

FIRST PRIZE

Dandelion Underfoot

Dandelion underfoot, dragged in footprints, ash and soot;
Where have tread the weary feet, carrying this flower, beat?
The yellow in your centre, bright, scarred with markings of your fight,
Reveals a story, of springtimes past, where your colour shone against the grass.

Now step by step, a sole carries you, crushing weight on passengers few,
Where will tread these weary feet? Where leads the path of no retreat?
A forest or a sandy beach, I see your yellow underneath,
Hiding from the world so stark, crunched along with fallen bark.

Dandelion underfoot, impaled within the ash and soot,
Where have tread the weary soles, that carry you to this headstone?
In a graveyard, grey and bare, this boot will leave a flower there;
Off you fall and lie at last, shadowed by your weary past.

Dandelion underfoot, now you lay with ash and soot;
The yellow in your centre, bright, attempts to warm the autumn's bite.
Day after day, there you'll rest, a foreign but not unwelcome guest,
And as you wilt, there still you'll be, dying alone in winter's freeze.

Remembering soles that brought you there, with souls that now drift in the air;
A brown stem alone is left to remind of what once bloomed in summertime.
No-one pays mind to the twisted remains, whispering stories that once knew such pain;
It began not knowing where it would go, and ended abruptly, quite simply so.

A flower on this grave got put, a dandelion, once underfoot.

by Emily Eskowich (Grade Nine)

Melfort & Unit Comprehensive Collegiate
Melfort, Saskatchewan



FIRST PRIZE

Release

Send me out beyond the door
Beyond the hills, beyond the moor
Let me spread my long-bound wings
And flit about through stars again

Let me go, just this one time
Is this longing such a crime?
To weave through maple, oak, and pine—

What you say, O mistress mine?

Hear me heave a warrior's cry
Hear my breath suppress a sigh
Cut through wisps of coloured sky
There you'll find me, cloaked in rain

Would it such a heinous crime
For me to hear the noon bells chime?
And windy whispers, soft and fine

What you say, O mistress mine?

Call out if for me you yearn
Long for me and I'll return
Croon to me, I'll hear you sing
Ask, and I'll come home again

Allow me o'er the lands and seas
Uncaged; lest I hear your pleas
Send me notice, word or sign—

What you say, O mistress mine?

by Nancy He (Grade Ten)
Fredericton High School
Fredericton, New Brunswick



FIRST PRIZE

My New Shoes/My Lost Village

I stand here alone in my new shoes,
Along the tombstones in the cemetery;
Here they are dead
Where they fought for me and for you.

In my village there was war,
They had come a long way for us,
During long months they fought,
And my village is dead, lost.

The memories come back to me so vivid,
The dead bodies lying in the wagons,
You could only see their shoes,
All shiny, like new.

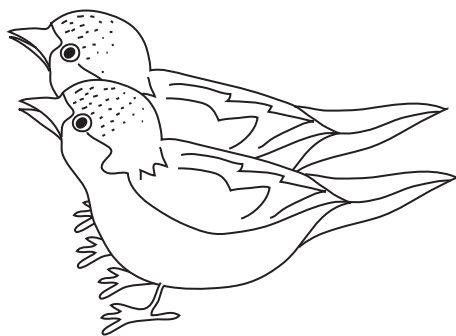
Sometimes when I think about this,
Everything around me
Seems like pieces of cotton;
They float in the air, and I'm all alone.

And then, when I hear death,
Breathing from behind the tombstones,
Death, rising from my new shoes,
Then there is nothing more than the grass and the grey sky.

The rain falls and soaks my new shoes,
But I pray for them,
And for all those who fought.
For me, and for you, and for my lost village.

by Melanie McQuaid (Grade Eleven)
École Évangéline
Abram's Village, Prince Edward Island





FIRST PRIZE

Frost

The weather was warmer
As were my spirits
Leaves returning, birds chirping
New life in spring, new life in me

A tidal wave of confidence
Like brave flowers budding first
Caused my primary lesson learned:
Those who start first, finish first

Young and naïve, a newborn child
Quickly was hardened and attacked
The seasons fooled me
Soon spring turned to black

The brightness of summer was blinding
Like a fire, it burned
But not comforting—painful
Dizzy with distress, I turned and turned

Renewal came in the fall
Autumn was prosperous, life turned a new leaf
And as time continued
Something changed within me

Now my cheeks are pink
As I wait for the pure, white, invigorating cold
I am ready to move forward
Into what, I don't know

by Claire Loewen (Grade Twelve)
Glebe Collegiate Institute
Ottawa, Ontario



SECOND PRIZE

Our Favourite Memories

I smell the sweet scent of dried leaves
as they cover the grass
creating a rug.
Always more to come with the wind,
you rake the leaves in a pile.
We run and jump in the heap of leaves.
The leaves fly around me
as we throw them over our heads, like confetti.
How I wish autumn could last forever.

The seed you planted
earlier in the year
turned out to be a perfect, miniature pumpkin,
arriving in time for the season.
The colourful trees surrounding me,
seem like bright lights
shining down on me.

Under me, I hear the sound of leaves crunching.
I stop, and the sound of rustling leaves
fills my ears.
I remember when there was a gust of wind.
The leaves that fell off the trees
flew past our faces
as we ran against the wind,
hand in hand.
How we wish autumn could last forever.

All the vegetables are taken out of the garden.
The colours around me have transformed
from green to red, yellow, and orange.
The best season of the year,
if only autumn could last forever.

by Janelle Sawatzky (Grade Nine)
École St-Joachim
La Broquerie, Manitoba



SECOND PRIZE

Fields of Corruption

Rancid, forsaken, banished these lands are
On which I lay dying
Covered in my own blood and countless battle scars
Grossly you overpowered me, left the vultures to devour me
Your hatred immeasurable
Potent and flaming, not remorseful, not shaming
As just had existed my heart merely a few moments before

These fields of corruption that hold my dead body
Have nothing over the way I'll always feel
Love ever tender, I would never surrender
At least I thought that, before my life you did steal

It's not that this happened to me
Why I'm bothered
It's the knowledge of your evil, your ruthless nature
Your ability to do this
When one cannot see
In a moment of blindness, of unconscious kindness
I feel damned well sorry
For anyone with you who has to be

I would vow revenge, but I just couldn't take it
Besides, I'm dead!
From all your torturing and needless strife
But I'll make sure to find you in the afterlife
And deliver one message—but one, for you
From me, and all your other victims
We'll be sure to say
“We've always loved you too”

These fields of corruption that hold my dead body
Have nothing over the way I'll always feel
Love ever tender, I would never surrender
At least I thought that, before my life you did steal
My life, you did steal

by Jacob Turk (Grade Ten)
St. Thomas Aquinas Secondary School
Brampton, Ontario



SECOND PRIZE

Take Me Back

I want to go back,
Where I spend my too-short summers,
Starting adventures and forging friendships,
No worries or troubles,
And the days seem to last forever.

I wish to go back,
Where my only decision
Is whether to plunge into the cool shimmering water,
The surface crystalline and gleaming,
Or to brown my skin in the scorching sun,
And listen to sweet melodies drifting from some speakers.

I yearn to go back,
Where the shooting stars are numerous,
And you sprawl in the dewy grass,
Next to a blazing fire and your best friend,
To watch them trail their brilliant tails,
And wish for whatever catches your fancy.

I'm going back,
Where the wind blows so strongly
You fear you will detach from this planet
And drift away with the countless ebony birds
And perhaps leave your life behind altogether.

So take me back,
Where I end my too-short summers,
Finishing adventures and forgetting friendships,
Remembering worries and troubles,
And the days seem to last forever.

by Michele McIntosh (Grade Eleven)
D.W. Poppy Secondary School
Langley, British Columbia



SECOND PRIZE

Two at a Time

I fall down my stairs at least twice a day,
my parents blame it on me moving quickly;
I blame my feet,
they blame my socks.
And each time I fall,
I hear a bruise making its home on a part of body
where there used to be healthy, moisturized skin.
Life is short.
I know this because it really does feel like yesterday
when I was asking a kid my age to push me on the swings.
I know this because I can't bring myself to write a letter
telling why I should be accepted into university.
I know this because Mom and Dad are trying to teach me
to cook something more than instant noodles.
And maybe it's just my imagination,
but I am almost fifty to eighty-five percent sure
the days are getting shorter,
losing their hours.
Look, I'm glad I'm not five or ten anymore,
I just want this kid to know
there is absolutely nothing wrong with wanting to be a Jedi;
find the perfect stick, make a lightsaber, and swing,
make the best sound effects possible,
'cause that's fun—always will be.
I fall down my stairs at least twice a day,
my parents blame the old house, my speed,
or my simple desire to be far away from them.
Most of the time, I fall going up.

by *Daniel Odendaal* (Grade Twelve)

Mortlach School
Mortlach, Saskatchewan



THIRD PRIZE

The Start of the Race

As spaceships explode
And planets implode
Extinction of this race is almost guaranteed
For things can only get worse for this alien breed

This war-torn species has such great features
They are the two-legged, two-armed, two-eyed creatures
Their technology so advanced it rules more than one galaxy
But now everybody is in a state of emergency

Somewhere, somehow, someone makes a device
This person says it should suffice
To end the thousand-year conflict
But what happens, nobody can predict

One of the creatures thinks it would be nice
To try and test this new device
This thing is not ready to be used
And all that could come of it is bad news

The device releases a deadly wave of power
It kills a million within the hour
This force begins to move from planet to planet
And not a single creature can withstand it

In a desperate attempt to save their kind
Capsules that could travel great distances are designed
These capsules contain enough creatures to repopulate
They just have to find a planet on which to recuperate

A planet named Earth is what they found
But a problem occurred when they hit the ground
The minds of the creatures had been in deep sleep while they flew
The impact upon landing caused their brains to forget all they knew

The crash killed all the dinosaurs already here for quite the duration
This species must now rebuild a once glorious civilization
And on the small planet that spins
This is where the human race begins

by Pascal Girard (Grade Nine)
St. George's School
Vancouver, British Columbia

THIRD PRIZE

Repressed Love

Sitting far back in the room
I'm able to see things
That are hidden from you.

When she walks in,
She shyly takes her seat,
Then quickly looks around
To see if you're in the room.

When you aren't there,
She'll open up a book,
Pretending to read,
Trying to seem occupied,
But I know she's thinking of you.

And then, you walk in.
She chews on her bottom lip
As her hands begin to shake.
She casually glances up at you,
Hoping she can catch your eye,
Because she desperately wants to see your smile.

Instead, you walk on past her desk,
Without a single glance in her direction.
Her shoulders droop in disappointment.
She reminds herself she isn't good enough for you.

But she always fails to notice
How you hide a smile whenever she laughs,
Or how you glance up at her every few minutes.
The signs of love are so clear to me,
But you're both too scared to speak.

by **Kassandra Alarie** (Grade Ten)
Lake of Two Mountains High School
Deux-Montagnes, Québec



THIRD PRIZE

This Rain Is Here to Stay

It comes in harshly, on a frigid, bleak winter's night.
The first sign of rain appears as sombre storm clouds cover the once tame sky.
Slowly, they close in on the last rays of sunlight,
Trying to escape through unreached territory.
This rain is not soft or timid, but pours down from the murky above,
Like bullets from heaven.
Accompanied by roars of thunder, the droplets grow larger and fiercer,
And seem to hit the ground with indignant force, as if to prove a point.
It continues to thrash down endlessly, filling potholes with muddy water,
And extending puddles into lakes of opaque forlorn.
The sodden eve turns to night and says its goodbyes to any sign of day.
This rain is here to stay.

by Morgan Govier (Grade Eleven)
Mark R. Isfeld Secondary School
Courtenay, British Columbia



THIRD PRIZE

Autumn with My Grandfather

How I loved those crisp autumn mornings!
Peering outside, I would see colours cascading from the sky
like raindrops—
red,
orange,
yellow—
gracefully spiralling towards the ground,
softly landing on the beds of rich, damp earth.

Out I would dash
into the shower of delightful hues,
hearing the customary *crunch* under my pink rubber boots
as I leapt into the dew-covered piles
raked by my grandfather.

There he would stand, rake in hand
and laugh heartily at my childish shriek
as I bounded through the leaves.

I would toss some at him
as he did at me,
breathing in their fresh smell
as they gently brushed our faces.

We would spend many a dawn like this
under the blue morning sky,
feeling the warmth of the glorious sun
just beginning to peer out
from behind a cottony white cloud.

It seems so innocent and childlike now,
but back then,
it was my favourite time,
for I spent it playing and laughing
with my grandfather.

by *Kerris De Champlain* (Grade Twelve)
St. Margaret's School
Victoria, British Columbia

