

# FIRST PRIZE

## The Pond

When midsummer arrived, there was not a sound  
Perhaps the veil of frost was drawn back  
Like a curtain  
And resting behind was a stage to be set  
And the world, the sonnet's captive audience  
Silenced in the growing anticipation  
The silence then grew to a murmur  
And was soon broken by the footsteps and laughter of a small boy  
Why he laughed I can't say  
Perhaps it was the exhilaration  
Of relief  
Or freedom  
Or just the innocent  
Ridiculous notions of youth  
His pants were covered in grass stains  
His hands matted with mud  
His shoes were worn, with the laces undone  
He leapt from stone to stone  
He followed a broken path  
Long abandoned in the dense scene  
For Lady Nature had pulled back the layers of snow and  
Basked her home in sunlight and compassion  
Of which she shared freely with the boy  
The pond produced a polished glow of emerald green  
And the trees rose vibrantly from the cool banks  
In this place lay opportunity and the experiences of adventure  
To search every rock  
Climb every tree  
And even though I have not been there in years  
I have never forgotten this kindness

*by Nolan Howard* (Grade 9)

Louis Riel School

Calgary, Alberta

# FIRST PRIZE

## **Harbour Me**

Harboured waters, harboured souls  
Long astounding, long untold  
Each wave beats better stories  
And splashes kinder kin  
I dance along the boarded edge  
And let it all sink in

*by Gabrielle E. Vilardi* (Grade 10)  
Charles P. Allen High School  
Bedford, Nova Scotia

# FIRST PRIZE

## **For a Rainy Day**

I love winter the most  
because the stories get trapped  
in the snow.

Glistening in shell-shocked waves,  
when you step out,  
they hold you up.

After the snow melts  
and the peace is gone,  
the silence is cut off by a roar.

Water runs our stories  
home  
into the deep blue dark.

After a while,  
when we think they're all lost,  
the sky opens up.

And gives them back to us.

*by Justine O'Kopniak* (Grade 11)  
Unionville High School  
Markham, Ontario

# FIRST PRIZE

## **Blue Jay**

Gentle blue jay in the wind  
no time lost, no wings trimmed  
Secret chirps in secret hours  
flying over fields of flowers

Nothing's lost when you fly above  
kindly, graceful, like a dove  
Nothing's lost when you land in trees  
floating over churning seas

Wonder how, oh, wonder why,  
wonder when you learned to fly  
In the breeze, you soar to find  
conversations left behind

You understand, you listen, too,  
you think of why, you think of who  
You listen in-between the leaves  
you listen from the barley sheaves

You hear the secrets, whispered then  
you hear when they'll next meet again  
You hear the quiet, sorrowful wishes  
you hear their words, said between kisses

But you can't say, you can't spill  
you keep the secrets, heard from the hill  
We can't understand you, we can't tell  
the wonders you sing in your sweet farewell.

*by Sofie LeDrew* (Grade 12)  
Eastwood Collegiate Institute  
Kitchener, Ontario

# SECOND PRIZE

## **Nobody Cares**

Midnight looms on this cold, starless night  
Overwhelming loneliness, darkness  
Surrounds the image of self-doubt  
Casting a shadow of the true self

Blank, but also brash, mind  
Fails to maintain harmony  
Until snow falls, blanketing the thought

Through it arises a new mist  
Shrouding the shadow of doubt  
Brilliantly elevating the mind to levels  
Previously shamed, dismissed

Now accepted and embraced  
The notion of *nobody cares*  
Now overpowers the illusion of self-importance  
Of the standard teenager

The next time a crisis occurs  
Shrug it off and remember:  
*Nobody cares*

**by Ray Zhang** (Grade 9)  
St. George's School  
Vancouver, British Columbia

# SECOND PRIZE

## Tongue-Tied

I'm tongue-tied.  
Because what else could be the knot I'm choking on but my tongue?  
Could it just be words that I can't cough out?  
Is it the things I want to say that are tickling my throat?

If so, why can't I just force them out?  
That speaking when I want or need could be so easy.  
I wish I would.  
I wish I could.

But the truth is that it is not.  
Because I'm sitting here tongue-tied.  
My throat is closing up as if I'm allergic to speaking.  
And my tears are getting so close to leaking.

When words have to be spoken in front of all those eyes that are looking my way.  
They seem to be saying, *Keep your words at bay*.  
That's what makes me tongue-tied.  
What keeps my voice coiled up in my belly.  
What makes me feel nauseous and chilly.

I hope you can see I'm trying.  
That it just sometimes feels as if I'm dying.  
That there are some days when I just can't participate.  
Some days I can't sputter out the things I want to say.  
Some days I only speak in my head.  
Some days it's speaking I dread.

I want you to know that doesn't mean I've stopped trying.  
If anything, it means I'm trying more.  
Just sometimes my waves of words just don't meet the shore.  
Sometimes I can't say what I want to because my thoughts are knotted up inside.  
They're trapped, left to die.

So, you should know that when I say I'm trying,  
I don't lie.  
I'm just tongue-tied.

*by Elianne Labrecque* (Grade 10)  
Avon View High School  
Windsor, Nova Scotia

# SECOND PRIZE

## **The End**

*The end.* Those words echoed throughout the mouths of all the inhabitants here before, permeating their history books. The housing has begun to wear, meals and tables long since abandoned, nature finishing the leftovers. The swing sets have long since fallen apart, the small critters inhabiting it using it much more like a jungle gym. The roads have cracked and become worn from lack of wear, sun beating down on them endlessly, as the melting heat stopped any plants from growing between the cracks. The heat had worn down the refrigerator doors, becoming a refuge for the animals (if they worked, of course). As the sun fell, though, life started to bustle, as the plants learned to grow in the absence of the heat. In the night, the critters ran amok, and the world awoke, once more breathing, glad for another day, for every end is simply a new beginning.

***by Leland Flood*** (Grade 11)  
Maverick High School  
Swift Current, Saskatchewan

# SECOND PRIZE

## Tied to Our Words

What if there isn't enough time  
for these words to prove their validity?  
For the Sun to push its way through the curtains  
and beg me to continue writing this nonsense?  
I know better than to dwell on hypotheticals,  
I was raised better than that.  
But what if the meaning and depth  
become too heavy on their backs  
that they begin to fall and break  
the way I do?

I have ignored the Sun's failed attempts to save me.  
I've scolded her for wasting her time on me and my words,  
told her to search for something more worthwhile,  
afraid I would rub off on her and make her dim.  
Yet she still warns the Moon to watch over me at night.

But part of me wishes  
to waste her time just a minute longer,  
to stand in her light.  
I still leave the curtains open for her visits.

Until all forces of nature are exhausted,  
or until Mother Nature herself rejects me,  
she happily wastes her time with me,  
pushes through the curtains,  
and ensures that this nonsense  
is no longer nonsense—  
or until I,  
am no longer nonsense.

*by Catrine Sidhom* (Grade 12)  
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Winnipeg, Manitoba

# THIRD PRIZE

## **Distractions, Directions, and Paralysis**

I feel the stress travelling through my body the way a snake climbs a tree—  
Slithering, constricting, and I can't do anything, you see.  
For I'm stuck on this couch, lying in wait  
For the snake to bite and snap me awake.

I'm not asleep, I just can't move,  
As if I'm stuck with some invisible glue.  
Finally, I am mobile and rushing to my desk;  
I think it's due tomorrow, so I cannot rest.

I'm at the table with my computer, set to start,  
But I stare at the house with all the disgust in my heart.  
The lights are plotting to go out with a flash,  
Forcing myself to start acting rash.

I go get a bulb and replace the light,  
But the table setting isn't quite right.  
So, I find some napkins that match quite well,  
And then I remember I have no time to kill.

I start the computer and start to write,  
With my fingers moving at the speed of light.  
*Clickety-clack* go the keyboard keys,  
Making me ignore all of reality.

I don't notice my parents coming home from work.  
I don't notice my brother covered in dirt.  
I do not stop until the moon is high,  
And I submit my work at ten thirty-five.

The snake is gone, and I am free;  
It was due in a week, apparently.  
So, now you know what it's like for me;  
Now you understand ADHD.

*by Ryan White* (Grade 9)

Louis Riel School  
Calgary, Alberta

# THIRD PRIZE

## Wonder and Grieve

My *ama* took her last breath when I was four  
From a woman in a dignity gown to ashes in an urn  
I didn't cry  
I didn't understand what Death was

I only had a question:  
“What happens after a person dies?”  
I tried to ask my parents  
My curiosity was not tolerated

They were grieving  
Trying to get closure  
I was told that nothing happened  
“Let it go,” they said

I didn't

I created theories  
Grasped for an answer  
Sought a form of verity  
The truth about the dark

I grew older  
The theories became more complex  
I sought out science  
To give some sort of conviction

However

As time passed  
Witnessing Death make its profuse call  
I understood what it was  
I learned to grieve

*by London Fraser* (Grade 10)  
École Pointe-des-Chênes  
Ste-Anne, Manitoba

# THIRD PRIZE

## **Wake Up, Mom!**

What is that, Mom?  
What is that loud, deafening, thundering boom?  
Why are people screaming, shouting, and crying?  
Why are we running? Why are we running without Dad?  
What is going on, Mom?

Where are we going, Mom?  
Dad told us to stay at home until he came back.  
Where are we going to sleep?  
Will you still tell me a bedtime story?  
Why are you crying, Mom?

Why are we staying here, Mom?  
I don't like this muddy place.  
I want my blanket.  
I want the stuffed animals that you gave me for my birthday.  
Why are you crying, Mom?

What happened to that house, Mom?  
Are they building a big playground?  
I have not seen Grandma in a while!  
I love to play in Grandma's big backyard!  
Why are you not answering me, Mom?

Who is that standing over there holding a gun, Mom?  
They look like the heroes in my comics!  
Are they taking us back home?  
Are they taking us to Grandma's house?  
Why are we running away, Mom?  
What is going on, Mom?

Why are you not answering me, Mom?  
Why did you let go of my hand?  
I know you're tired, but don't fall asleep on the ground, Mom.  
Wake up, Mom!  
Wake up.

*by Luna Yu* (Grade 11)  
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Vancouver, British Columbia

# THIRD PRIZE

## **My Heart Does Not Need You**

My heart does not need you.  
It does not need your comfort or your touch.  
It does not need your voice to survive.  
I can live my life without a partner.  
My heart does not need you.

My heart can live without your laugh,  
Without your smile, without your song.  
My heart can survive, I know it can.  
I can live my life without a partner,  
Yet my heart longs for you.

My heart longs for you,  
Your gentle touch, your caring voice.  
I do not need to have you to survive.  
I can live my life without a partner.  
My heart does not need you.

My heart may break if you find someone—  
Someone who makes you laugh, smile, and sing.  
I will be happy for you,  
For I can live my life without a partner.  
My heart does not need you,  
Yet my heart longs for you.

***by Willow Bloomfield*** (Grade 12)  
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