

## 2014 Northeast Texas Poetry Contest Student Winners



**Student First Place, \$400**  
Kelli Knepp

Northeast Texas: Through the Eyes of a Child

As my day comes to an end,  
I reflect on the past.  
Back to a time of carefree days and lighthearted laughter,  
I see a younger, smaller me.

Through the haze of memories, I see myself throwing my head back and swinging,  
with all my might, to and fro.

Trying to swing high enough as to reach out  
and grasp a pocket-sized handful of the vast, azure sky  
dotted with feathery clouds,  
which look inviting and soft enough to sleep on,  
and brings other children, like myself, such pleasure.  
I smile as the sun, like a mother,  
kisses my face and brings warmth to my cheeks.

Look! Over at the quiet pond, you will see my grandfather and I,  
standing side by side, waiting for the tug of our fishing lines  
to alert us of an unsuspecting Catfish who has taken the wriggling worm.

However, before our prize fish has come  
I find my boot trapped in the mire.  
My grandfather and I earnestly pull and plead with the muck to let my boot loose.  
But the sludge, unrelenting, drags us both in.  
And there we are- my grandfather with his blissful laughter  
and I with my shameless sobbing.

Another glimpse into years past,

my mother and I stroll down the blacktopped, county road hand in hand.  
She tells me of her own childhood in these piney woods,  
and the adventures she experienced.  
As we continue, I smell the sugary fragrance of the blossoming honeysuckle  
and the intensely, fresh aroma of the towering pine trees,  
with each scent intermixing together to deliver an aroma that subdues my senses.  
We pass by mockingbirds that send out a cheery hello and sing their joyous melody.  
Traversing down this road together, we cannot help but sing along.

Hopping along the fence line,  
my friend "Thumper" the rabbit visits me.  
I cautiously peek around the persimmon tree,  
so he will not be frightened away.  
With his cotton-white tail and sleek, silver fur,  
he entices me to give him a pat.  
Courage summoned, heart racing, I reach out a trembling hand.  
Slowly, gently it meets his tail.  
However, we do not tarry long.  
For the surprise of what has just happened causes us to flee in opposite directions.

At a summer day's end a friendly campfire welcomes me.  
I listen and gaze at the scene.  
Surrounded by the ones I love, we sit close to the blaze.  
Over the lapping flames we roast marshmallows to a golden brown.  
Through the crackling of the fire, I hear the distant chirping of crickets  
and the croaking of frogs as they welcome the approaching night.  
As the sun sets with its gentle glow on the horizon, the stars begin to appear,  
dancing elegantly to the tune of the crickets and frogs.  
Sitting here, an audience to this magical night, I feel an indescribable joy.

Visiting these special places of my heart,  
I cannot help but exhibit a smile here and there  
and shed a few tears as well.  
Northeast Texas will forever be a part of me  
And who I am to become.  
Never will I forget such lovely memories.  
As I lay my head down to sleep  
these scenes from the past play across my mind,  
and I am home.



**Student Second Place, \$300**  
Miranda Mendoza

Northeast Texas Storm

That day I awoke before the sun  
But soon my world was tinged a smoky blue  
The air was hot, heavy, and humid  
And yet the grass was dry

First warning of a Texas Storm

The ducks were gossiping contentedly until I came to them  
Seeing me  
But they broke into a defining roar  
"Food? Food? WATER! Food?"  
They seemed to thunder  
But they said something more  
Something I did not recognize  
Nay, had forgotten  
They told me of the coming storm

First sign of a Texas Storm

The heavens were tinged with pink  
Like God, in all his Glory  
Had chosen to paint like a child  
Brush strokes of orange and red and purple  
Blue and pink water colors  
Spilled over the paper  
And joyfully smeared  
With firm hand and stiff brush

The clouds had crumpled from the water as it evaporated  
Wet paper clouds  
Sunny day clouds  
But pink means rain, and the ducks said rain  
And the cats refused to go outside

## Second sign of a Texas storm

It was windy  
And that was strange  
The air had been still for days  
Quit for days  
No movements for days  
The air had felt thick to breathe

The wind swept the sunny day clouds away  
The wind was sweet relief from the hebetudinous  
Humid still heavy air  
That I had become used to breathing  
The sky was blue  
Clear blue  
Blue like the sky in a cartoon  
Hot sunny day blue

I began to doubt the pink sky morning  
The ducks  
The cats  
The weatherman I ignored anyway  
That I doubted him was redundant  
Rain does not come in percentages  
It will or it will not rain  
It can't rain twenty percent  
It can't storm sixty percent  
It will storm or it won't

But soon large clouds started appearing in the sky  
White cotton candy clouds  
Closer and closer and closer  
Crowding each other as if they all wanted a better look at the sun  
Bumpy clouds  
Fluffy clouds  
Sheep's wool clouds  
Rain clouds

## Beginning of a Texas Storm

It began with the fish  
Silver fish in the trees  
Flashing  
Waving  
Silver  
The virgin undersides of the leaves had never seen  
The outside world  
They quivered with excitement and anxiety  
As the wind ravaged them  
The trees seemed to ripple  
Sparkle

The wind prepared the way for the storm  
Her majesty the Texas storm  
The wind had cleared the sky  
Then brought more noble clouds to attend her  
Soon the queen, the storm, would come  
And all must show respect  
The storm could kill  
Give life  
Her majesty the Texas storm

Soon the air was yellow  
And the thunder rumbled  
Slowly, quietly, far off  
At first  
Then it was banging, crashing  
Lightning flashing  
The great big sky was grey  
Black  
Blue  
Dark  
Foreboding  
Warning  
Growing  
Empty and full  
Larger than life  
Cold and frightening  
But cool and inviting

The beauty of a Texas storm

Oh sweet relief from heat of summer  
Sweet, sweet, cool falling water  
I sat reading  
Resting  
Waiting  
For the calm after the storm

The power dulled and flickered  
But the flashlight was on hand  
Quilts  
Cocoa  
Books  
A Movie?

Simple pleasures to wait out the storm  
Fearful? No. I had been here before  
Smelled the red dirt roads after the rain  
Perichor

I have felt the mud come up  
Hug the bottoms of my feet  
Squish between my toes

Cold cool  
Seen the rainbow  
Heard the amphibian choir singing  
Seen the plants grow greener  
Brighter  
In the calm after the storm  
I have survived the raging of the storm  
Loved the beauty of the Texas storm

Weather changes  
Like a bad temper  
Here  
In this land that I call home  
Hot and humid  
Dry and sunny  
Windy right before the storm  
I love the beauty of the storm  
The raging beauty of the Northeast Texas Storm.



**Student Third Place, \$200**  
Tyler Reynolds

### The Abandonment of the Firefly

I awake from my slumber.  
I attempt to return to my dream, but sleep refuses to greet me.  
The silence of the night is too loud.

I arise in my bed and gaze toward my window.  
I notice a glimmer of light piercing through my blinds.  
My curiosity overwhelms my desire for sleep.

I open my back door and I am met with the mugginess of an August night.  
My senses overwhelm me.  
I am taken aback by the aliveness that accompanies an evening in northeast Texas.

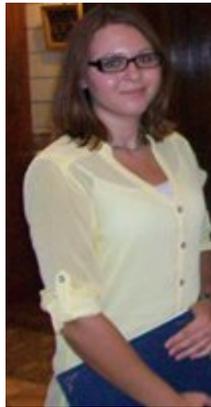
I smell the charcoals of my family's "end of the summer" barbecue.  
I hear my lab Ranger howling in his kennel.  
I make out the distant sounds of bullfrogs croaking in my pond.

I look toward my window as if to return to my mission.  
The glimmer of light has revealed itself to be a lone firefly.  
It isn't flying, merely dancing in the air, cascading light on and off my window.

I start toward it, not to catch it, but to closely experience the magic of it.  
However as soon as I start its way, it buzzes off, as if to reject my approach.  
Over the fence went the firefly, nearing the darkness of the trees behind my home.

I run toward the gate and sling it open.  
I run out into the uncertainty of the night.  
I try with my entire strength to see the last bit of light.

I was through the gate just as the light escaped me.  
Loneliness filled my soul and I was left gasping for air.  
Because with the abandonment of the firefly, was the last breath of my summer.



**Student Fourth Place, \$100**  
Morgan Capps

### Life Under the Piney Woods

The beauty of our pines hides something deeper  
Cradling stories that lay, untold in secret  
Simplistic lives of creatures maintaining a vast forest:  
Birds sing in splendor, joining a bright chorus

Careless Eastern Fox squirrels leap from strong oak trees  
Drop down a torrent of spawns, with hidden value  
These prime seedlings prosper in the warmth under no chilling snow  
Here in the rich woods, the juveniles grow

Rustling colorful leaves above alert me  
Mocking birds squawk a warning, they protect their eggs  
My feet crunch on dry foliage as I trod unto a new spot

A creek lay ahead, where minnows swim uncaught

Natural debris float along the waterway  
Red, yellow, orange colors drift, acorns bob downstream.  
Their end destinations grouped with their impact are hard to know  
Maybe to survive, they sail from the Caddo

Whitetail tracks litter the clay mix waterbed  
Theses prints could be a record, but blend slowly back  
Small herds roam the thick vegetation in a reserved manner  
They graze quietly; their ears apt for danger  
So much around us happens without concern  
Life maintains itself quite well, despite human wrecks  
Amazing collaborations take place free from instructions  
A snippet of peace, let it give us lessons



**Adult First Place, \$200**

Shelby Blevins  
Breathe In

Breathe in  
Sticky air and blistering heat  
Sun rays so intense grasshoppers are blinded and pelt you whilst they're in flight  
Tables set in the front yard stacked with watermelons, notice the woman sitting in her housedress hiding  
from the heat in the shadows...bless her heart  
The flat land surrounding you always seems to converge into miles of cows grazing  
Venture outside on a warm summer night and prepared to be overwhelmed by blood sucking monsters,  
mosquitos  
Listen as everyone grumbles about rains absence and urges diligently its return  
Breathe out  
Alas, rain always returns upon consistent requests and kisses the land and everyone is delighted  
Summers distressed but fall eventually comes to relieve it  
Bright oranges, dark reds, the air crisp, God bless fall  
Get in the car, we're going back roading  
Where it's a tight squeeze down worn black top through tunnels of tall oak trees  
Pass fields of golden grass and long forgotten rickety houses that tell stories of a time before you  
Here you are born and though you may leave your heart will always stay  
You're always welcome here in Northeast Texas



**Student Runner-Up, \$50**

Zachary Davis  
Summer's Charge

As I walk, the sunburnt grass crackles beneath my feet  
A quick glance to the sky is met with a nigh upon blinding glare  
The humidity clings to me like a parasite to its host  
In the distance, the horizon dances like flames in the light

Grasshoppers swarm like locusts to avoid my path of destruction  
The blade swings  
Once again cleaving that which stands in my way  
Fumes waft around me, the scents of fuel and heat mingling in my nostrils  
I wipe the sweat from my eyes  
the sting is gone if only momentarily and I continue with my grave task

The amalgamation of blades, gears, and gas stutters in front of me  
My enemy has but one defense in its arsenal  
Crouching next to my weapon I remove the mass of foes caught in its blades  
With violent force the machine whirls again to power

I turn for a moment to look upon that which has been completed  
Perfect lanes carved into the enemy front  
They are quickly losing ground and soon their numbers shall be nil  
This is not however a casualty free victory for the winning side  
I can already feel the blistering of my skin in the light

A thought passes grimly through my mind  
"This isn't the last front, it never is"  
Regardless of this revelation my task has reached its conclusion  
I return the tool with which I reap to its resting place

I stand silent and solemn before my superior  
And hang my head as my next task is assigned and the equipment to complete it given  
I mention under my breath the horrors of her actions

She smiles, and replies simply  
"You promised to mow and weed-eat"