

2011 Northeast Texas Poetry Contest Student Winners

First Place Student, \$400: Amberly Alpha

Battle of Texas

The radiant Sun beats down with his infinite searing temper
He shows this place no mercy
The amount of abundant life that once danced on these lands is no more
Forced into solitary confinement
The earth and luxurious grasses have turned to brittle and broken replicas of their former selves
This is the place that drought calls home
Texas

The sky on the horizon begins to grow dim formulating its strong attack
Humid air emits its stoutest perfume of advancing precipitation
This is no subtle attack as the rival rumbles headfirst
Flashes illuminate the sky giving away the opponents position
The battle of the skies has arisen
Waterless cracked land is its battlefield in this place we call home
Texas

Foes meet midfield clashing and booming as they collide
The atmosphere is being torn between the two sides
Commotion echoes in the far distance as the enemies brawl for control
And then silence seizes the land
This land that Mother Nature calls home
Texas

Just as stillness envelopes the land the roar of a freight train begins
With it comes utter chaos
The rivals have created the most malice of them all, the twister
Thrashing and deafening the unrelenting twister claims its territory
Rampant winds engulf the land; this land drought no longer calls home
Texas

Through all of the commotion the land finally surfaces
Revealing the scars from the erratic visitors
The drought has come and vanished, conquered by the rain
The twister has cleared away all from the battlefield
A new life has arisen on this unstable land I call home
Texas

Second Place Student, \$300: Rhea Siensen

Northeast Texas

The twelve-hour drive
From Colorado to Northeast Texas
Was an excruciating stretch
For an impatient child

But the tedious ride
Was worth the wait
When the familiar lands of mountain views and suburbs
Disappeared into the mysterious and exciting unknown of Texas

The summers spent at Grandpa's
Nestled in the Northeast Texas country
Were the best summers
I had ever known

Quiet, early morning trips
Observing the careful movements
Of a majestic doe in the distance
Grazing in the fields

Humidity making me sweat
And sweltering summer heat
Baking my skin as I stood
Under the Texas summer sun

Trying to keep up with Grandpa's strides
As we walk through fields of grass
Attempting to memorize
The various majestic types of trees

Learning how to fish
Persevering through the scorching day
Waiting for that fateful bite
Having to throw back my small first catch

Sitting at the dining room table
Competing for the win
Learning new games of cards
With country music playing in the background

Famished from long hot days
Enjoying the aroma of
The delicious surprise that
Grandma has preparing in the kitchen

Sitting in the Texas breeze
Sipping my grandma's sweet iced tea
Watching squirrels run rampant
And hear the distant calls of coyotes

Hating to leave the majesty of Northeast Texas
And the wild animals and fervent heat
To return to sidewalks and suburbs
My summer trips always ended bittersweet

Third Place Student, \$200: Isaac Griffin

The Simple Life

Graced by a hawk
And its screeching cry

A long day done
Hear joyful sighs
For home-style chicken
And a pile of fries

Traits so simple
And yet so define
Our life in East Texas
The land of the pines

Fourth Place Student, \$100: Kaitlyn Tackett

East Texas Comes and Goes

From the mountains to the sea
From the mountains to the sea
From the mountains to the sea
From the mountains to the sea

with tremulous anticipation
waiting
I fear this time of year

sighing
parched and panting
I wait
aching, I wait
like the earth
like the trees
dry, brittle
longing for that which is not here
forgotten like lost lovers
whose companions have long since
turned to sweeter sins
who'll surely soon turn again
I loathe this time of year

slyly
that unfettered gypsy
wanders close to me
sauntering back from his travels
seeking to seduce
his voice beguiles
it's soft
and so cool like the mountains
cool like the deeps
it whispers
and it promises
such lovely things
that I'd falter whole-heartedly
save for that I would be a fool
to trust such, this fickle wind
that, empty-handed, leaves me here

I detest this time of year

Helios
why punish so mercilessly
withering that which
depends on your bright face for its very life
why unleash this abhorrent assault
onto your celestial kin
I wipe my beaded brow

I despise this time of year

yet
just when hope seems forsaken
the world shivers and catches its breath
for against the horizon looms a somber wall
building ever upwards, slate and indigo

bloated clouds creep closer

rains come

There are rows upon endless rows of peas.
Bushel baskets drug behind, filled to overflowing
Purple Hull, Black-eye, Red Ripper, Cream Crowder pods.
My young back aches, my feet burn, my arms are tired

Up early at the break of dawn to dig potatoes,
Rousted out of my lazy summer sleep
Up the sand hill I go, into the cool morn.
Digging out the fist-sized red-skinned potatoes,
Tender of skin and damply clinging to their secret place
Rudely laid open by the plow's ruthless swipe.
Yes, it is hard work, but it must be done
For it is for family that the harvest is made

Adult now and the garden is my own
A tiny small garden in the edge of the yard.
Not a giant truck patch with endless rows
Oh no! I am no farmer like my grandfather
Yet, I take the knowledge that he bequeathed
That which he learned from his own parent
Who received it from grandparent and grandparent before,
Stretching back to the eve of time.

I carefully make my rows and plant my own seed,
Planting by the moon as one must do,
Dropping each small dried kernel of life carefully
Into the open fertile earth,
Spacing them just so that they may grow strong.
A whispered prayer for increase as I tuck them in
Tamping down the cool damp soil covering over
I wait eagerly for them to grow

My garden is much like my life
I am deeply rooted to this place in the world.
This tiny corner of Eastern Texas beneath the deep blue sky.
I am a result of generations of experience and time
Memories harvested, some joyous, some that hurt.
We grow and we spread and each has their season
Their time in the sun and their time in the earth
And we all seek that the harvest-time be bountiful

Deep soil
The first memories endure
Digging bare child toes into the dirt
Filled with the primal scent of fresh-turned earth.
Placing small footsteps in those of my daddy's
As he walks across the fresh-tilled ground
My bare footprints in the center of his large boot tracks
Stretching my legs long to match his stride

Small child, young girl has passed by
Woman and grandmother I now am

The garden comes again each spring
The soil is turned and the seed planted with hope
I wait for that first tender shoot to emerge
From the pungent fresh-turned earth.
There is joy in seeing that first hint of green
Push up and crack open the crusted soil.

There is anticipation of generous fresh vegetables
Salad greens, tomatoes, peppers, peas,
Okra, potatoes, beans all in a row
Food for the table and satisfaction in the knowing
That I am a continuation of a long line
Of dirt diggers and weather watchers,
Praying for rain, hoping to enjoy that which
I have brought into being with my own labor.

I am the result of generation after generation
Following the same steps.
Planting and harvesting and working the land.
Large fields or small plots,
It matters not.