



2013 Poetry Contest  
Winning Entries



**POUDRE RIVER**  
**PUBLIC LIBRARY**  
DISTRICT

# Battle of the Bards Poetry Contest and Poetry Reading

To celebrate National Poetry Month 2013, the Poudre River Public Library District created this special program to engage both adult and teenage creative writers in our community for a multi-generational poetry contest and poetry reading event. Special thanks go to:

## **The Friends of the Poudre River Public Library**

**Diane Tuccillo**, Teen Services Librarian; Battle of the Bards Co-Coordinator; and poetry reading program Co-Host

**Melissa Beavers**, Reference Librarian; Battle of the Bards Co-Coordinator; and poetry reading program Co-Host

**Michael Liggett**, Poudre River Public Library Board of Trustees member; Fort Collins attorney who served on the Poudre School District Board of Education, Fort Collins Baseball Club Board, and Foothills Gateway Rehabilitation Center Board; and poetry reading program Co-Host

## **Little Bird Bake Shop for donating a variety of baked goods**

### **Teen level judges:**

**M. Hawkins**, graduated Interesting Reader Society library teen advisory group member; freshman at Coe College in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, studying Studio Art and Religion

**Todd Mitchell**, author of *Backwards* (Candlewick, fall 2013), *The Traitor King* (Scholastic, 2007), *The Secret to Lying* (Candlewick, 2010), co-author of *A Flight of Angels* (DC Comics, 2011); and instructor at Colorado State University in Creative Writing and Adolescent Literature

**Jane Nicolet**, Instructional Coach, Webber Middle School

**Jordan Triplett**, Interesting Reader Society library teen advisory group member; senior at Fort Collins High School; and poetry reading program Teen Co-Host

### **Adult level judges:**

**Amy Forgue**, holds an MFA in fiction from Colorado State University; instructor of English in the Arts & Letters Department at Front Range Community College.

**Jack Martin**, high school English teacher; Colorado Council on the Arts Poetry Award recipient; professional poet published in literary magazines Agni, Crazyhorses, Ploughshares, and Quarterly West; and author of the chapbook, *Weekend Sentences* (Pudding House, 1997).

**Dona Stein**, former Stegner Fellow in Poetry at Stanford University; recipient of national and international poetry awards and honors; author of chapbooks *Children of the Mafiosi* (Jacaranda, 1995) *Heavenly Bodies* (Jacaranda, 1995), and *Entering the Labyrinth* (Pudding House, 2003); host of KRFC's "The Poetry Show."

**Bill Tremblay**, Colorado State University English Department Professor Emeritus; novelist, teacher, editor, and reviewer; award-winning poet of *Crying in the Cheap Seats* (Univ. of Massachusetts Press, 1971), *The Anarchist Heart* (New Rivers, 1977), *Home Front* (Lynx House, 1978), *Second Sun: New & Selected Poems* (L'Epervier, 1985), *Duhamel: Ideas of Order in Little Canada* (BOA Editions Ltd, 1986), *Rainstorm Over the Alphabet* (Lynx House, 2001), *Shooting Script: Door of Fire* (Eastern Washington Univ. Press, 2003), and *Magician's Hat: Poems On the Life of David Alfaro Siqueiros* (Lynx House, 2013).



**Cambria Corp**, *Anniversary*

**Brett Fisher**, *My Stellar Love*

**Ellie Manning**, *The Nowhere Man*

**Kacie McClure**, *No Matter What*

**Greta Richardson**, *Cancer*

**Jesse Sheppard**, *Purple Narwhal or Life of Crayon*

**Heidi Shortreed**, *Cage*

**Elizabeth Woolner**, *Perpetually Silver*



**The Flute Player's Song**  
By Olivia Chatfield-Scott

One note rings out in the icy air.  
sounds like mist.  
mist fluttering down to land on the small wood violets.  
Another note.  
Sharp and piercing high.  
Scarlet roses and fire.  
The next notes are descending like stairs.  
Up the stairs, then down, stop.  
One sweet perfect note in the middle of the scale.  
A faint bit of sunlight on a cloudy day. The next sound is like  
trees.  
Quiet and deep.  
Whispering to each other.  
Then, sunset at the beach.  
Soft sand.  
Swinging high, then low.  
A sharp pause like someone gasping.  
Then, starting out soft and steadily growing louder, a sad,  
crying high note.  
Rain.  
The color blue.  
Second-to-last note, blowing loud and rich.  
The sounds of a family.  
The note then smoothly turns quieter and higher.  
Gray.  
Telling a story of a girl writing poems by candlelight, listen-  
ing to the flute music that is her inspiration.  
Fall time.  
The song ends with a rainbow of the scale, fast and fading.  
Playing colors.



## **My Trusty Blue Pen**

By Miranda Coldren

You might call this a poem,  
I call this fun,  
I love to write  
More than I like to eat chocolate.

When I am bored,  
I get out my notebook.  
I pour out my thoughts  
With my trusty blue pen,  
On to my paper  
With little blue lines.

Soon my notebook is full  
Of ideas and poems.  
My ideas are what keep me going-  
what I make into poems,  
Like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle  
falling...  
into...  
place.

Poetry is as important to me  
As food or water.  
I feel the words flowing out of me  
like rain,  
The pictures are as vivid  
As lightning tearing apart the sky,  
The sound of the words coursing  
through me is as loud  
As thunder shattering our win-  
dows.  
When I write poetry  
I am a super creative thunder-  
storm.

Poems have colors-pink,  
purple, blue, green...  
Just like my life.  
They stimulate my imagina-  
tion,  
Giving me things to occupy  
My ever-racing brain.

You might call this a poem,  
I call this fun,  
I love to write  
More than I like to eat choco-  
late.

When I am bored,  
I get out my notebook.  
I pour out my thoughts  
With my trusty blue pen,  
On to my paper  
With little blue lines.



## **A Soul's Song**

By Sydney Dunnahoo

When the soul was first created,  
It was born like a bursting  
song.  
The Lord smiled, 'It is good.'  
He saw no spot or wrong.

Then the song was doubled  
with another soul  
And made twice as bursting  
and great.  
The songs were made to fit each  
other  
And to be forever soul-mates.

But suddenly a choice was  
made,  
And oh the following sorrow!  
The ground was cursed, life  
became dark;  
There was no hope for tomor-  
row.

The souls stumbled around in  
horror  
In realization of what had been  
done.  
The songs became desperate  
pleas for help  
For a Savior from the life  
begun.

God the Healer looked down in pain  
And saw the lack of right.  
So He became the answer to the cry,  
The One to restore the souls' sight

The Sacrifice came into being  
His perfect brow pierced with a  
thorn.  
The Lamb's crimson blood flowed to  
the dust  
The barrier curtain was forever torn.

And now the song is restored in full  
To the souls who were once ab-  
horred,  
But now are spotless and beautiful  
Singing a hallelujah restored.



## The Knight's Victory

By Tamara Faour

The knight crept into the monster's den  
Dripping with questing through swamp  
and fen,  
Stiff with riding through field and glen,  
Wearied with searching one month and  
ten.

But he had come!—He raised his sword—  
He'd rode every league; crossed every  
ford  
For months every discomfort, ignored,  
And now he had come for his reward.

“Come forth, foul beast! I've come at last  
To settle the wrongs of an endless past.  
My fury rises—it waxeth fast!  
Now come forth and fight, if thou dast!”

The challenge echoed off walls of stone,  
Then faded and left the knight alone.  
He listened, warily, both ears prone,  
And then he thought he heard a groan.

It slid out of the corner, weeping,  
And so the knight approached it, creep-  
ing,  
And there the monster lay, as though  
sleeping  
His dark blood from a dark wound seep-  
ing.

“Aha! I have found thee!” the old knight  
said.  
“Oh blight of the earth thee will soon be  
dead!”  
Then raised he his sword to chop off its  
head,  
And looked into its features of dread...

...And then he stopped. He stopped and  
he stared.  
The monster's eyes met his, hopeless and

scared.  
And for just that moment the knight dared  
To think that he, too, might have so fared.

It could've been he about to die  
Too weak and alone to even try.  
It could've been he unable to fly.  
It could've been me, he thought with a  
sigh.

But it was not him. The knight gripped his  
blade.  
Why should his judgment be so delayed?  
Should not a monster be so repaid?  
And yet he was still, and his hand was  
staid.

In the quiet dark the creature bled.  
His blood was black, his eyes were red.  
The knight had come to claim his head,  
But he lowered his sword and left, instead.



## **The Strongest Women Live West**

By Audrey Flach

Rusty wheels squeak across black tops in this broken dejected town.

The day I met you, it was new, the wheels, the road, and white fresh buildings.

What I saw was greed, the yearn for a sewing needle,  
Stitch our hands, wrists by the hair of an angel.

A god forsaken angel, that's what you would take for granted?

White wings checker black; her tears rust the wheels of buses

Hear the squeaking that echoes every time you lift a finger?

Hear them like the carol of the bells, faster and faster

She breathed and you were nearly.

Dead.

With the thought, she clung to a tree in the yard shaking the apples to fall for your feet, but you did not eat.

It was her fault that the angel cried when you told her she should pity herself.

She was your tramp, caught with hysteria she aborted her own choice to leave.

She gripped to serve the dying town, but left day by day  
withering her life away for you, damn un-grateful being you,  
dominated her choice of who she really was.





## Simply Called, Words

By Isaiah Rayner Fried

Simply Called, Words

These words, fleeting as they are, are  
my life.

Inspiration every day, from the small-  
est flash of a smile,

To the sun falling over the mountains.

And I steel myself, dawning armor of a  
jaded boy,

Whose parents never gave up on,  
whose brother tried to teach,  
whose sisters still comfort.

But they cannot reach me,

Broken body,

The bird cage of a battered soul,

Who despite all the compliments, the  
smiles, the achievements,

Still feels worthless inside. A failure.

Who cries out for help, silently, who  
stifles his sobs,

And keeps all his thoughts locked up in  
a zoo titled Journal.

A boy who dares to dream, as he twirls  
through an untaught dance,

As he stumbles on learning a piece of  
music,

As he picks up the pencil in sweating  
hands, writing his soul on paper.

I stand before you now,

That boy.

Stripped, a battered soul.

Pouring his story to a room, full of  
strangers, who don't know him,

Who can't see who he is.

I, a naked, rough, unpolished soul,

Who can't even forget his smallest  
mistake,

Who can't ever forgive himself.

I went through five years of brutal  
beatings,

Words and fists, but I survived

For what?

Two more years of pain, his screams  
ignored.

They said it would get better, if I  
just wait.

Yet even after the fists stopped fly-  
ing,

And the scars cover up,

I still walk through a school,

Where my bird cage, battered,

Hears the words whispered, yelled  
FAG!

That's so GAY!

I am still beaten, day by day.

But words are my weapons!

And I can use them for other things  
too!

I use my words every day, to fight,  
to live,

Even a poem, scribbled on the back  
of a notebook,

Is one more reason to live.

Because my story,

Is one of hope.

Of a boy, who went through all that.

Whose body is still bleeding.

My soul slowly leaving.

My story is one of hope.

Of a person, just like everyone else.



## **I Am Tall**

By Gabrielle Gonzales

“I am tall!”  
Said the child,  
practically shinning bliss  
Two pig tails,  
ratted from sleep  
Fuchsia Cheeks,  
from a pillow face plant  
A nightgown of fairies,  
that dance off the fabric  
And a face with a smile,  
brighter than the sun.  
“I am tall!”  
Cheered the girl,  
as she walked towards the wall  
with the menacing yellow tape.

There it stood,  
towering over all  
A malevolent,  
numbered,  
monster.

But she wasn't afraid,  
No. that little girl wasn't.  
Once more,  
She warm heartedly spoke;  
“I am tall!”  
And stood tall and proud against the wall.



## Here and After

By Madisen Kiernan

Yesterday it was that situation you  
couldn't find the courage to face;  
It's the belief in yourself that leaves  
without a trace.  
You've looked for it as hard as you  
knew you could,  
But it's in yourself that you find the  
strength to do what  
you should.  
You've taught yourself not to use  
power;  
Today it's that word that was held in-  
side because you had too much to say,  
It's that word that needed to taste the  
world but  
questioned if it was okay.  
Link by link your words formed from  
irritation, anger,  
And annoyance chained yourself from  
the inside.  
It's put you in a cage made out of the  
very place you used  
to hide;  
Freedom becomes more foreign to you  
by the hour.  
Tomorrow it's your empty soul, lacking  
compassion and  
concern;  
It's taking away from you your very wit  
used to discern.  
You've turned your back on yourself  
and your life;  
It's lingering in you in your mind's  
peace and strife.  
Your naivety has become ignorance;  
In the next month it will be the weight  
you feel because  
you do not know if you are human or  
a beast,  
Because with every passing day it's  
helped your confusion  
and rage increase.  
You search for someone new to be,  
But you miss that peace is not in some-  
one else but in thee.  
The chaos you allowed in has killed  
your humanity;  
The next year it will be the guilt that's

drowning you as a  
whole,  
Crashing through your walls and  
boundaries until it has  
filled your empty soul.  
You try to lie and say it wasn't you;  
But looking back you know it's all true.  
Out of your own guilt you'll drive your-  
self to the grave;  
On your deathbed it will be only you,  
everything you ever  
did you'll have to face.  
There will be no mirror, there will be  
no mask;  
You either finished or failed your last  
task.  
You might for once feel in control or  
your mind might be  
reeling;  
It's that time when darkness will come  
stealing;  
There is nothing more you can do.  
When you look back on life it won't be  
the courage you  
lacked,  
It won't be the strength you couldn't  
find,  
It won't be the time you couldn't say  
what you needed to  
say,  
It won't be that cage you formed for  
yourself,  
It won't be that weight in your heart or  
guilt that took  
what you believed was the rest of you  
If you see anything at all it will be the  
hope that you



## **Time**

By Ellie Manning

Time  
hypnotizes  
the mind  
into infinite  
madness.  
Slowly,  
    silently  
        hollowing  
out  
our souls,  
endless  
drumming  
echoes  
in our  
seemingly faultless  
minds.

Cruelty  
has vanquished  
the humanity  
that shall  
free us,  
so forever  
are we  
trapped.

Trapped  
within  
the echoes  
that are  
Slowly,  
    silently  
        driving us  
toward  
infinite insanity.



## **Temple**

By Madeline Wishow

My body is a temple.  
A temple of chaotic charisma.  
Chemicals collide  
In a rousing riot of reactions  
To form my thoughts.  
Thoughts set a spark to light  
Along my nerves that run to my lips  
To take my tongue through the motions  
To speak the words I think.  
My body is a temple.  
A temple of facilitated freedom.  
Flowing fibers cloak my bones,  
Twitching my fingers into tantalizing action.  
The raw ends of numerous nerves keep  
The pen in my grip, keep  
The words coming from the cataclysm in my mind.  
Muscles make my legs move me  
Across this stage, keep me  
Moving with the words I speak.  
My body is a temple.  
A temple of timeless temptation.  
The words I mouth taunt and tease  
At your ears,  
Twist your mind  
Into action.  
The power of the poetry  
I write.



**Caitlyn Berman**, *Cherry Child*

**Robert Gaines**, *Aberystwyth, Wales*

**Bear Gebhardt**, *Rocky's Oneness*

**Kaylen Merritt**, *Language of Absence*

**Tracy Taylor**, *Baby Changing Stations*

**Traci Thomas**, *Tree Nymph Chrysalis*



**Sunday Breakfast: Love and Grace**  
By Seth Forwood

Dear Lord,  
    Under table meet  
my beloved's and my feet,  
knob and knuckle-pop and stub  
on the toes of bone and bulb,  
thin skin crinkles with caress  
nail corners catch, slice, transgress.

Yet it is love that passes across tendon and vein  
and the grace of wool socks to which we'll return again.



## Destiny's Peaceable Chore

By Bear Gebhardt

Outside, under the stars, just before  
bed,  
I snap tight the lid on the trash can  
wrestle it to the curb,  
begin to count the times since moving  
in I'd set out trash cans on this very  
walk.

I was a restless young man back then,  
somewhat irritated with such a menial  
chore,  
young kids in the house, in their baths,  
while I,  
the guy, outside, hauling trash cans  
streetward.

Winter, spring, summer and fall, week  
after  
week, more than one thousand five  
hundred  
weeks in a row—a long string of trash  
nights,  
long stream of bags, with occasional  
forgets,  
but mostly successes, getting them out  
before the trash man comes in the a.m.

Now with hair mostly white it's a plea-  
sure,  
of sorts, to walk the old can from  
behind  
the fence where I'd built a rack to the  
curb  
where in the a.m. the young trash men  
come  
and in their brief, beautiful, practiced  
ritual

uncap the can, heave the trash, set  
it back  
lid asunder on the curb, then wave  
to the driver to move on to the next  
can—  
stop, heave, wave, in less than  
twenty seconds.

Tonight as I took the can to the curb  
I felt at peace with this, at ease,  
unhurried.  
The kids have grown, married,  
moved away,  
setting out every week trash cans of  
their own.





## **Redwood Grove**

By Linda Grey-Wilson

Late summer sun warms ocean air to vanquish morning fog  
Giving rise to peaty fust from every fallen log  
Communities of Ancients with intertwining roots  
Clinging for stability like new army recruits

Up and up and up and up thirty stories high  
Their ample girth and dark brown bark enchant all who pass  
by  
A swaying canopy of green, dances at great height  
The California Redwood grove is cast in dappled light

These stately guardians were here before the fall of Rome  
Standing to attention above the ocean's foam  
Awestruck by their massive trunks, many make the climb  
The trees inspiring pilgrims ever since the dawn of time

Though forest fires burning bright, hollow out their boles  
These trees survive and even thrive despite large gaping  
holes  
Beguiling caves of living wood where children sit and play  
A spot to shelter from the storm, a safe dry place to stay

In time a Redwood giant succumbs to weather's rage  
And knocks into a neighbor as its short roots disengage  
Weep not for the Redwood as it crashes with a roar  
Its rotting trunk will help sustain life on the forest floor

Nourishing the humble ferns which in abundance grow  
Small leafy trees and Douglas firs flourishing below  
Decaying logs give wildlife shelter from the cold  
The wonders of this forest grove are truly many-fold



## **Let it Go**

By Sierra Hastings

My heart and brain have known the same,  
the taste of love and hate and pain.  
If words could save me, but they won't,  
I would memorize the dictionary  
in every language  
twice.  
If I could let it go,  
I'd give it to the earth and air  
and make my sacrifice to the sea.  
But in my attempts to clarify my thoughts  
and clear my soul,  
I've only succeeded in digging deep this hole.  
Into the ground, I'd bury my figurative heart  
and unilateral soul,  
I would get rid of it all  
just to know  
happiness.



**Boy at the Lake**  
By Kaylen Merritt

We could almost feel  
the cellophane gunfire  
of the ice as it split into  
two lips of blue  
beneath the aspen grove,  
swallowing leaves like  
globes of honey  
as he slipped through  
the ripple net,  
his clinging hands  
shaking the branches  
as a woman might  
shake a fan.

And then,  
the wet pop of wood,  
and the hanging limb  
above the stilling  
pond of gold,  
a red glove  
risen from its center.



## Words from Wednesday

By Krista Reuther

The dust upon your headstone  
reminds me that  
I have neglected you again

My scarf becomes  
an eraser eradicating  
the remnants of my  
mistakes from your  
beautiful name

My tongue is still  
heavy with the words  
I never birthed but  
your ears only listen  
to the earthworms  
passing by

I want to tell you  
my soup has improved  
I added pepper  
like you said I should  
I take the dogs  
on daily walks  
you were right  
they stopped howling  
at the mailman  
adding the teal accents  
to the living room  
brightened the space-  
you probably wouldn't  
like it  
you always preferred blue  
like the sea

But  
you will never taste  
my soup again  
or scold the dog  
for singing at night  
your eyes are blind to  
the garish teal  
and I am reminded:

the good don't  
die young;  
the good  
die anyway.



**Evensong**  
By Julie Rowan-Zoch

Sun collects her daytime shadows  
Slips behind the mountain's rock  
Bars of blue hum twilight's cadence  
October clouds chime six o'clock  
Gathered grays in thirsty chorus  
Ignite as wispy ribbons fly  
Bowls of peach, plum, and orange  
Offer grace to autumn sky



**A Sonnet on a Shoe—For Tiffi Tawn and  
Reaggy Roo**

By Morgan Taylor

Today, I found a doll's shoe in the dirt.  
An inch, and pink, and soft, without a sock  
or foot. No kewpie leg. No gingham skirt.  
Just a shoe. Caked with mud. Beside a rock.  
No yards nearby. No bus stops where it could  
have been cast unmissed, adrift from a doe-  
eyed, toy-aisle companion's dainty toes. Should  
it have been a pair, perhaps I would show  
less concern. But one's just so lonely. Is  
it missed? The doll kissed less often because  
she's incomplete and can't go, without this  
shoe, to the park until the springtime thaws?  
I hope, if that's the case, this plastic lass  
lost the other, and's barefoot in the grass.



**Remanence**  
By Tracy Taylor

If you took away my skin,  
Peeled it away like the turn of a page,  
And all of my muscles fell from my bones,  
Would that mass still be me?

If you opened up my skull,  
And watched my brain slide down my neck,  
Then bounce against the ground,  
Would you see that shiny gray nest and think of me?

And when my mind starts giving way,  
When rockslides block the only roads I ever knew,  
The roads that connected me to you,  
Would that mass still be me?

If my body is torn apart,  
My pieces thrown to the edges of Earth,  
And only air stands in my place...  
Will you breathe in that air and think of me?



**Wyrd: “Fate remains wholly inexorable”—the Wanderer**  
By Traci Thomas

With a heap of honey and bees dancing in the hive,  
who wouldn't choose and cast a bone or cobblestone  
slick with brood comb and sticking with sap?

In fear of hiding honeybees— a hush that no longer hums  
—we'll fill our stomach with slungum after squeezing honeycomb  
to harvest disgorged nectar from the hanging hexagons.

Devoid of language days will drone  
and myths will moan from within moonlit stone  
for the runic rustle of the roving humblebee.

To become a Valkyrie, blow burning bark into the hive,  
bear mead brewed from the pollinated bough,  
and bless the birch with a boreal bloom.