

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

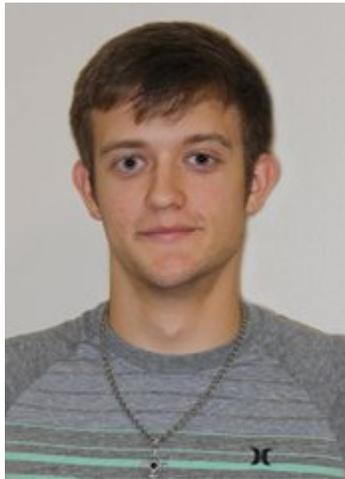
The power dulled and flickered
But the flashlight was on hand
Quilts
Cocoa
Books
A Movie?

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.

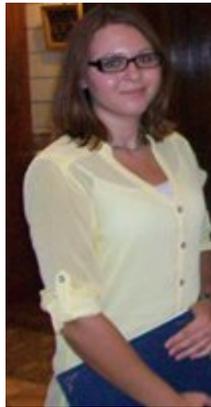
I smell the charcoals of my family's "end of the summer" barbecue.
I hear my lab Ranger howling in his kennel.
I make out the distant sounds of bullfrogs croaking in my pond.

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"