. Guess the pie will have to wait as I grab my school bag and run outside to the mailbox under the number 447. The school bus pulled up and he opened the door with a friendly smile. I greeted him back with a smile and found my way to my seat. It took us a couple of blocks to get to the stop... The bus stopped and the door would follow open, my bus driver facing the front not trying to bother the guy we all call "Big Jason". We call him that cause he is over six-foot feet and has boulders for muscles. I looked out the window trying to make myself seem unnoticeable, but he threw his school bag on me and walked to the back in his seat. I looked at the kid in the seat to the right of me and he had urinated all over himself. I felt bad for the boy but I decided to mind my own business. I looked out the window contemplating what I had to do to get out of this situation. About ten minutes later we arrived at the school yard. We all took our school bags, I left Jason's on my seat, and made my way to the common's area. It's already so loud in here and it's not even eight in the morning. I decided I needed another year and that maybe this year wasn't the right year for me to be in school, especially high school. So, I called my mother asking her to let me stay home this year, and of course, she said no. I wanted to throw my phone at the wall really bad. The morning bell rang for us to go to class and I was looking for room 532. When I had finally found it, I walked in past the tall woman figure who I greeted with a shy smile. About seven minutes after the bell ring, she walked to the front of the class and introduced herself. "My name is Mrs. Darlene" said the teacher. I began my math assignment when I heard the door slam. I jumped up frightened and looked up to see Jason. Of course, he's in my class, what else could I expect? I looked around the room and saw every seat in the room was filled, except the one beside me. As I looked towards the empty chair hoping he wouldn't notice, I was tapped on the shoulder aggressively. I bit my lip and turned around to be met of the presence of Jason. "You're in my seat little girl" Jason said. I nodded my head in agreement, and grabbed my backpack

moving to the empty seat beside him. As I went to sit down, Jason would pull the chair from under me and would follow with, "My school bag sits here." I looked towards Mrs. Darlene for assistance but she agreed with him and pointed to the floor. I gave her back a sarcastic smile in return and took a seat on the floor. I looked at my paper for a good five minutes before falling asleep on the floor. Soon the bell rang, and I woke up scrambling to gather all of my belongings before getting stepped on by my classmates. Right as I went to stand up I felt a sudden pain in my hand. I looked at my hand to find brown steel toe boots followed by Jason laughing. I went to tell him something but I couldn't make up the words to do so. "I can't hear you princess" he would then claim. After he walked out I grabbed my school bag and went to sit in the cafeteria. I pulled out a ham sandwich and some peanut butter crackers, the round kind of course. I was about to take my first bite when I heard someone yell "Take cover!!" I turned my head around to see what was happening, only to be met with a face full of mashed potatoes. I looked around the cafeteria and saw everyone obnoxiously laughing at me. I grabbed my school bag leaving my lunch and ran out to an empty hallway. I pulled out napkins from my bag and wiped my face removing the potatoes. I buried my face in my hands and just began crying softly. From behind someone would hug me. The grasp was manly, but a feminine manly. I would turn my attention to a 5'7 boy who wore glasses and had silky blonde hair. I went to wipe the tears from my eyes, but instead he rushed and wiped them for me. "My name is Ethan, I heard you crying. Are you okay?" he would ask. "I'm okay." I would respond. He nodded his head knowing I wanted to be alone and gave me his schedule for the day. I folded it up and put it in my back pocket. The bell rang for us to go home, so I walked to the bus waiting for Jason to get on. Not too long after, Jason got on bumping in to my shoulder purposely. I expected nothing less from him. All I was wondering was why he was targeting me? I feel as if I have done nothing, but to him I'm just destroying his world or something by just living. The bus finally arrived at my house and the driver dismissed me with another smile. I ran inside grabbing a plate making me a slice of the blueberry pie. I grabbed my fork and went to go take a bite, when the plate was taken from me and mother stood there angry. "So, you think you can start a food fight and then come home eating up all mine?" she asked. I went to say something but I decided to bite my tongue and ran to my room slamming the door. Of course, Jason blamed it on me. I grabbed a knife from the top of my dresser ready to end everything. Ready for the blame to get put on another person. Before I could go through with it, I heard pebbles being thrown at my window. I looked out the window to see Ethan standing there. I put the knife back on the dresser and fixed my hair. I walked back to the window and smiled at him. He motioned for me to come outside. I rejected his offer and pointed to my mother who was checking the mail. He looked at mother and ran fast away. I couldn't help but laugh. I sat in my bed and gave my nightly prayer, not soon after falling

asleep.

Mama knocked on the door and I immediately jumped out of bed and got dressed for the day. I had to skip out on breakfast again! I rode the bus to school again and as soon as I got to school the principal handed me my write up slip. The slip read "Misbehaved student throwing food across the cafeteria." I sighed and walked to Mrs. Darlene's class taking my seat on the floor. She handed out our lesson for the day and went to her desk. I was soon joined on the floor by Ethan. Ethan sat there with a smile, but I could not move my face to give one back. I finished my worksheet and went to go turn it in but instead I got tripped and Jason took my paper. Ethan stood up and pushed Jason and took my hand lifting me up. As I got up, Ethan went down. Jason was throwing his fists into Ethan's face. Soon we had multiple officer's in the room separating them. Ethan stood up with a really throbbing, black eye. I went to check on him but he waved me off. I smiled and started to realize there are people who are good. People who stand up to bullies. I rode the bus home and when I ran inside, a plate of blueberry pie was ready. I grabbed my silver fork, cut a piece of pie and took a really big bite. A long-awaited taste of perfection. In that moment I felt like no matter how tough life was, that there were people who cared about me and that everything would always turn out alright.

2nd place Fiction – High School Division

By: **Lindsay Council**

Academy of the Sacred Heart

Compelled By My Lover

I miss him terribly. As I wait for him to come home, I can't help but think about only him. I've fallen in love those piercing blue eyes blinding mine. They make my vision hazy, and now all I see is him. I have memorized the sound of his voice, deep and loving. Now that voice fills my head and it never stops playing on repeat. He is not perfect, but no one is. All of his imperfections make me love him even more. Every time he leaves, I miss him. Every time he comes home, I realize how lucky I am to have such a loving man in my life. I could never imagine being apart from him and I can't wait for his return tonight.

Those hands know their way around. They hold my hands so tight it hurts, but the claw marks don't bother me. They give me hope that I will always have something to hold and the scars are my lasting reminder. Those hands wrap around my back and entrap me, but I've never felt so close to something. His hands fiercely touch my face for only a second. I'm left with the sting of losing the touch, but the warmth remains and makes my cheeks rosy. These hands know me the best and I miss the feeling of them touching me when he is gone.

His smile is captivating with teeth aligned perfectly and lips the perfect shade of red. It pains me to watch him after a long hard day. His smile is faded, and his lips are drained of color. I always know how to fix his face though. He has a thing for making love marks on my neck and it always brings him joy. As he loves on my neck, I watch the color return to his lips and his smile regrows. Sure, these love marks hurt a little, but relationships aren't easy. Sometimes one person might have to hurt a little if it means that the partner can be happy. The marks are small and even though it might take some of my energy, he needs the energy more than me. I am happy to provide whatever he needs in return, since he provides so much for me.

I don't get out much anymore because he doesn't like to share me with anyone else. It makes me feel so loved to know that I'm all his. My mother misses me terribly and every time she calls, she begs for me to leave him. I know she's just jealous because she's never known love like this; my dad never loved us. He abused both of us then found love somewhere else and left. She tries to convince me that I'm in love with the same kind of man, but she doesn't understand. She was never loved by my monster of a father, but now I have found love in a new man. It angers me that she would try to take that away from me. Our conversation today was especially aggravating. She told me this is the last time she would call. She claims that she can't bear to hear me talk about this nightmare anymore and this is my last chance to come home. I told my mother that she shouldn't expect me to leave such a wonderful home and she's wasting her time waiting for me to come home. It's sad that my relationship with my mother is now ruined but I cannot leave; I am loved too much in my new home.

My thoughts are interrupted by a knock on the door. I run to the door with excitement for my lover's return. I unlock the door quickly and I can't help the smile that shows on my face. The smile quickly fades when I open the door and it's not him standing there. The resemblance is uncanny, but I don't recognize that grin. He only gets a smile after he returns home not right when I open the door, which can only mean one thing. He won't be making love bites on me tonight; he already made love bites on someone else. I can tell by the dot of blood on the corner of that evil grin. He walks past me with that stupid grin and doesn't care to even look at me. I distance myself from him for the rest of the night. He doesn't notice at all and I am able to pack my things. He falls asleep with the same grin still painted on his face. It's hard for me to make my departure so I sit and watch him sleep. His smile brightens as he dreams, and I know it's about her. His hands reach out as if to grab her and his teeth are more exposed as his smile continues to grow. I see those pearly fangs he makes love bites with, and I am horrified that I ever let him do that to me. I am hurt that my whole world has betrayed me. How could the one I love, cheat on me?

I guess my mother's last call came at the right time. I am returning to my mother tonight and I don't care how much she will say I told you so. As I walk the long road to my old home, hot tears fall down my face because I don't understand how he has changed so much. I was compelled to love him. He is no longer my lover, but a monster that I can no longer give my life to.

1st place Creative Nonfiction – High School Division
By: **Sam Foore**
Carencro High School

Gently Down the Stream

In the early years of Greek philosophy, there were those who were revered for their intellect, such as Plato or Socrates, and then there was Diogenes. Diogenes was unorthodox, to say the bare minimum, challenging many social values with cynical views of the world that baffled the denizens of Greece at the time, not by the merit of speech or theory, but by the events of his life almost novelizing his ideas.

One event of his life stands out amongst the rest in terms of irony. After a portion of his life where he was sold into slavery, Diogenes held little more than a cup to his name. Bare of wealth or power yet devoid of such concepts such as pride or shame, Diogenes walked the streets of Greece as a defeated man until he met eyes with a poor boy on his path. Sipping from his namesake, Diogenes noticed the boy was drinking water from his dirty, naked hands. Astounded, he cast aside his cup, his only ownership in the world at the time, and exclaimed in awe “Amazing! A child has bested me in the plainness of living!”

Unlike Diogenes, today people are overwhelmed by the stress presented by the responsibilities of work, family, possession, and money; leaving optimism but a myth of a trait to the common man. I have faith in that myth. I invest my belief in the idea that stress is a slow and insidious killer of the soul, and that optimism about the future is the only means of exorcising this poison. After all that can be said and done, this self-centered Earth still turns after anything, and there’s always someone in a deeper pit of despair. This self-maintained Zen was not acquired

through some ridiculous task, but rather a simple conclusion to come to terms with the situation I was presented; Waves and waves of stress.

The conclusion of summer break usually has its own abundance of fears and tension, but it never causes mass discord or peril in someone's livelihood. The situation was initially not so different in the final days of the summer of 2016, with impending socialization, study, and deprivation of sleep looming over the minds of students and parents alike. Then something else loomed over our heads: One of the worst storms in the recent history of Louisiana. To say it was devastating is to condescend the bite of a cobra to a simple phrase as 'unhealthy' or 'irritating'. People's livelihoods were lost under waves (both in the emotional and the literal sense.) Upon the realization that an impending force of nature was brewing above, school was near instantaneously dismissed, and all students were herded together to be sent home. The trek back from the school grounds was accompanied with the sight of everywhere you call home buried beneath a sludge of dirt-mixed water acting as a vacuous deterrent sent by nature.

As dismal as it all seemed on the path back, nothing was as dreadful as finally crawling back to home- to the one shelter you confide a piece of yourself in- only to catch it in the process of being destroyed from the inside-out. Immediately I was greeted with the sight of many possessions of mine floating adrift inside my abode; objects of different parts of my past floated past me, acting first as a sharp stab of nostalgia and recollection, then in the next moment as a symbol for history being washed away. After salvaging what essentials we couldn't part with, we were able to have some close friends of our family assist us in finding a temporary residence. They took us in, a brew of conflicting cause and relations acting as a motive for their actions;

loyalty in our kinship, faith of a better future for our sake, and fear that they might walk the same road that day alike.

It may seem bizarre that this story plays a role in optimism, considering how devoid of hope the details may describe. We were indeed crushed; there is no simpler or more effective way to describe the mood- crushed and defeated. Then came a revelation. After a few days in the care of our allies, my mother had grown to hate the corrupt mood that loomed over me. She suggested I would go to my closest cousin's house in hopes that he would find a means to relax me. I obliged, and by a miracle unknown to me still, he did. Upon my arrival he was preparing to do something so random and obscure that even now I laugh at the thought of it: He was going to canoe.

Canoeing in flood waters may initially seem to be the most barbaric, least self-conscious acts we could have done at the time, and rightfully so. Yet this was one of the most innocent, pure experiences that I can describe. The sight of the sky and water at equilibrium after the harsh storm brought about a tranquility only tapped by nature. The precise yet subtle transaction of rowing the canoe ever slowly through Arnaudville paired with witnessing the rural society as not a township or a civilization, but rather a museum comprised solely of the remnants of destruction left by the flood conjured such raw emotion and food for thought that the whole scenario stimulated something beyond the mind or body, almost feeding the soul directly. The laughs we had, discussing life as if nothing had happened or were to happen in the previous days or in the coming future was pure unlike any element.

The culmination of these powers was the perfect climate for a spark of thought. There was something so magical about that instant; to be completely void of stress in the most chaotic

of times, that resonated with me at the time. After losing most material goods I owned, after watching my house be reduced to a rotting carcass of a structure, after watching my kin become terrorized with anguish and stress, the logical evolution of that chain of thought would be that I would be next. Yet there I was, almost enlightened by this supposedly horrendous event. Why was this? Why was the rest of the world so distraught when it was still so very alive? We were in the midst of one of the most beautiful scenarios created, yet we frowned because of the thought of loss?

I couldn't accept that mindset. It became very apparent that the stress of the flood was a mere waste of processes. There was too much good to be had in the present at the time, and at the end of the day I knew the Earth would still turn. When all of that was fused together, what reason was there to have fear over faith?

Most people say that the Greek philosophers were ahead of their time, and I stand with that statement. Yet it isn't because of the mental greatness of Plato or Socrates, but rather the mindset of Diogenes. To be so empty of fear and stress that every action he took would stand to be a testament to his philosophy is a state that most people of the modern world can't even comprehend. I strive for that absence, both out of agreement in the idea and out of curiosity in what could be achieved in such a state. What wondrous, bold actions await when there is no negative feeling to repress it?

2nd place Creative Nonfiction – High School Division

By: **Jasmine Moton**

Carencro High School

Hard Work

Could you imagine putting in hard, tedious work on something you may not want to do but still want to excel at? Staying up late at night or even struggling to keep pushing forward to get your task complete, even though you had considered quitting umpteen times throughout the entire process. Then at last, your hard work begins to pay off and benefit you, finally. Imagine your smiling face and the joy and warmth that will swell in your heart. Feelings that you would never want to leave you because you would know that you deserve all the blessings that you are receiving because you gave your very best to get it. Although we as human beings do not always want to put in hard work when we are attempting to do something, it is always worth it in the long run. To be successful at anything in life you must work hard.

One Saturday night, I walked through the doors of my home devastated. Devastated because I missed out on a position I felt that I more than deserved. Devastated because I would be missing out on something that meant so much to me. I would be missing out on such a great opportunity in the sport I loved so much, all because I let my arrogant demeanor get the best of me and did not give my task 100% in the way I knew I should have.

In the Spring of my eighth-grade year, we had softball tryouts for my middle school. All throughout my recreational softball years I had always been chosen to be on the best All-Star teams, so I just knew that I was going to make the team for sure. I would always hear comments like, “you have a great third baseman coach,” or, “excellent work on the field Jasmine,” from my coaches and others who would just watch me play at my games. It would not be uncommon for

coaches to pull me on the side after games and ask me to come and workout with their select teams. So, when it came time for tryouts I was confident that my spot on the team would be secured.

I was so confident about my position on the team, that I didn't even try my hardest; I ran the slowest, warmed up the fastest, and sat the longest. I let the fact that I had remarkable talent and was one of the most athletic girls on that field blind me from the fact that I still had to give the same amount of effort ,and then some, just like anyone else on that field.

After I didn't make the Youngsville Middle School Lady Dragons Softball Team I had given up on playing the sport all together. I was so heartbroken that I didn't make the team that I didn't even try out to play for my high school during my freshman year. But, after realizing how much I loved the sport and admitting to my mistakes it taught me to never think that talent is enough. Instead, you have to put in maximum effort and every time you walk onto the field you have to be working harder than the person next to you. And lastly, it taught me never to settle. Even though I didn't make it the first time, nothing will stop me from trying again. With my new and improved mindset I can now say that I am a Second Team All-District Third Baseman with a .555 batting average in my Junior year, because I persevered and learned how to humble myself. I have also always exhibited hard work throughout my academic journey. I have always loved the fluttering feeling I get in my stomach when I get A's on my test, after I have spent the night harassing my mother to help me study with flashcards. I can also remember the joy I would feel when the nine weeks would end, and I would get my report card back and I had made the honor roll or principal's list and my mother rewarded me with a mini shopping spree and ice cream date for my tedious work. I can also remember my heart filling with pride when at the end of the

year we would have the award ceremony and my name would be called for the honors award. I can still see the smiling faces of my grandparents and parents as I walk across the stage to receive my certificates, my mother's index finger eagerly clicking away taking pictures of me just to show all of our friends and family members. I love the feeling that I would get after all my hard work would pay off.

However, the feelings I would have after I had not worked hard at my school assignments were totally opposite. There were times when I was in school that I would let my pride get the best of me. Instead of studying, like I knew I should have, I would go outside and play with the kids in the neighborhood, thinking that I knew the material all too well to sit around and study all night. The next day when my teacher would handout the test, my stomach would drop and I would almost begin to feel sick when the last bit of confidence I had would vanish, realizing that I would possibly fail the test. Had I put in the slightest bit of time and effort to better prepare for my test I would have, without a doubt, passed the test with flying colors.

Being a teenager, I am no stranger to the feeling of procrastination or laziness. But I'm also ambitious and competitive, so settling for anything other than the best can be very hard to do. Like lots of teens, these two opposite impulses battle within me- I know which one I want to win.