

2008 Northeast Texas Poetry Contest Student Winners

Sponsored by Elliott Chrysler Dodge of Mount Pleasant

Winning Student Poem Adriana Lopez's

Weather

Clouds weep from the heavens above
Their sorrow drenching the land once forgotten
The tears renew and rejuvenate the soil
But their choking companion envelopes the people
The moisture in the air smothers and clings
Bringing a haze of languid oppression
To be broken by the champion of light
The sun reaches down with rays of ardent want
His warming embrace lulling the land to sleep
Only to awaken her with a scorching kiss
The kiss of summer fades to grey, from winter's chilling bite
Slowly draining and destroying everything once green with life
Frozen and unfeeling the land lies in deep sleep
Waiting once again for sorrowed clouds to weep

Second Place Poem by Zachary Richardson

"Stephen Austin Epiphany"

I

It's no epic tale
they came here
moving west
the frontier
land-hungry
profit-hungry
glory-hungry
cheap land
timber cotton oil Catholic heathen souls to save
nothing special
Anglo-Irish wanderlust
itchy feet
never too many miles to roam
their blood is in my blood
as they say

II

These Dixie Texans
of the pine wood and cotton patch
and that sweet Southern variety of English
meandering like the Mississippi
tempered by cicada-screaming heat
this westernmost outpost of the Old South

we feel like strangers in our own land
no we are not like the rest of Them
we do not love the razor-sharp prairie
we do not sing Home On the Range like an anthem
we do not dream of vast rolling oceans of mesquite and
epic cattle ranches or
mystical mustang herds
we do not drink the holy waters of the Brazos Pecos or Colorado
no we are aliens
nobody knows who we are
we do not belong here

III

Land of peace and paradox
charming courthouses and town squares
bed-and-breakfasts
football
low taxes
“family values”
Spanish moss
lots of churches
rolling green pastures
Southern hospitality
sweet-smelling pine cedar oak sweetgum forests
sweet tea
humble muddy creeks and streams
fried chicken
serene meadows
but also
never-ending libertarian struggle for freedom and independence but denying these to certain Others
Bible-thumping or rather Bible skull-cracking (it’s no surprise it was inevitable)
desperately clinging to old ways while destroying them – old downtown buildings crumbling rotting
and forests and fields sacrificed paved over for Wal-Marts and shopping malls and chain restaurants it’s
disgusting

IV

I’ve lived here all my life and I still don’t understand it
I’ve been here for 200 years
as a matter of fact
and
I still don’t get it
we don’t get it
we are converging with the rest of these strange people
in this strange land
with the rest of this enigma
that is America
Electronic Superhighway
highways and plastic and shopping centers and pizza and burger joints
defining us
no we are not special
we are destined yes

destined to be
mystery

Third Place Poem by Maria Chavez

"Northeast Texas Eden"

In the neglected land there exists a northeastern Eden.
Precious not with stones or gold, but life.

Oaks, Pines, and cypress, giants in the land
Waving in the wind, gently caressing the sky.
Bushes shrubs and ivy rustling down below,
Critters scurry something spooks,...
Dears in the clearing, shhh don't move.

Walk through the deer trotted path and you'll find,
Quietly settled amongst giants, mystical mirrors
Reflecting the beauty around.
Fishes, toads, and turtles, gliding inside,
Swimming, eating, and breathing, surviving in Eden.

Across the green lake there's an old dusty road,
That leads to an old dusty town, A tiny, historic, old town with

buildings right and left. Brown, green, muddy colored buildings, friendly
and homey Quite, peaceful , tiny town where crickets are heard in the
dark The barber's in the corner Mrs. Smith's shop three doors down, I can
tell you name by name who all live in the town. By old Sally's house there's
a much bigger road. Black, tarry, brand new road winding away to the
west. Follow the road and you will find another type of forest. Tall, tall,
tall trees, made of glass, metal, and steel Most square, quiet and stern
not waving or gentle, one round twirling in the sky, bright lights loud
nights No peace or tranquility. A rush and a bustle time's in a
hurry Everywhere strangers busy with life. From green to silver
quiet to loud,
his is the Eden complete all around.

Winner of the Adult Division by Ronald Bowden

Kiss Me

Pounding rain
Released in torrents
Thundering echoes
Silencing the quickened halls

Winds of change

Charging the daylight
Violent swirls and shadow
Beating all life into submission

Greater than I
Or are we equals?
Rain and wind, my brother and sister
Casting your crowns upon my head

You speak between the breaths of life
Uttering your secrets
Are you spirit, brother and sister?
Who is your maker?

I rose from brother rain
I am water
I move with sister wind
I am air
I speak as god of thunder
I am fire
I drink as mother earth

Kiss me with your forceful ways
Texas thunderstorm in May.

Poetry Judges:

Chuck Hamilton

Our Northeast Texas Poetry Contest Chair is an Associate Professor of English at Northeast Texas Community College. Hamilton has edited and written for numerous magazines and newspapers, and is a participant in Texas Renaissance Festivals.

Jim Swann

Jim Swann is a professor of Spanish at NTCC. He is a two-time nominee of the NTCC faculty for the prestigious Minnie Piper Award for teaching, and has been a great fan of poetry in both English and Spanish.

Anna Ingram

Anna Ingram taught English at Mount Vernon High School for sixteen years, before teaching full-time this year at Northeast Texas Community College. Born in Arlington, Texas, she prefers the quiet landscapes of Northeast Texas.