First Prize

Boat in the Pool

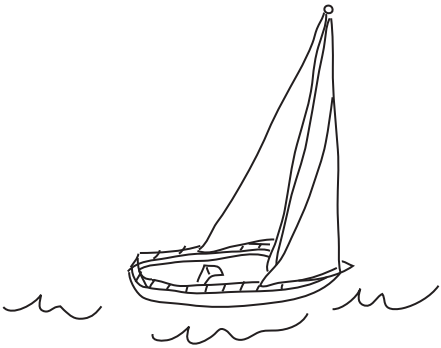
The sun shimmers through the thin clouds,
giving warm air at times
and annunciating the shadows
in the noon light.

The pages of a new mystery keep me intrigued
as I continue to read,
with my brother in my peripheral vision,
encircling me like a shark going in for the kill.

Shrieks, splashes, and treading of water
occupy the air.
Suntan lotion on skin mixes with chlorine
as cannonball pandemonium breaks out
and waterfalls come down on the edge of the boat,
mocking previous rainstorms.

Crisp pages continue to turn at a quick pace
as comfort levels decrease with the growing heat
and humidity,
seemingly
skin
melting.

by Libby Giesbrecht (Grade Seven)
Linden Christian School
Winnipeg, Manitoba



First Prize

The Battle

A two-hour drive
separates me from my haven.
As we get closer I immediately recognize the gravel-road turnoff
and the antique sign that reads, "Cold Beer."

We're here.

I jump into my swim suit and sprint to the dock;
it creaks with every step I take.

The water is crystal clear and inviting.

I dive in.

Once beneath the surface,
my limbs freeze stiff.
It's as if the lake's frozen hands
have an unbreakable grip on me.
They tempt me, as if it were a sick game.
I have to win this battle.
The prize?

My life.

Kicking and punching doesn't help,
I sink faster.
A million thoughts suffocate me;
I could give up,
but I don't.
I gasp for air,
water fills my lungs.
On the brink of death,
my feet touch the bottom of the lake and

I push off.

by Julia Morin (Grade Eight)
Collège régional Gabrielle-Roy
Île des Chênes, Manitoba

First Prize

That Season, I Remember

That spring, I remember
swinging—
for the dimpled white sphere that lay in front of my feet,
drifting smell of freshly mowed, lush grass,
squinting at the burgundy red flag in the distance—
swinging mightily.

That summer, I remember
riding—
over the violent ripples of the sea,
salt water splashing onto my sunglasses,
the city of toy blocks growing smaller and smaller over the grey horizon—
riding high.

That autumn, I remember
cruising—
along the infinite winding roads of the highway in the Rockies,
amidst the golden skyscrapers of Mother Nature,
clutching the glassy surface of the slim steering wheel—
cruising along.

That winter, I remember
whistling—
past mischievous spruce trees covered in brilliant sweet snow,
gliding over snowflakes and ice chunks with my skis,
inhaling a lungful of frozen air that burns my teeth—
whistling by.

And, yes, I do remember
thinking
I could wish for nothing else in the whole world,
yet
finding myself
longing for the time to stop.

by David Jung (Grade Nine)
Clear Water Academy
Calgary, Alberta

First Prize

Georgian Bay

If I could be anywhere—anywhere but here—
I'd be at the bay.
That gorgeous bay,
where caramel rocks softly dip into the water,
cool and clear.

Along the rock would stand
an occasional burst of beige, of green, of red.
Outcroppings of bush,
and scattered among them
berries as blue as the sky.

The slap of the water against the rock
and the sweet smell of dead pine
would fill my heart
as I pushed through the water, a creature of the sea.

The warmth of the sun would kiss my head
and paint my neck.

A breeze would stir my hair.

Not too far off I'd see an isle,
inviting me to meet it.
A fortress of cherry red rock and pine,
I'd really swim out to it—I would!

If only I could be there,
there at the bay.
That gorgeous bay,
where caramel rocks softly dip into the water,
cool and clear.

by Rebecca Penner (Grade Ten)
Kingsville District High School
Kingsville, Ontario

First Prize

Absence Makes the Heart Go Wander

The trains are always leaving
The doors are always closing
All the pretty pinprick people
Are cascading down the stair.

The buildings stand too straight up,
The windows are too glassed up,
The drifting dreams are dying,
But nobody seems to care.

The sun is still a-rising,
The clock is still a-ticking,
I've been lonely-longing-lusting,
It's still hard for me to say.

The roads feel truly angry,
The smiles feel truly empty,
You argued, asked, abandoned this—
I love you anyway.

The lights are blinking on now,
The faces lit I don't know,
The nights are noxious nothings
And the days are far too long.

All footsteps have your pacing,
All shoulders have your posture,
I turn to try to shake the chance,
I'd search if I were strong.

Guess I'll move in with a boyfriend
Guess I'll move into the suburbs
Find a healthy, happy husband
Who'll put sprinklers on the lawn.

My songs can gather dust-motes,
My life can gather mosses,
Don't dare disturb me, dearest;
If you look for me, I'm gone.

by Eleanor Hoskins (Grade Eleven)
Burnaby North Secondary School
Burnaby, British Columbia

First Prize

Bountiful Garden

The ray of sunshine had made its way down from the sky
and lit up the garden below.
Blocks of symmetrical bricks were lined in rows,
like kernels of corn on the cob—only red.

Seeing the pink silk ribbon wrapped around the hyacinths
made butterflies flutter in the springtime,
jealous of only the yellow daffodils that stood proudly yonder.
As time moved on in your garden and the spring turned to summer,
the sunflowers knew it was time to open,
so with strength and a desire for curiosity
they turned to face the flame—only to be punished for their actions,
scorched and burnt by the heat.

The pansies that sway in the gentle breeze,
calla lilies cupping the morning dew,
bluebells sagging aside—pulling away from one another,
united they were strong, alone are now weak.

The willow tree had started to die, but its shadow still covered my window that morning.
You tended to the plants with care;
they shall not forget your loving hands.

That is why the pink-silk-ribbon-wrapped hyacinths now stand proudly at your grave,
in your crystal vase—the one from your wedding day,
so that you never forget your garden,
though the patch is now bare, weeds scattered across the dirty pathway.

Figurative emotive language splashes on the pages on a novel unwritten in my mind,
from the invisible umbrella shielding the homeless from the rain—
a waterfall of beauty cascading down a mountainside,
meandering along a path among the crevasses of wrinkles lining my face.
At the edge of the abyss, there is always a moment of clarity before physical pain sets in.
A moment of clarity.
And the remembered scent of living flowers.

Your tired eyes,
heavy as stones pulling with the all-mighty force of gravity
your head to the pillow.

Calluses on your palms,
a physical story of the working boy who grew there—markings of tales from our past.

Bountiful garden is still etched on the faded blue painted fence—forever a mark of memories from once upon a time.

by Hannah Borland (Grade Twelve)
Mulgrave School
West Vancouver, British Columbia

Second Prize

Airport Lines

To the airport at dawn we go,
on the big board the flights they show.
We hand in our bags: one, two, three,
there is a sea of signs to see.
    Standing in the airport lines,
    patiently we read the signs.

Then they take your passport. Oh, why?
Do they really think we are spies?
And what is this about our drinks?
He took it from me! Hey, that stinks!
    Standing in the airport lines,
    sleepily we read the signs.

Next to come is an x-ray check,
a scanner moves from feet to neck.
My sister thinks it's pretty cool,
to have a scanner as a tool.
    But this means more airport lines,
    very bored, we read the signs.

When we are finally at our gate,
as you know we just have to wait.
We don't have little kids and so,
boarding the plane is really slow.
    Waiting in the airport lines,
    tiredly we read the signs.

We land and get right off of the plane,
then they have to x-ray you again.
And check your passport one more time,
as people's cell phones start to chime.
    Knowing this is our last line,
    happily we read the signs.

Off the plane the luggage is thrown.
Make sure you take just your own!
Now from here you are free to leave,
out the gate and to where you please.
    Flying would be very fine,
    if there were just fewer lines.

by Noemi Potma (Grade Seven)
Maranatha Christian Academy
Windsor, Ontario

Second Prize

Cool

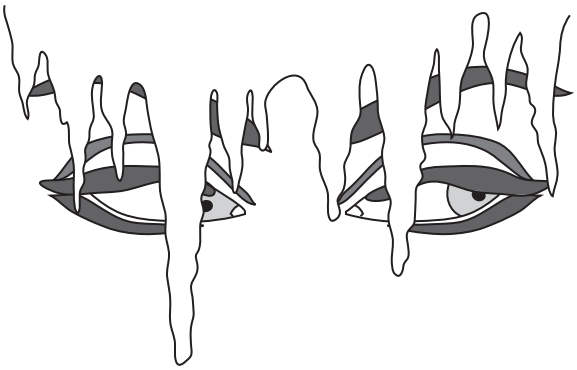
I guess they call it cool because of the way
those kids huddle up really close
as if they were freezing cold,
while their gossip wanders
to the ears of the passing stranger.

I guess they call it cool because of the way
their words sting like bitter icicles,
stabbing the back
of the kid who forgot to
watch it.

I guess they call it cool because of the way
their eyes pierce through you,
scrutinizing your every move,
sending you chills
that make you turn away.

I guess they call it cool because of the way
their eyes are glazed over with ice
and their smiles are frozen,
not quite reaching their eyes,
because they have no warmth to melt it.

by Bianca Mercadante (Grade Eight)
Rosemère High School
Rosemère, Québec



Second Prize

I Walk My Road

I walk my road. Observantly, joyously,
skipping down my wondrous streets.
Burning curiosity,
endless crossroads blocking the freeway.
I don't know where I'm going,
my parents my GPS.
I walk my road.

I walk my road. Carelessly, recklessly,
dashing down my littered streets—
littered with error,
littered with things I wish,
and should put behind me.
But rather leave for another to pick up.
I walk my road.

I walk my road. Silently, solemnly,
trudging through the pouring rain.
A washout of sorrow,
flooded with tears of those so dear to me,
those who want me happy,
but yet they leave me cheerless.
I walk my road.

I walk my road. Anxiously, nervously,
scuffling down my busy streets.
Burdened with worry,
burdened with stress I can't seem to lift.
I am overwhelmed,
my whole world zooming past me.
I walk my road.

I walk my road. Regretfully, pensively,
roads paved with laughter,
riddled with experience,
but yet it's almost over.
I wish I lived it better.
I walk my road.

I miss my road. Perfection, innocence,
lived with enjoyment,
lived with love,
my imperfect abyss of childhood.
A journey, not a destination.
I miss my road.

by Isabella Gudgeon (Grade Nine)
St. Michaels University School
Victoria, British Columbia

Second Prize

Enchanted

If the world did stop turning,
if the sun did burn out,
if the moon fell down from the sky,
if the stars did abandon,
and the Milky Way spilled,
the grass would still sing hushaby.

This magic's eternal,
this world is inside.
The wind in the trees that smells warm,
the flowers euphoric,
and the cloudberry bright,
the immaculate blanched snowstorm.

A fresh apple core,
the seeds plant tomorrow.
The clouds are a caramel dream,
a still life in motion.
A song whistled in blue,
riding a silver moonbeam.

All time is free time.
Time can't be chained.
Rhythmic and constant—time can't be claimed.
But can time be chased?
And can time be changed?
Time is at fault; time can't be tamed.

Time is candid: a yawn,
caught on film;
sticky warm fingers on glass;
a mother who washes
sticky fingers in kisses.
Time is what love will outlast.

If the heart did stop yearning,
if compassion did die,
hatred and nothing would thrive.
But love is eternal,
and this magic's inside.
The music in my soul's alive.

by Sarah Spurrell (Grade Ten)
Holy Heart of Mary Regional High School
St. John's, Newfoundland

Second Prize

The Simple Marigold

When the sun crawls out of hiding, from behind the shattered glass,
it fosters burning resemblance to the life that's come to pass.
Nothing left of creation, no inkling of desire,
for the world would rather shine upon the passing shreds of fire.

The feathery dust and refuse, the shapeless stone and ore,
now so much as precious to all galaxies galore.
For nowhere are there crowds about, all foreign left unsaid;
from edge to edge this wasteland stayed as silent as the dead.

Yet, upon the searing horizon, between forlorn decay,
lies a whispering reminder of life that has passed away.
Greeted by iniquity amongst the barrens uncontrolled,
hatching in the wasteland, came the simple Marigold.

With tousled hair of amber and soft folds of citrine,
wrapped within a bonnet of earthen olive green,
veins of fragile pattern run below its gravel deck,
forming a womanly curvature across its stalwart neck.

But what could prompt this providence to show its blissful face,
towards the disheveled rubble of a long-forgotten race?
What act of fate and circumstance had the cosmos to behold,
to compliment the wasteland with a simple Marigold?

by Samuel Nowicki (Grade Eleven)
Kelvin High School
Winnipeg, Manitoba

Second Prize

The Lady ’Neath the Snow

Deep in a lonely prairie culvert, Winter softly prowls,
And as he takes his hold, a lone coyote howls.
This Winter is a careful chap and seldom lets us know
What he’s concealing out there buried ’neath the snow.

Sweet Summer’s fading blossoms freeze out on the plain,
And yet they’re not alone. Two others still remain.
The one is a corsage, bought for naught but show.
The other, just a lady, sleeping ’neath the snow.

She’s dressed in her best suit, the finest that she owns,
The last she’ll ever wear—forever on her bones.
No one shall e’er remove the stains that on it flow,
The blood, in horrid contrast, to white and purest snow.

Above this lonely scene, the wind sings in the air.
Seeing the lady ’neath the ground he asks, “Does no one care?”
Dear lady, never fear, although you may not know,
Those who love you want you back; they’ll clear away the snow.

This story’s not a pleasant one, or one you’d want to hear.
Worse still it is a truthful tale from back many a year.
Sweet Summer’s blossoms flower still, dancing to and fro,
Over the spot the lady lay, dead beneath the snow.

by Veronica Kmiech (Grade Twelve)
John Paul II Collegiate
North Battleford, Saskatchewan

Third Prize

Freedom

The sun shines through the treetops,
ferns greener than ever,
looking up in the rain, arms out, eyes closed.
It feels like light—very light—kisses
on your cheeks, forehead, arms, eyes, lips.
You want more,
yet it makes you shiver.
You huddle in your clothes,
you purposely forgot your coat;
at least you will have something else
to think about at night
along with the drizzle of rain
left on your skin.

You remember a time
when you felt more free
than the ocean itself,
more than a horse without a limit to
run, walk, or be wild.
You long to be free once again
when you are stuck
in a place where you
don't want to be.

You long to not have a care in the world,
to spin as fast as you can,
and fall over laughing with them
about how fun it was or
how much you wish they did it too.
Freedom is to hold someone's hand and
never want to let go,
until you get to stand in the rain again.

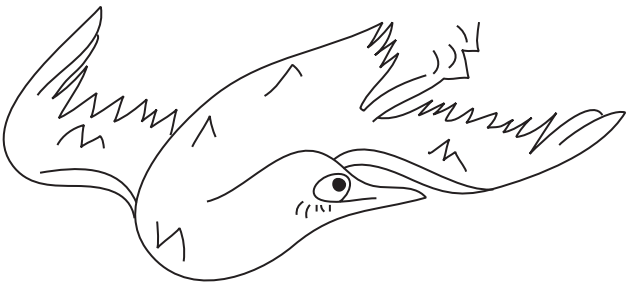
by Anita Dolson (Grade Seven)
École Mission Central Elementary School
Mission, British Columbia

Third Prize

Sunset

Golden-tinged ripples lap eagerly at the sandy shore
Before dissolving
Gone like the previous day
With its petty anxieties and joys
All mixed into a jumble of activity
The wind itself calms in reverence
A mirror to the thoughts of the soaring gulls
Whose incessant wailing ceases for a time
The trees and ferns behind still their velvet green leaves
As they settle for rest
The sea perfects my reflection as I walk beside its quiet depths
I pace beside myself
The fiery, active, searing white orb of the day
Fades to orange
Like the day gone by it fades darker
The sky screams
Crying of the glories of the day in fits of orange and yellow
But the dim, dull sun continues its journey
Unsympathetically rushing into the distant mountain's embrace
The sky's screams fade to mourning wails of blue and purple
The world darkens at its life-giver's demise.
But my selfish, sentient heart smiles with calm and peace
The day ends

by Nathan High (Grade Eight)
St. Michaels University School
Victoria, British Columbia



Third Prize

Time Passes

The birds flee.
The snow returns.
Earth lies desolate and cold,
frozen and bare.
Time passes.

Trees lazily shake the snow,
from their budding branches.
Birds return.
Flowers send their roots into the rich moist earth.
Time passes.

Lush green grass covers the fields.
Vast yellow fields of grain ripen in the sun.
Brilliant flowers sway in the gentle breeze.
Time passes.

Leaves shower the Earth
in gold and crimson.
Yellowing grass covers the fields.
Trees bend under an abundant harvest.
Time passes. . . .

Earth lies barren and cold.
The birds return.
Multicoloured flowers sway in the wind.
Vegetation shrivels and dries.
The cycle continues and
time keeps passing.

Seasons change.
Time passes.
Nothing changes,
except me.

by Kristofer Waldner (Grade Nine)
Decker Colony School
Decker, Manitoba

Third Prize

Tinted Windows

There's something romantic about travelling,
the constant
leaving and arriving,
the steady landscape
that eventually trickles into something familiar.

I was born on the roads,
grew up looking out the window,
at places I probably wouldn't remember,
or come back to.

We are never satisfied,
you and I—
not completely,
but we are also never without hope
that we'll come back one day and find
our memories tucked in corners of places
we don't belong to,
wonder at how these places
contrast and reflect
our safe home town.

We try to be innocent,
not judging the places we see only through
tinted windows,
and we've learned to be compassionate
from all the lives we've glimpsed
and the people we try to know with
passing glances.

We can't understand it all,
we can only
look at the past and the future
of everything and
leave
just enough ignorance
to be happy.

by Lynette Ens (Grade Ten)
Landmark Collegiate
Landmark, Manitoba

Third Prize

The Sun

With a final splitting boom
the thunder gave up
and left the sky to settle
into a dismal silent state.

As she watched a drop of rain slide silently
down
        down
                down the window
she wondered when she would hear
the familiar sound of
footsteps on the floorboards,
the familiar sight of
light peeking from under the doorway,
and the familiar feel of
warmth filling up the other side of her bed.

One
        two
                three more drops fall
and the only thing still moving
was the dismal, silent sky
waiting eagerly,
for the sun.

by Kelsey Fijal (Grade Eleven)
Stonewall Collegiate Institute
Stonewall, Manitoba

Third Prize

Inkstained

Deep in this indigo pool,
Nightshade we travel
Wide-eyed, soaking in the liquid cool
Of this deep blue ocean
Lit by the glittering, warm glowing
Beacons of reds, yellows, oranges

Deep in the indigo pool
Steam rises, stealthy
Soft, its grey cloak
Concealing the scars of the land
And you hide under the blanket
From what you can't ignore

Deep in an indigo pool,
Wicked, the arm of a metal-jawed beast
Swings, neck snakelike
Its eerie claw like a black shape possessed
To devour another helpless
Tree, creature, traveller on this place we call Earth

Deep in my indigo pool
Lie I, drowning in the intoxicating
Waters of fear, of restlessness, of simple awe
Skin soaking up the ink of a thousand night skies
And sometimes it's good to be drowning.
You leave yourself behind a while.

by Annie Lepage (Grade Twelve)
Guelph Collegiate Vocational Institute
Guelph, Ontario