



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,
Weary 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.