

And the Winners Are...

Sponsored by:

 **BALTIMORE'S CHILD**



Baltimore's Child and CityLit Project are pleased to announce the winners of the second annual Maryland Young Writers' Contest. Last year, we were thrilled to receive 400 submissions for our inaugural contest. This year, honestly, we panicked when we received almost 900 pieces of creative writing. So we called in reinforcements in the form of volunteer readers and eagerly dove into the mountain of papers.



Fiendish Lot, and the forthcoming *Freak Magnet*, and a video game designer for Big Huge Games.

The submissions of our six first-place winners are published on the following pages as well as on the CityLit Project website, www.citylitproject.org. Additionally, each of the writers has been offered a full scholarship to attend this year's Maryland Writing Project's Student Writers' Workshop, based at Towson University with sites in Frederick and Harford County and Southern Maryland.

Our final judges selected first-, second-, and third-place winners in both prose and poetry from our elementary, middle, and high school submissions. These 18 writers represent the wonderful diversity of Maryland's student body: homeschoolers, private schoolers, and public schoolers, city kids and suburban kids, young men and women from different cultural backgrounds. It has been said that Maryland's geography is like "America in Miniature." If so, then these creative writers represent the "mini-melting pot."

Each of our first-, second-, and third-place winners will receive a certificate of recognition and have the opportunity to read his or her winning piece at a special event on Saturday, May 1, at Barnes & Noble Power Plant, in the Inner Harbor, at 1 p.m. A portion of sales at the bookstore that day will go toward future Maryland Young Writers' Contests. Please join us as we congratulate this year's winners.

This year's final judges were Laura Shovan and Andrew Auseon.

And attention young writers, parents, and teachers: The deadline for the third annual Maryland Young Writers' Contest is Friday, Dec. 31, 2010. We challenge our state's young writers to top 1,000 submissions this year!

Shovan has been active in the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation Poetry Program, and since 2002, has been an artist-in-education with the Maryland State Arts Council, leading poetry workshops for school children.

Special thanks to the Carroll County Times for sponsoring this section featuring the winning entries.

Auseon is author of the young adult novels *Funny Little Monkey*, *Jo-Jo* and the

Elementary School Poetry, First Place

Circle of Time for the Anaquash

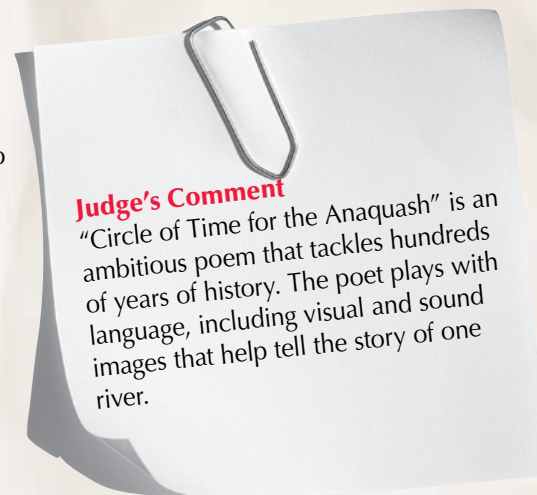
Gillian Hutter
Stone Ridge School
Montgomery County
Grade 5

Time of the Riverwalk, my waking beauty is healing.
Returning Anaquash called Riverwalk, finding ways for business to protect nature,
Cooling shade of returning trees, signaling bird and animal friends to return,
Glowing glossy green waters, greeting visitors not seen in far too many moons,
Energizing, recreating, rethinking, and imagining.

Time to Be Repaired, my new found beauty is building.
Finding ways to help all my friends, living, learning, protecting and enjoying,
Reclaiming, restoring, replanting and renewing, winning,
Breathing in the open air, living life and sharing joy,
Circling around, living for simple pleasures, appreciating what the river means to me.

Note to readers: Anaquash is the Native American name for the Anacostia River in Washington, D.C. It means a village trading center or marketplace. Modern names for the Anacostia include Eastern Branch, Forgotten River, and the River Walk Project.

Time of the Anaquash, my tender beauty is living
Churning slowly, lazily lingering, distracting spirals just meant to enjoy,
Singing Meadowlarks, dancing by in the breeze, darting and dashing
Shimmering when swimming, tickling my shoals by very silly schools of shad
Celebrating abundance with the Nacotchtank, partying because there is enough to share.



Time of the Eastern Branch, my fragile beauty is slipping.
Making me gurgle that Captain John Smith found me, smiling that I can not be lost,
Hoping that the fabled forests will be left upon my sides, being shaved by farmers,
Spreading and widening my mud flats, turning sadly green,
Wandering and babbling, drifting rings of tobacco with no trees to be seen.

Time of the Forgotten River, my fading beauty is failing.
Picking between two sisters, forcing L'Enfant to make the hard choice
Pulsating on my sister's shores are liberty, freedom, and democracy,
Nurturing a new nation's capital, caring from Potomac's gentle touch,
Remembering forgotten promises, consuming my riverbanks with growing envy.

Time of the Anacostia, my hurting beauty is bleeding.
Listening to sounds of the city, trying to rattle and roar through clogged veins,
Watching unrecognizable streams, hiding in the sewers, hindering my flow
Stagnating jet black ink muck, barely passing by, choking,
Wanting to stop the Blue Veins, wanting just to cry.

More Winners

Elementary School Poetry

Second Place: "What is Gray?" by Ethan Forrer, Park School of Baltimore, Baltimore County, Grade 5
Third Place: "The Ocean," by Abby L. Pepin, Homeschooled, Grade 4

Elementary School Prose

Second Place: "The Detective Family and the Cookie Case," by Janae Morris, Homeschooled, Grade 3
Third Place: "Beam of Sunlight," by Joelle Rosen, Carderock Springs Elementary, Montgomery County, Grade 5

Elementary School Prose First Place

Coming to You

Jade Drawec
Fountain Green Elementary
Harford County
Grade 5

My daddy's hugs are warm and comforting. His special hugs. When I packed I knew I would miss him. I tried hard not to cry, but I had to. "I'll see you soon," he said to me. Even though he knew he would not. He pulled me close to him and kissed my forehead.

We were pulled to the car. In the next few days we were settled down. This was when he called for the first time, tonight. His first call. I love his calls. They make me feel wonderful inside.

This morning is warm and comforting just like my daddy's hugs. His hugs. Now I miss him dearly.

My mama tries to help. "You'll see him in a week," she says.

This morning we get warm breakfast. My brother and I gobble it up, then watch TV. My brother doesn't know what is happening, but I do.

I want to see my daddy. He called again tonight. His nice calls are just like his hugs.

I know I will see him soon. When I see him for the first time I know I will be very happy. Very, very happy. This is the first time I will see him in three weeks.

Today we pack to go to his house, our blue house. My brother loves playing with my daddy. He is the best at playing outside. We pack our nicest clothes, for this is the first time. I have missed him so much.

We drive seven hours to see our daddy. It is a very long drive. My brother and I try to keep each other entertained. This seven-hour drive feels like a century. I look out the window trying to stay interested. The color of gray swallows up the sky. It is very discouraging. One tree in the middle of a large field reminds me of my daddy. One tree out of a ten acre field, like one father, the best in the world.

When we get there my eyes start to water. I hug my daddy. I love him. I feel like a bug in a rug. His big fluffy coat keeps my cheeks warm. It is now almost winter and cold up North. But my daddy's hugs are warm and comforting. Sometimes when he hugs me it is so quiet, quiet enough I can hear his heartbeat. This is my favorite time.

I love my daddy very much. And that will never change.

Judge's Comment

In "Coming to You" what starts as one girl's simple wish slowly becomes a meditative chant on longing, and we begin to truly feel her love for this distant figure of her father. The raw, lyrical power of her writing was striking.

Middle School Poetry First Place

The Hood

Marquise Caldwell
Franklin Square Elementary/Middle School
Baltimore County
Grade 7

The hood is the hood the way I see it.
The way people walk up and down the street fighting or giggling...it doesn't make sense in the hood.
Can you believe it?
People who are only thirteen on the corner...losing it.
You know what I mean?
By the culprit, drugs and guns.
People who are so young...they don't even make it past twenty-one.
It's either jail or gone.
Living the life...in the city.

While the hood is the hood, I'm going to be different.
It's like crabs in a pot...there's always going to be someone in the hood trying to hold you down.
Me? I'm different! I can walk in and out with my head held high,
Because...between you and I, there are different things on my mind
With these thoughts, "the hood" is no longer "the hood."
I have escaped!

Judge's Comment

"The Hood" stood out because of the energy in its voice. The poet skillfully used rhyme and rhythm to emphasize ideas.

More Winners

Middle School Poetry

Second Place: "Colored," by Katherine Flanagan, St. Joan of Arc School, Harford County, Grade 8

Third Place: "At the Beach," by Willa Beam, Monocacy Valley Montessori, Frederick County, Grade 8

Middle School Prose

Second Place: "Missing," by Laura Seaberg, Roland Park Middle School, Baltimore City, Grade 6

Third Place: "Underground Railroad Adventure," by Molly Turlington, Cockeysville Middle School, Baltimore County, Grade 6

“How Africa Became”

Zaynab R. Gholston
Homeschooled
Grade 6

Ever wondered how Africa became? It all began with the elephants, but not as we now know them. In the time before time, elephants were so tall, their feet rested at the bottoms of the oceans and their heads grazed the heavens. Their ears were as wide as countries, and they were so big, man never thought of coming near them. Elephants roamed as they pleased and had none to fear.

Among these elephants was one named Afreeca. Afreeca wasn't the oldest elephant amongst them, but she was wise. She lived with her mother in the land now called Asia. One night, Afreeca had a dream.

Afreeca was standing in the middle of nowhere. Beside her was a baby elephant. Suddenly more than ten man creatures were surrounding the baby. Afreeca could only watch as a net went over it. The baby's tiny tusks were pulled out and the helpless elephant was divided into pieces. Afreeca didn't understand. Then the dream changed. Now she saw many elephants surrounding the baby elephant and the men couldn't attack him.

Afreeca was awakened by her mother. “Dear Afreeca, I think you were having a dream.”

“Yes, mother.”

“You know what dreams are, don't you?”

“Yes, a message from God,” Afreeca replied.

Mother nodded. “Tell me your dream.”

Afreeca related her dream. When she finished Mother said, “I don't understand this dream.

Man has never attacked us. You'll have to figure this out yourself.”

Afreeca's head hung low. She walked until she reached a lake. She sat down and began to drink.

“The messssage,” a voice hissed. Afreeca looked down and saw Python sitting on a rock. “Tell the messssage,” Python said once again before disappearing.

“I don't understand it!” Afreeca called. She looked towards the heavens. “Please help me.” Then she had it! She knew what had to be done. She leapt up and ran toward the oldest elephant known. Grandfather Horace was in the middle of cleaning when Afreeca announced her arrival.

“Come in,” he coughed.

“Sorry for my interruption Grandfather, but I've realized something.”

“Apology accepted.”

“I had a dream.” Afreeca then related the dream and Python's words.

“Granddaughter, are you telling me elephants should get into what you call 'herds' when we are so big and strong? We are great! We don't need protection!”

“That's exactly what I'm saying. We're strong, but vulnerable at times, too,” Afreeca argued.

“Dimwitted child, you think too highly of men. I have lived many years and have never been disgraced by the sight of an elephant until now. Leave!” he roared.

Afreeca ran. She ran home to Mother, who wrapped her up in her large, soft ears.

Over time, word spread of The Dream. Storytellers added and subtracted as they pleased, and the message of The Dream was lost. Afreeca became an adult. Her head grazed the clouds, but her life was ruined. No one accepted her anymore.

One day she stood gazing at the ocean. Two elephants whispered behind her. She supposed they were talking about her, and then one elephant raised her voice just high enough for Afreeca to hear.

“Isn't she the one who came up with 'herd' and ate Python?”

“Didn't she try to kill Grandfather?”

Afreeca bellowed. “I didn't eat Python or try to kill Grandfather, you foul-mouthed bananas!”

“Oh! She's a nasty one,” one of them snorted.

“Let's leave this monkey dung!”

The pair walked away, spreading tales of how Afreeca had tried to eat them.

Afreeca lay down and sobbed. “I wish I never had that Dream.” Suddenly she had a funny feeling and opened her eyes. Surrounding her were more than twenty men! Afreeca jumped up, but they closed in. One tried hushing her with a soft gurgling noise as he neared. Afreeca hesitated and he touched her, but then she reared up, flinging him into space. The others lunged at her. She trumpeted loudly.

Far away, Mother heard the trumpeting and quickly ran towards it. Finally she reached the ocean's shore. There she saw her daughter lying on the blood-stained ground.

“Darling...?” Afreeca's tusks were gone, and she had gashes all over. Mother cried.

“Men, Mother. My dream,” Afreeca gasped.

“My dear. HELP!”

Elephants from all over came and were horrified by what they saw. Grandfather, too.

“We must get her home,” he said.

“I will help her,” Mother said.

“So will I. I was wrong.” Then Grandfather pushed Afreeca's back legs up with his large head, and Mother's trunk pulled on her front legs.

Afreeca tried to stand, but she was too weak. When she fell back to the ground, Afreeca's ear, which had been hanging, flew off of her head and into the blue water. The earth shook under her and its dust fell over the lost ear. The elephants watched in wonder as the flesh stretched and turned into land and the blood into rivers and Afreeca's ear became one with the world.

Mother looked down and smiled. “This is how we'll remember you.”

“There'sss another way too,” a voice said. Mother saw Python sitting on a distant rock. The elephants walked to him. Dazed and confused, Afreeca tried to follow but lost them.

“Down here!” someone cried desperately. Afreeca looked. There was Mother, Grandfather and the others, looking like insects off in the distance. She stumbled over to them.

“We've shrunk,” Mother said. Afreeca cried. “You're raining on us.”

Afreeca stopped crying, blinked and with a sigh took her last breath. The elephants watched in amazement as the last Great Elephant's body melted into different creatures. Lions, crocodiles and others they'd never seen before.

Grandfather pleaded, “Afreeca, come back. Take this ear away. No!” But it was done.

From then on the elephants were forced to live smaller lives on their sister Afreeca's ear as punishment for not lending her theirs. Because elephants have good memories they never forgot what happened and began to stay in herds. And that's How Africa Became or how Afreeca became Africa.



Judge's Comment

“How Africa Became” is an original and entertaining creation myth that utilizes traditional elements to tell a new story, one with a depth and cleverness all its own. The best writers become invisible; this writer clearly has a talent for fading into the white space behind her words.

High School Poetry First Place

Tools

Rachel Richardson
Mt. Hebron High School
Howard County, Grade 12

Her most important feature,
Her hands,
Broad, calloused, red, covered in paint,
Covered in clay, covered in ink,
Covered in charcoal, covered in pastel,
Covered in the wite-out she let
Me borrow
When I Was upset about a mistake.
Covered in the glue she used
To make me a Christmas gift.
Covered in the gloves I gave her
In elementary school
Worn just to make me happy.
Hands with the memories
Of countless snow days, basketball games,
High-fives, and pool-swimmings.
She's scrubbing her hands at my kitchen sink.
I look at her signature feature,
The tools she uses every day
In admiration.
I say, "Your hands have paint on
Them, what Were you Working on?"
She looks down, disgusted, and replies,
"They look horrible, don't they?"

Judge's Comment

"Tools" uses a focused image to create a character sketch. In a short space, the poet establishes two opposite and revealing points of view.

More Winners

High School Poetry

Second Place: "Thoughts on a Morning Stroll Through the Hallway," by Stuart Russell, Mt. Hebron High, Howard County, Grade 12

Third Place: "Dear Sun," by Rachel Cohen, Beth Tfiloh, Baltimore County, Grade 12

High School Prose

Second Place: "Beginning of the End, " by Jasmin Whitehead, Forestville Military Academy, Prince George's County, Grade 10

Third Place: "Knock, Knock!" by Rachel Robbins, Wilde Lake High School, Howard County, Grade 11

Honorable Mention: "Voices Around the World," by Mohammed Khalid, Mt. Hebron High School, Howard County, Grade 11

High School Prose First Place



The Bright Light

Jenny Sloane
Beth Tfiloh
Baltimore County
Grade 11

Dressed in all black with tears streaming down my face, I look around the room. I see my friends comforting each other. I see my parents holding hands in silence. I see my younger brother sitting alone in the corner. Remembering that I promised to share a few thoughts, I walk forward. As I open my mouth to speak, nothing comes out. I glance down at my crumpled up paper, but I cannot make out the words. Everything is a blur.

Finally, I am able to softly mutter, "We will always love and miss you."

It's been days. I can't sleep. When I begin to doze off, a bright light flashes in my mind, and my heart begins to pound. Did this really happen? I walk to his room and sit on his bed, not bothering to turn the lights on. I can still smell him. It was only yesterday that we were talking, smiling, and laughing together. There is nothing I can do or say that will bring him back; it is just not fair. I feel like I lost a part of me. I make my way over to his desk where I pick up a photo album. Flipping through the pages, I travel back in time. I was five. He was eight. For my birthday, I had just gotten a brand new bike with no training wheels. That day he promised me that before he went to sleep for the night I would be in the street riding my new bike. We spent the entire day outside, determined to succeed. All of a sudden, with a final push, he let go. I was riding my bike, all by myself.

It was the proudest moment of my life.

Reminiscing on this childhood memory, for the first in time in days, I smile. I think of my brother; he would hate to see me this upset. The more I think about our lives together, the more I realize how lucky I am to have had such an amazing brother. I continue turning through the photo album. Not only do the pictures make me smile, but I also begin to laugh. Before I know it, my younger brother and parents are sitting beside me. Sitting together on the floor, smiling and laughing together, I know this is what he would have wanted. There is just one thing left to do. I get up and walk over to the window. I open the blinds. As the bright light shines through I quickly return to my spot on the ground, not wanting to miss a single memory.

Judge's Comment

There is a vein of honest emotion running beneath her writing. However, all is not tears for the hero of this story. I was pleased to find this piece empty of unnecessary vocabulary and careless metaphors but, rather, cleanly written and elegant. The simple observational style brings readers closer to the character.