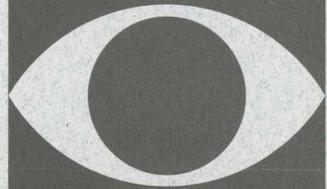


6TH ANNUAL



OUR OWN  
WORDS

**Y  
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YA810.8097  
OUR OWN  
2002

Pierce County Teen  
Poetry & Fiction Writing  
Contest 2002



# Winners

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## Poetry (Grades 7th & 8th)

**First Place** . . . . . Winter's Beginning  
Tawni Holt, 8th Grade  
Gault Middle School, Tacoma

**Second Place** . . . . . Losing Color  
Jennifer Wong, 8th Grade  
Annie Wright, Lakewood

**Third Place** . . . . . Dance of the Waves  
Emily K. Grover, 7th Grade  
Sumner Junior High, Sumner

## Poetry (Grades 9th & 10th)

**First Place** . . . . . Black Roses  
Anna McCallon, 9th Grade  
Home school, Tacoma

**Second Place** . . . . . Battle With Death  
Jessica Entz, 10th Grade  
White River High School, Buckley

**Third Place** . . . . . Funny Farm  
Rachel Zeller, 10th Grade  
Home school, Spanaway

## Poetry (Grades 11th & 12th)

**First Place** . . . . . A Lie for Mark Rothko  
Rachel Smith, 12th Grade  
Gig Harbor High School, Gig Harbor

**Second Place** . . . . . Sunset's Garment  
Emily Larsen, 12th Grade  
Gig Harbor High School, Gig Harbor

**Third Place** . . . . . Absence  
Ashley Rayes, 12th Grade  
Gig Harbor High School, Gig Harbor

# Winners

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## Short Stories (Grades 7th & 8th)

**First Place** . . . . . Kitten Wings  
Pearl Fritz, 8th Grade  
Stewart Middle School, Tacoma

**Second Place** . . . . . Fortune Girl  
Tami Kim, 7th Grade  
Hudtloff Middle School, Lakewood

**Third Place** . . . . . The Family Tree  
Jenny Ruthven, 8th Grade  
Mason Middle School, Tacoma

## Short Stories (Grades 9th & 10th)

**First Place** . . . . . The Little Flame  
Kimberly Whitton, 9th Grade  
Cascade Christian, Puyallup

**Second Place** . . . . . I Mourn For the Coyote  
Stephanie Furner, 10th Grade  
Home school, Sumner

**Third Place** . . . . . Black and White  
Paul Hanton, 10th Grade  
Covenant High School, Tacoma

## Short Stories (Grades 11th & 12th)

**First Place** . . . . . The Next Plateau  
Lucas Howell, 12th Grade  
Lakes High School, Lakewood

**Second Place** . . . . . Horsetale  
Ian Beck, 11th Grade  
Sumner High School, Sumner

**Third Place** . . . . . Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young  
Karin Pearson, 11th Grade  
Gig Harbor High School, Gig Harbor

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**POETRY**

**7th & 8th Grade**

## Winter's Beginning

Fall starts to smother  
life as animals die or  
burrow deep outside.

The branches are bare  
frost freezes the blades of grass  
the sun goes hiding.

Swift clouds barrel in  
dark, fluffy, huge, and heavy.  
They burst open: snow!

Snow floats to the ground  
sticking to earth like velcro.  
Winter has begun.

---

**Tawni Holt- 1st Place**

*7-8th Grade, Gault Middle School*

## **Losing Color**

I've forgotten what it's like in the backyard  
beneath pink umbrellas to shield the rain, and  
could you remind me what the kitchen smelled like  
when we baked red-and-white candy cane cookies  
for Christmas, together forever?  
What happened to Froot Loop necklaces,  
strung side-by-side on dental floss for the car rides,  
with sing-along song tapes to last through the wash:  
monstrous green mops, trashing against windows,  
when safety was rest-assured because you were driving?  
They never give me the children's menu anymore;  
I've been accepted into a city, clothed in white, beige, black,  
where I can only gaze into fuzzy frames  
because coffee has finally grown on me.

---

***Jennifer Wong- 2nd Place***

*7-8th Grade, Annie Wright*

## Dancing of the Waves

Ocean waves against the shore,  
    ever coming, always more.  
Up they rise from in the deep,  
    wakened from a fitful sleep.  
    Up and out, around they curl,  
        seeking, seaweed, oysters, pearls.  
        Running races, climbing high,  
            reaching up to touch the sky.  
        Leaving treasures on the sand,  
            sliding back away from land.  
    Floating further from the beach,  
    heading deep far out of reach.  
    Ocean waves against the shore,  
        ever coming, going, more...and more...and more.

---

***Emily K. Grover- 3rd Place***

*7-8th Grade, Sumner Junior High*



OUR OWN  
WORDS

**POETRY**

**9th & 10th Grade**

## Black Roses

Black roses on the table, in a cracked glass vase,  
She dresses in the other room, tears running down her face.

Skirt spread over her legs, ruined from the rain,  
She forgot the umbrella in her haste, all those tears from the pain.

Make up smeared below her eyes, her voice rough and hard,  
Scripted ink on parchment paper, the letters wet and marred.

Dirty pools in the grass, mud beneath her feet,  
Preacher's hands on Bible pages, his gray hair combed and neat.

No others hear his voice; no others watch her cry,  
The roses on the casket shake as the wind blows by.

Ashes to ashes, dust to dust, her hands fly to her face,  
His body to the earth, she will never return to this place.

---

**Anna McCallon- 1st Place**  
*9-10th Grade, Home school*

## **Battle with Death**

You lay your body down, onto the silent ice-cold platform.

You feel the shock sliding slowly,  
from your head to your forearm.

You press your cherry lips together, in hopes you won't be scared.

You clench your fists, and close your eyes,  
and pray to God that you won't cry.

He's knocking on the door now, you hear him coming through.

The sounds begin and Death comes in, to tell you what to do.

You want to win this battle; you want to win this fight.

Suddenly, the sounds stop ringing,  
and from the top you see the light.

The doctor calls your name to tell you "You're all done."

He slides you out, and takes your hand,  
and says, "Now wasn't that fun?"

---

***Jessica Entz- 2nd Place***

*9-10th Grade, White River High School*

## **Funny Farm**

Stupidity is in my brain  
Dumbness on my tongue  
Crazy thoughts embody me  
Destined for the funny farm

Surrounded by geniuses, enclosed by smarty pants  
Around me are philosophers and thinkers  
I'm destined for the nut house

Deep thoughts encircle my head like Saturn's rings  
Though none get into my thick skull  
I try to join in, but they put me down  
Destined for the looney bin

Left out, confused  
Give me my padded walls and straight jacket  
I'm destined for the funny farm

---

**Rachel Zeller- 3rd Place**  
*9-10th Grade, Home school*



OUR OWN  
WORDS

**POETRY**

**11th & 12th Grade**

## A Lie for Mark Rothko

weep into a lake of velvety blue

*Untitled (Blue, Green, and Brown), 1952*

warm on magenta sand

the color my cheeks turn in the sun

*Untitled, 1953*

feed me an orange

a plum

*from White Center, 1950*

and i will believe you when you say,

“silence is so accurate.”

---

**Rachel Smith- 1st Place**

11-12th Grade, Gig Harbor High School

## Sunset's Garment

I never mentioned how often I reflect upon that sunset.  
With an hour to kill,  
we perched on knotted driftwood as toes taunted the tide's quest-  
ing tentacles while  
cars sped behind on the emaciated strip of paved highway and  
sound. Hemmed with stoplights and embossed bay,  
we sewed silence.  
Kimonos of nori and sea thread dripped from our fingers,  
laced with wordless inquiry as we cast it to  
the bloodied offering.  
Tension needled the fingerlength between briny palms—  
the brimming void. Growing crab claws, the surf nibbled our  
minutes until we  
overturned our familiarity and abandoned the land bridge  
somewhere between Wauna and Purdy,  
nameless  
except for you and me.

---

***Emily Larsen- 2nd Place***

*11-12th Grade, Gig Harbor High School*

## Absence

I tap my pencil...

waiting, waiting, waiting.

My teacher is late, my mind abating;  
oozing, shapeless, numbing gray,  
unadulterated talent withering away.

Eager to learn, perceptive, shrewd.

Thought and creativity, naked, crude.

There is no teacher.

No one weathered with ideas to share,  
but why a teacher when a student is there,  
who is cast aside to travel alone,  
wandering aimlessly in a great black unknown.

The success, the debacle, the irony.

Nothing is innovative, simple larceny.

---

**Ashley Rayes- 3rd Place**

*11-12th Grade, Gig Harbor High School*

A stylized, high-contrast black and white graphic of a human face profile, facing left. The face is composed of solid black shapes. The eye is a white almond shape with a black pupil. The nose is a simple black circle. The mouth is a large white shape that tapers to a point on the right, containing the text "OUR OWN WORDS" in a bold, black, sans-serif font. The entire graphic is set against a white background with some light gray rectangular areas at the top and bottom, suggesting a page layout.

OUR OWN  
WORDS

**SHORT STORIES**

**7th & 8th Grade**

## Kitten Wings

I guess it just isn't fair to Little Gray Fur that he doesn't have wings. You know you're a real kitten when you can launch yourself into the air *and not land*. You always knew we cats were a-searching for something, now you know what. It takes tough training to be a good cat. It takes good breeding to be a good kitten.

I wasn't just lucky to find them. It took days, weeks at least, but I did it. It's mighty hard to find a pixie village, unless you're a little half bit fey, but cats have been searching for as long as we were feline. I suppose you're confused now, being a regular kitten like Little Gray Fur, so I'll tell it from the top.

The first thing I learned was how to get food, and the second thing I learned about was the race. Mother She-Cat went a-hunting all over the garage for us. I saw her down there, sniffing around. I was sure she'd never find me, I was hidden behind the can of nuts and bolts. Well, she might have not found me, but I jumped around a little bit and the can of bolts, myself, and my tail behind me landed with a crash on the ground.

"There, little Crémé Coat, don't you think you can fly yet," Mother She-Cat meowed.

Well, I was still dazed and mighty well fluffed up from that big noise the can caused, and I didn't understand till she explained. With the others deciding whether or not to follow, Mother She-Cat picked me up in her teeth by my loose-skin and carried me to the meadow.

"Take a look around and enjoy yourself, now, Crémé Coat, because now you're most likely to get your wings," said Mother She-Cat.

"Wings?" I said, then ran off before she could explain. I wasn't meaning to tease, I just saw a grasshopper that needed catching, and there was nobody else around for the duty.

When I came back Mother She-Cat told me about the race, "You see, Crémé Coat, humans and cats have been a part of a race for as long as we both had thought about birds. We wanted to fly, or more specifically, we wanted wings. At first to catch birds, but then it was just because of the thrill. Humans thought of birds, but kittens started thinking of butterflies."

That's all I had patience for before I went to investigate a butterfly of my own, one which needed to be caught.

Then Mother She-Cat had the notion to wash all the nice dirt I had gathered during the day from my fur, and she told me that as soon

as I went to explore, I must try to find the pixies to get wings.

Pixies love flight, having it themselves, but they also like to share it, for a price. The price is catching them, as far as I know. The birds caught them, as did the bugs and the mice, so now we have winged bugs and bats. There are those who try to steal flight from the pixies, and they just get a gliding ability instead. A snake did once, and so did a squirrel. It's when the pixies *give* you flight that you get *wings*.

I was a little surprised to discover my duty of getting wings was more important than catching grasshoppers or keeping yarn in check. Previously I had thought those were the most important duties there were, that and eluding dogs.

So I set out in the bright, warm meadow towards the old forest, because if there's any place where one will find pixies it was the old forest. So many places to hide, so many places to creep. Where would a pixie be? I looked under rocks, behind tree stumps, and in bramble bushes. In the bushes I caught Little Yellowfeather by his tail.

"Do you know where the pixies are?" I asked.

Little Yellowfeather sang:

"The grasshopper hops like a little wee feather-kin,  
All in the buttercups,  
Up-a-jump and down again."

That was no use to me, so I played with the bird a little bit till he flew away. What other flight-given animal might know? The bees might. I ran through the clover till I found Blackwing Bumble, humming over the purple blossoms.

"Do you know where the pixies are?" I asked.

Blackwing Bumble buzzed:

"Honey-dew and buttercups,  
Toadstools in the briar,  
A snakedoctor's wing,  
Not as fine as a chuckle-flyer."

Perplexed, but still hopeful I went to find a bat. I climbed a tree and found Nightmouse.

"Do you know where the pixies are?" I asked.

"There by the marsh fire,  
There and gone again,

Dare ye be their denizen?" Well, that was all confusing in its own right, and still I hadn't a clue where to find the pixies. I went to climb down the tree, but when I saw how far up I was, the tree became suddenly so much more comfortable and I just decided to stay.

That's when a tree frog climbed down and looked me straight in the eye with his large, round yellow eyes and croaked:

"Kitten wants to know,  
Or kitten wants to play?  
If kitten wants to find,  
Then come along this way."

So I followed the tree frog. He hopped slowly, and I often was tempted to pounce and eat him after a little bit of play, but I didn't. I even resisted chasing my tail when it snuck up on my nose, though it did tickle so.

The tree frog led me down to a small patch of pearly white mushrooms, and squatting under the largest was a large, black turtle. He looked at me so fiercely I wanted to run away, but I didn't.

"You want to find the pixies?" he slowly asked.

"How could you know? Had you met them, you'd be a flyer," I said, "Did you see the pixies?"

"Tell me, Crémé Coat, what would I do with a pair of sparrow wings on this old, heavy shell?" asked the turtle, "Remember what the flyers told you. Follow them, and there you will find the pixies," explained the turtle.

Rhymes remain good in one's head, and I followed their directions. I prowled through a patch of buttercups till I saw a grasshopper that needed chasing. I came to a field of toadstools growing in the briar, all in a circle around a small marsh. Dragonflies flitted everywhere, and one gleamed like a flame. I chased it, and it was fast, till I stopped for I felt in my whiskers I was in a palace.

I heard laughter, and a circle of light flew about my head, teasing so dreadfully I mewed for them to stop. They pulled my tail and tickled my ears, they giggled and danced, and made me feel so very shy. In fact, they teased so much I got up and flew away with my new wings, but I didn't forget to stop and thank them. Won't Mother She-Cat be so proud, and Little Gray Fur so jealous...

---

**Pearl Fritz- 1st Place**

*7-8th Grade, Stewart Middle School*

## Fortune Girl

Her real name was Dorothy Hui, but everyone called her a fortune girl. In fact, there weren't many people who knew her as Dorothy. She moved here last month from somewhere in China and now the whole school knew her. Was she extremely pretty? No way. Brain? Not exactly. Why? I'll explain it to you everything from the beginning.

\*\*\*\*\*

Have you ever seen a fortune cookie? It looks like a beautifully carved brown shell. It tastes just like an ordinary cookie, but people love it! The fun comes from inside. When you crack the cookie in half, you will see a white paper. It's called a fortune paper on which a statement is written. Most of them give you a hope. Otherwise, some advice or prediction. Sometimes it fits with your situation exactly and surprises you. Well, as you may know, misfortune is inevitably replaced by blessing.

Fortune. That explained everything about her. Huh? You would say. Did she bring a fortune? In a way, she did. She delivered the fortune papers from her yellow purse. She didn't just give out though. Only on "special" occasions. You know, birthdays, biggest days, tryouts, award days, etc. Whenever someone had an event of any kind, she was there. It looked like she knew every social business of each student.

She always had a smile on her face, communicating with her philosophical no-grammar English. "Everything from the cosmos to the school is a cyclic process between good and bad. No reason to be depressed. You'll live only once, so try to be happy." When somebody asked her about always being happy, she replied with crescent eyes.

Where did she get all those fortune papers? Apparently, her parents were running a Chinese restaurant called Ching Tao. Just like any other restaurants, fortune cookies were served as dessert. She knew that almost every people just threw the papers away after glimpsing them. This was how Ching Tao had a small box, fortune collector, on each table. On the box, there was a short explanation:

"In case you don't keep fortune papers,  
Please recycle and share your fortunes with others."

With the Fortune Collectors' help, she could keep hundreds of fortunes.

\*\*\*\*\*

The whole school liked her except me. I don't know why, but I had a tendency to dislike students in ESL. The fortune girl was no exception. The day she came, she became my eyesore. The way she strolled down in a hall, saying 'hi' to everyone, the way she smiled, and the way she got whole attentions.

That was it. I didn't want the school to move their attentions to the fortune girl from me. Before she came, it was me who got all those 'hi'. The other students envied me because of my perfect report cards, popularity, and the musical talent of violin. My dad was a renowned doctor, and my mom was on the school's executive board. Further, I had a thoughtful older brother, Zach, who understood my music as well as my feelings. I had everything anyone wished to have in one's life.

It was the day when Todd, my boyfriend, became the captain of our football team. Todd and I were eating lunch when the fortune girl came up to us.

"Hey, Todd," the fortune girl said, with her strong Chinese accent. Todd looked at her with the expression of do-I-know-you. She gave Todd a fortune paper, neatly folded and said,

"Congratulations for being the captain." Without giving Todd a chance to say anything, she left. The fortune paper read, "You'll have the luck of victory with you."

"Julie, do you know her? She is so nice." Obviously, Todd liked getting a fortune from her. My head started screaming: "What is she doing flirting with my boyfriend? I'm going to do anything to make her life miserable!" Instead of saying these, I calmed myself down and said, "Oh, Todd, you know how famous you are. Even one of those nerds wants to be acquainted with you!"

From then, I did everything I could to make the fortune girl isolated. I called her names, and spread rumors about her. I even put her as my target whenever we were playing a dodge ball.

What made me mad was that she seemed completely oblivious about my criticism behind her. Whatever I did, she kept going on with her life. She still gave out fortunes, still greeted people by saying "hi." I had to admit that she was unique and had an attitude that people liked. Instead, it was I who lost friends from time

to time. The worst thing was that I denied how lonely I became.

April 3rd. I had been practicing really hard for Washington State Young Violinist Competition which was only 2 days away. I had a feeling that something was wrong. Although I got all of my techniques and dynamics right, something was missing in my music. I just couldn't figure out what it was.

Just then, Zach poked his head through the door. "Everything all right?" He must have noticed something unusual. I complained about my problems with music. He was silent for a while, and then said, "When I listen to your music, it gives me feelings of desperation instead of happiness. I mean, the feelings on music should be natural, rather than striving. I think everything is up to how you feel. Trying to have happy thoughts. It might help."

After he left, I tried to elicit happy thoughts. Times when I became the leader of cheerleader squad, when I started going out with Todd... These didn't seem to help. Even worse, as I thought of my friends, I couldn't help but realizing my loneliness. One part of me was saying that I was wrong, trying to exclude the fortune girl from my friends. The other part, however, dominated me, shouting that I had done nothing wrong. Pondering over my thoughts, I fell asleep.

\*\*\*\*\*

In the school I barely talked to anyone. If it had been the old days, my teacher would've warned me because of my chattering. I was so alone that I actually thought of apologizing to the fortune girl, but I still had my self-esteem left, deep in my heart.

As I rushed to the school bus after class, someone called me. It was the fortune girl. Contrary to my expectation, she gave me a neatly folded paper. "Good luck tomorrow," she said and left, not giving me a chance to say anything. On the fortune paper, it said, "The only way to succeed is to be self-confident."

As I kept reading my fortune, my anger and hatred were dissolving. A little paper changed my feelings and attitude toward the fortune girl. Tonight, I would call her. I knew this was the only way to get me out from the cage that locked me in with my arrogance. I also knew that I could do well on the competition with the fortune girl's luck.

---

**Tami Kim- 2nd Place**

*7-8th Grade, Hudtloff Middle School*

## The Family Tree

My mama was always an avid gardener. In Ireland, she had a spot of land bursting with flowers, and our two big Maple trees forever seemed to have a tree house in the making by my brothers and their friends. To me, my four brothers seemed like the worst in the world, and being the youngest and the only girl made me the target of all their hair pulling and teasing.

Daddy was a potato farmer, just like everyone else where we lived. He loved the land, and his job suited him. We were never rich what with seven mouths to feed and clothe, but we were never wanting as children.

Life was great. My brothers were all expected to help Daddy in the fields, and I helped Mama keep our house clean, and the never-ending holes in my brothers' shirts mended, but we always found time for play. We were all brown by the summer's end. Even me, because I would take my tea parties outside, under the big Maple's waving leaves.

Everything was wonderful until the summer I turned nine. That was the summer the potato plants were skinny and sickly, and the potatoes rotted underground. That autumn we had barely any potatoes to sell and even less to store away for the winter. We had practically no food, and we only survived through Mama mending clothes for a little bit of pay. By next spring when the weather seemed as unpromising as last year, my daddy decided we were to sail to America where we could have a better life.

We were all sad about leaving our home, and we each cried a fair bit. Mama especially was going to miss her garden. She packed some seeds from our old garden to plant in the new one in America. She even brought over a little bag of seeds from our Maple trees.

I didn't like sailing over. We were packed family to family, with only stale air to breath below deck. We had to listen to babies crying and people getting sick. Of course disease ran rampant. It was a miracle we all made it over alive.

We settled in northern Pennsylvania. Papa bought some land, cleared it and started a new farm. We also had to build a new house, so it wasn't until next spring that Mama could start her garden. It flourished under her loving care, and once again we had beautiful flowers from the old country, plus a few from the new.

Mama was getting homesick for the trees back in Ireland, so along with her flowers she planted every single seed that we had gotten from the Maples. Strangely enough, only one came up. It grew and grew, and we were soon able to climb its towering branches, and have tea parties under the cool leaves during the hot part of the day.

My brothers and I grew up and moved away to different parts of the country. We'd all go back to visit once a year, and our children would have picnics under its branches.

That tree still stands.

---

**Jenny Ruthven- 3rd Place**

*7-8th Grade, Mason Middle School*





OUR OWN  
WORDS

**SHORT STORIES**

**9th & 10th Grade**

## The Little Flame

WOW! Does it feel great to be alive? I feel like I'm on fire! Oh, maybe that's because I am. I don't know, I just know I'm living!

Um, what do I do now? Hmm, when most things come to life, they begin to grow; maybe that's what I need to do. I am kind of small. I'm only burning on this little twig; maybe if I jump onto that bush, I'll grow a bit. That's it! Who's brilliant now? Oh yeah, talk about being big! Someone stop me now.

Hold on a second. What's that? A tree? Well, I know it's a tree; I want to know why it's bigger than me. I'll teach that stupid oak for being so impertinent. I'll just jump on it. I made short work of this bush, didn't I? Ha! Good-bye Mr. Tree!

Hey, there's another tree...well, not anymore! Ha, ha, ha! This is fun! I could make up a song about it:

*Here I go from tree to tree,  
Jump, jump, jump,  
Now I wave good bye, as each tree  
Burns, burns, burns,  
Soon I will be, as big as the  
Sky, sky, sky,  
And no forest will ever dare to stand in my way,  
Yeah, yeah, yeah!*

That's what I call a song! And I mean every word too. I'm going to burn down every tree in this forest, and in the next, and every tree in the world, and...what's that! There's a pool of blue goop in my way. Hey, blue thingy, get out of my way. Oh, you won't, huh, well get ready to deal with the awesome powers of fire. Here's your last chance, no, ignoring me huh? Well not for long, I'm jumping, and you'll be sorry! Three, two, one, juuuuum...ahhhhhhhhhhh! Help, help, somebody, heeeelp!

---

**Kimberly Whitton- 1st Place**

9-10th Grade, Cascade Christian

## I Mourn for the Coyote

Far off in the woods of western Washington, a girl danced with her father. The father chased the girl as she twirled and leaped around the fire. The girl looked back and dashed toward her mother.

The father laughed. "Blossom," he called. "My rose, come here and give your daddy a kiss." He knelt down. The little girl timidly crawled out from behind a stump that her mother had been sitting on. She put on a smile and jogged to where her father kneeled. She climbed up a small pile of lumber, which sat beside her father, leaned over, and tenderly kissed him on the forehead.

The father smiled. He took off his headband, which was decorated with fangs and feathers, and placed it onto Blossom's head. The five-year-old girl found it difficult to keep such a large head-dress on her head, so she let it fall and it served as a necklace. The father gently lifted Blossom and placed her onto his back with her arms around his neck. He slowly stood up and started to dance around the fire.

Today was Blossom's fifth birthday, and she would never forget it...

Blossom slammed her newspaper noisily onto the coffee table beside her. "Can you believe it Hunter?" she yelled to a sleeping cougar. "Even after that show we gave them, those rangers are still letting the hunters through."

Hunter, a healthy young cougar, lazily stared at Blossom over his shoulder. He was once rescued from poachers, who were mainly after him for his skin. He now lived a rather pampered life with Blossom, and was happy – that was until she discovered the daily paper.

Blossom's father, was an Indian chief to the Olean tribe (Olea was believed to be the Gods' name for moon); he believed his guardian angel was a coyote. Blossom heard that her father was ill, and she rushed home to see what was wrong. Her father was lying on a bed of straw; she knelt by his side, and pushed his hair away from his face.

"Blossom," the Indian whispered, as he reached for his daughter's hand, "there is nothing you have done wrong, and there is

nothing you can do for me now. I mourn for the coyote.

The coyote is weak, soon his spirit will be joining the moon, and I will be going with him. Don't cry for me Blossom, don't cry for me. He is waiting and I must go."

"Father!" Blossom cried, now grasping her father's hand in both of hers. "You can't leave me now Father! There is still hope for you, I am giving a talk tonight Father, a talk that will save the coyote." The Indian chief opened his eyes slightly, and with a faint smile he whispered, "Come closer to me darling, I'm afraid my voice is not as it once was. Send me a doctor and I will wait, but I cannot promise you happiness. Good luck my sweet daughter, and may the spirits of the moon be on your side."

Blossom kissed her father's hand and departed from his sanctuary. She sighed and knelt in front of Hunter. "It's all up to me now Hunter." She cried. She wrapped her arms around the cougar and rubbed her cheek against his. "Come on Hunter its time to go." Grasping Hunter's chain in one hand, and her coat in the other, Blossom started her long walk home. Blossom was reminded of the death of her mother, and she wept. When she was approaching her driveway she saw a familiar car pull in. Blossom released Hunter and ran to the car. "Daniel!" Blossom was surprised. She leaned through an opened car window to check the time. "What are you doing here, it's early."

Daniel was a friend of Blossom's, and he too was going to give a talk. "Hello," Daniel said as he slammed the door of his car. "I decided to take a sneak peak at how the conference was coming on--"

"And?" Blossom interrupted.

"Don't rush me! Well, I went in the back way, there was no one there. When I finally got to the door, I saw the podium. It was packed with microphones. Channel two was setting up their camera. A few of the guests were there, setting up decorations or something, I don't know. I looked at their faces, and I tell you, no one looked near as anxious as I was."

"That's enough for me." Blossom laughed. "I better get dressed, and find Hunter. I guess I should lock him up. I'll be back, really channel two was there?"

"Yeah," Daniel nodded. "Pretty nice."

Blossom jogged up the stairs of her porch, and nearly fell over Hunter. He was looking pathetically up at her. Before she could say anything though, he went galloping playfully toward Daniel. Blossom shrugged and let herself into the house.

As she dressed, Blossom recited her talk aloud. She picked up her coat, and looked through the window to check the weather. She grabbed her umbrella and sprinted out the front door.

"Looks like rain!" Blossom shouted.

"Hey," Daniel answered. "I got Hunter, he's in the back. Poor devil."

Blossom hopped into the car, and closed her window. Daniel and Blossom both knew this was going to be hard and wished each other luck.

Daniel was the first up. As he spoke Blossom nervously looked around. She felt as if it had only been one minute by the time Daniel was done. Blossom listened to the conductor as he announced her arrival. Blossom stood up and walked slowly to the podium. When she spoke she was very straightforward. "The coyote is a very important carnivore, and like the wolf, we have treated them most bitterly and unmercifully. Not many of us know of the importance, which the coyote holds, and our judgment is clouded over by myths and legends.

"People have claimed that they have seen coyotes pestering and eating their chickens. The fact of the matter is, that the animal that deserves the blame is a mix breed, half-wolf half-coyote.

"Coyotes are not interested in farm animals. In fact, coyotes, like wolves, mainly feed on mice. Through the coyote, we can reduce three things; crop damage, some forms of food poisoning, and the surplus population of a much, excuse the expression, hated animal. "I am sorry to say, however, coyotes are endangered. We got them into this trouble, now they need our help. We must bring them out. We must give them their freedom back, give them their valleys back."

Blossom looked at the audience, they were not impressed. She continued, "Coyotes have adapted very well in their position. Have we ever asked ourselves why? Mother earth is telling us something, and like the ignorant men we are, we turn our backs on her."

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**Stephanie Furner- 2nd Place**

*9-10th Grade, Home school*

## Black and White

Marcus: My name is Marcus. I'm a junior and I'm 17 years old. I'm 6'6" and weigh 240 lbs. I live in a foster home because my parents got into drug problems. I am one of the few people my age that live here. They say that after you reach a certain age people won't adopt you. That's okay. I don't mind living here but a nicer place would be great. There was one thing in my life that was always a plus. Basketball. How I love basketball.

James: My name is James. I'm a junior and I'm 17 years old. I'm 6'4" and weigh 220 lbs. I live with my parents in an apartment a block away from the biggest high school in Harlem. Tomorrow I will be starting school there but I don't want to because I am afraid of the racism I might receive. There are a few white people that go there but they are just like the black people. You're probably wondering how I got here. Well, it's a sad story but in order to understand my life you have to hear it.

It all started a couple months ago, right after school ended and everyone was starting summer break. At the time I was going to a private school. One of the best in the country. People who went there could go to any college they wanted to, including Harvard. All you needed to be was really rich. My dad was the CEO of an important import company and my mom was a doctor. One day my dad put all his money into the stock market and lost it all because the company collapsed. We had to sell everything and were left with clothes, one car, and each other. The only place we could afford to live was in Harlem. When we first moved to Harlem I was scared and wouldn't even go outside because of the drive-bys and gang fights, but after a while I was inured to it all and quickly learned about what to do and what not to do. Living there was total hell but there was one thing that kept me going. Basketball. How I love basketball.

Marcus: I don't ever remember starting basketball. It's just always been there. There are a couple basketball courts here at the foster home and that's all anyone ever does here. I play all day and all night, 24/7, perfecting my game so when the time comes to play in the NBA I'll be ready. That's my dream in life. To one day play in the NBA. I don't want to sound like I'm bragging but everyone says that I'm the best that

there is (for my age). I don't know how I got so good. People say that great players are made not born. I disagree with those people. You do need to practice but you also need that indescribable basketball feeling. I've never had any of those fancy schmancy basketball shoes. I always wore hand-me-downs. I believe that true game comes from the heart, not the shoes. I also go watch the great street ballers play. Street ballers are the really good pick-up-game basketball players. I go and watch them play every night at the park by the school. That's where all the good players play. You can learn a lot from watching the great players play.

James: I started basketball when I was five and I have been hooked ever since. Because I was rich my parents were able to make sure I was on the best team and had the best shoes. I even had lessons on how to shoot and on how to dribble. I played basketball day and night, 24/7. People say that I'm one of the best players (for my age). My goal in life is to play in the NBA and for that I'll need to practice hard. People say that great players are made not born. I agree with those people and because of my hard work my goal is becoming a reality. Since we've moved into the apartments I've played so much basketball here, that one time I was sick of it. I play with the other kids that live in the apartments. Most are pretty good but they all agree that I am the best. I always go watch the pick-up-games at the park near the school. You can learn a lot from watching them play.

Marcus: I hate going to school and I only go to play basketball. I have to go to high school and get passing grades if I ever want to play in the NBA. This year our team has a good shot at winning state. We have a strong team this year and some people that live in the apartments say that there is a really good white player that lives there. I look forward to being on the same team as him.

James: The school that I will have to go to supposedly has a really good team. They say that there is a really good player there. I look forward to being on the same team as him. This year I expect to get good grades because this is no private school. When I went to private school I got a 3.7 but this year I expect to get a 4.0.

Marcus: Today is the first day of school and basketball season is starting soon. I saw that white kid who is supposed to be good, but I have my doubts.

James: Today is the first day of school and it is way different from private school. The lunches are terrible, the people here are rude, I am one of the only white people here, and people stare at me like I am from another planet. It's cool though. All I need to do is make the basketball team.

Marcus: At tryouts today I saw that white kid. He's pretty good and with him on our team we should be the favorites to win state. He's almost as good as me.

James: Today at tryouts I saw that really good black kid. We had better win state this year because our team is good. That black kid is as almost as good as me.

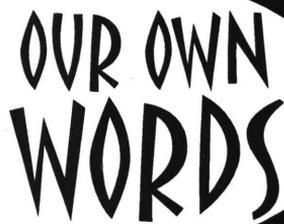
Marcus: I talked to that white kid today and found out that his name is James. He seems like a pretty cool guy. Tomorrow I will ask him if he wants to go shoot some hoops.

James: I talked to that black kid today and found out that his name is Marcus. He seems like a pretty cool guy. Tomorrow I will ask him if he wants to go shoot some hoops.

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**Paul Hanton- 3rd Place**

*9-10th Grade, Covenant High School*

A stylized, high-contrast black and white graphic of a human profile facing left. The face is composed of solid black shapes: a vertical rectangle for the head, a circle for the eye, a smaller circle for the nose, and a large, open, white shape for the mouth. The words "OUR OWN WORDS" are written in a bold, black, hand-drawn font within the mouth. The graphic is set against a white background with two light gray rectangular areas, one above and one below the main black shape, suggesting a page being torn out of a book.

OUR OWN  
WORDS

**SHORT STORIES**  
**11th & 12th Grade**

## The Next Plateau

### *To Kurt Cobain*

From a distance she looked like a child. Skipping joy in the gutter beside the curb. The water splashed and flew as she danced beneath her rain soaked layers of flannel and denim. The men didn't understand. The rhythm of clattering trash cans and honking horns was lost on them. They gave scornful looks of disapproval as they scurried along the sidewalk, covering their heads with briefcases. She would dance alone under the dark sky. Often, cold and hungry.

Soon the summer came, and the rains ended. But the men still had eyes as dark as the clouds had once been. When the streets dried, she moved to the sidewalk and continued her trek across the city. Now she traveled among the working men. Residents cringed when they saw her coming near, and shop-keeps complained that she drove away business. People became uneasy, and many questions were raised – “What will we do with her? Are there more?” – but nobody had an answer. “She will corrupt our children,” some said. “It’s not natural to be happy with so little.” Others feared she was a fascist infiltrator, and thought she must be destroyed immediately.

The police were called to talk to her, but she had broken no law. They called the homeless shelter, but she had never asked for a bed or a meal. They went as far as to call the mental hospital outside of town. The operator only laughed a trite laugh and said he was sorry but had bigger problems of his own. The days passed slowly, and rain clouds began to form on the horizon.

When the rain came again, she moved back to the gutter. She splashed violently at the men and taunted passing cars. She was still a nuisance, but people ignored her when business picked back up. Nobody even noticed her until the rain began to fade.

Meetings were held and tempers flared over a solution. She became nightly news, and the focal point of the local elections. Everyone had a plan, but it seemed that no one could agree on a single course of action. A mediator was flown in from some port town back East. He convinced the townsfolk that any action would be better than none.

Finally, a decision was made, and the people bided their time. When the first day of spring arrived, she was met by the city

S.W.A.T. team and the National Guard. They corralled her and forced her in the general direction of the train station. She seemed not to even notice their presence. She did not fight, or even speak to them as she skipped happily along to the station. Her fare was paid from the city's general fund; San Francisco was chosen as the final destination. They wondered what would become of the City by the Bay when she arrived, but rejoiced in the fact that she was leaving them.

Everyone in town came to see the train pull away from the station. With a sharp blow of the whistle, the engine lurched forward and she was headed for the outskirts of town. A cheer went up, and a parade was held in honor of her going. The people celebrated their victory. The effort which had so strongly bound them together was finally over. The clouds that summer were as dark as the eyes of the men, and as the rainy days went on, dissent began to grow within the people. Many doubted that they had done the right thing. No one could remember why they had joined in the mob. They wanted her back now. They were ready to listen. They wanted to understand.

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**Lucas Howell- 1st Place**

*11-12th Grade, Lakes High School*

## Horsetale

The horsetail ferns appeared overnight, sprouting out of the ground like the decaying hands of the undead in a horror flick. They stretched from one side of the garden to the other, waving with insidious innocence in the breeze; they were the cockroaches of the plant kingdom.

That morning my mother sighted the dastardly weeds, growled like an affronted mastiff about to be freed from its chain, and donned a pair of frayed jeans, an old sweatshirt that exuded a lingering scent of decaying grass, and the gray-speckled gardening gloves with the small hole near the end of the right index finger.

Horsetail ferns can grow anywhere; I wouldn't be surprised if there are a few on the back side of the moon, grown to monstrous proportions out of sight of humankind. Above ground each plant consists of a single stem emerging from the soil with a bunch of thin, cilia-like tentacles sprouting from it. But below ground the roots start, where, according to my mother, they descend all the way down into Hell where they are nourished by the screams of the damned. Once a horsetail has sprouted somewhere, it never leaves, unless all of its root system is eradicated, a feat next to impossible and roughly equivalent, in my estimation, to uprooting a fifty-year-old oak tree with your bare hands.

The dreaded horsetail fern is my mother's nemesis, and as such follows her everywhere; when she plants flowers, horsetails follow.

So when they once again appeared in her garden she launched a quick offensive, arming herself with a kneeling pad and her Trowel of Doom on her way out the door: the nine A.M. warrior, ready for battle.

I've never been much of a garden person. I just can't grasp the appeal of mucking around in the dirt, putting a few things in then pulling a lot of things out, and repeating the whole process when all of the plants die during the winter. Flowers may be colorful, but green's a good color, too, and grass requires much less upkeep.

For my mother, however, gardening is something of a passion. Every weekend after another week of putting up with shrill off-spring at home and a filing cabinet at work in which finding anything is like diving for pearls in shark infested waters, she escapes out to her flowers. She'll get down in the dirt and coax the little flowers up and viciously uproot the weeds and otherwise have a grand old time. Until, that is, the inevitable horsetail ferns rear their mottled stalks.

On this occasion I could see her outside, kneeling on her pad and vehemently tearing horsetails out of the ground. It wasn't

really all that out of the ordinary, so I turned my attention to other matters.

I'm not really sure how long it took me to realize that this wasn't the usual brief bout of horsetail slaughter, but it was at least five hours later when I noticed that my mother was still at it. This was rather odd; normally she'd go on a brief foray against the hated plants, then cut out at the next meal or so, her need for retribution sated. But now she seemed to have developed a serious vendetta, had totally disregarded lunch, and was still hacking away with her stalwart Trowel. I could see from my vantage point at the living room window little bits and pieces of horsetail flying about, some of them making it to the waste bucket (which was now overflowing onto the grass around it), some falling short, or, in the more extreme cases, shooting off in the opposite direction. The garden was a mole hill of ditches and pits, strategically winding around the flowers and other plants; it looked something like a mine field might after a large herd of fuzzy, green bunnies had just hopped over it.

Finally, though, my mother did come back inside, dirty and scowling and covered with horsetail guts, and I figured that was that.

But I was wrong.

Two days later, the horsetails rallied together and swarmed the garden in force. For all of my mother's furious troweling the roots had still remained, and until the roots lie withered in a plastic bucket, the horsetail will continue to return, much like a vampire will if not staked properly. And believe me, horsetails don't care about garlic, so there's one thing they have up on vampires. My mother was back out in the garden weeding furiously about four seconds after she sighted the plants once more infringing upon her flowers' space, but it seemed to me that it would be wasted effort. As they say, When once the trowel fails, try you the spade. Well, perhaps they don't actually say that, but I'm sure it's something close.

I think my mother had heard that saying as well, or maybe one more strongly worded, for after fifteen minutes of chopping impotently at the horsetails, she disappeared around the house. There was the slam of a shed door, the snap of protective glasses, and my mother came back around armed with the weed whacker, gasoline fumes hovering behind.

It probably didn't do much against the horsetail problem, but it was sure fun watching my mother stand out in the garden, screaming what seemed to be, "Die, evil plants, die!" (although I am an imperfect lip reader at best), while bits and pieces of horsetail flew all around like cows will in a large twister. Amazingly enough she seemed to miss most of the flowers, a feat which I personally could never hope to duplicate. I, too, have had

the opportunity to use the weed whacker, and it has always been my experience that it is extremely reticent about only whacking weeds, that in fact it will whack just about anything nearby that is living and more than two inches off the ground. I've even had it leap towards bushes, as a red-eyed, drooling, ravenous Doberman Pinscher will toward a particularly scrumptious looking visitor's leg; the thing is practically uncontrollable. But my mother was controlling it; I guess that's what righteous anger will do for a person.

After her hour of whacking, my mother returned to the house, a satisfied smile upon her lips and dismembered horsetail in her hair.

But, as ever, the horsetail returned.

And that was when my mother discovered "Weed-B-Gone" at the local hardware store. It was advertised as a heavy-duty weed killer, although the small print warned that in concentrated form it was not selective. Apparently my mother didn't read the small print. She was by now so enraged at the horsetails that she just started slinging the stuff around the garden. I think that Weed-B-Gone must have been a close cousin of nitroglycerin; the plants literally went up in smoke.

After a surprisingly brief interval, quiet descended over the garden, and as the smoke dissipated my mother was revealed grinning like a death's head, alone upon a desolate patch of dirt that had been completely scoured of life.

So now we smile contentedly from our new cement patio at our neighbors' plight as they engage in their hopeless battles against horsetails.

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**Ian Beck- 2nd Place**

*11-12th Grade, Sumner High School*

## Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young

Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young came on the radio as Tess drove down the dark roads towards her house, wondering what her parents were going to say when she told them. She supposed that her mom would tell her that things never go as planned, but that's part of life. Her dad would probably throw a glass or two, breaking the few they had left in their cupboard.

"Rejoice, rejoice, we have no choice but to carry on..." The lyrics caught Tess as she struggled to piece together the shambles that her life had become. She was so tired of things being the same. For her entire life, her mom had been the positive, upbeat parent and her dad the angry, pessimistic parent. Both of them didn't believe in showing emotions, and got angry with her for "acting like a baby." Tess fretted over telling them the story, because she knew she could never tell it without feeling.

The night had started innocently. Tess, her boyfriend James, and four of his friends were driving out to the coast to build a bonfire and play in the ocean. The hour-long drive was fun, with talk easy and playful tension building in the air. The beach had been amazing – Tess left the group behind and danced in the wind, salt air stinging her cheeks and the moon blazing down on her like a spotlight.

"The questions of a thousand dreams/What you do and what you see..."

The song played quietly on the radio as Tess recalled how one of James's friends had given her a beer and walked with her out into the surf. He's sweet, Tess recalled thinking, and felt at ease with this guy she had never met before. The ease ended though, when Tess woke up, the 5 guys standing around her laughing and joking. She had fallen asleep? Why was she lying on the ground – last she remembered she had been playing in the warm ocean waves. She sat up and felt a stabbing pain in her sides; it was so intense that she leaned over and threw up several times in the damp sand. James came over and squatted down by her, smiling and inviting her to come join them. She passed though, and reached over to cover herself with one of the guy's jackets. Out of the pocket fell a bottle of pills – unmarked – almost empty. Tess panicked, staggered off the blanket and demanded to know what had happened to her. James just smiled dumbly and the other guys looked off at the moon. It only took a few minutes for Tess to

figure out the truth – date rape. Retreating into a world of pain and emotional turmoil, she didn't talk for the entire ride home. When the group reached the gas station where Tess had parked, James tried to reach out and hold her. She ripped her arms from his grasp and stumbled over to her car. That was the easy part. Guns N' Roses was on the radio now.

"I know it's hard to keep an open heart/When even friends seem out to harm you..."

Tears slipped down Tess's cheeks, and she felt her will falling with those tears. She pulled into her driveway and saw her mom's smiling face in the window. She turned off the car and sat there for a few minutes until she could see worry set in her mom's eyes; it was only then that she pushed open the door and stepped into the damp grass next to the driveway. Pain accompanied her with every step as she slowly made her way towards the house. Her mom greeted her at the door, asking questions about the evening and how it had gone. Tess sat down on the couch next to her dad and gave him a weak smile. Her voice cracked as she told her parents the story; she felt her dad tense up next to her, and saw her mom's cheerful mask shatter. Her dad got off the couch, stalked angrily into the kitchen and grabbed a glass out of the cupboard. The pieces went everywhere as the cup hit the wall and shattered. Tess's mom got up and grabbed the dustpan, sweeping up the mess. A few moments later, the backdoor closed as Tess's parents went outside to the deck.

Tess decided to leave them a note before she went upstairs to bed. She scribbled on a piece of paper and placed it on their bed. "Mom and Dad – I'm really sorry that I screwed up so bad. I didn't mean to and I really trusted James. You guys did too, I'm sorry...but I don't know how to fix this."

Around 3 A.M., Tess felt herself being prodded awake. Her mom stood over her, looking bleak as tears slid down her cheeks. Her dad stood in the background, pretending not to be too involved in what was going on. Tess's mom grabbed her shoulders and pulled her out of the bed. They took her down to the car and buckled her in.

The radio came on; Wilson Phillips was on now. "No one can change your life except for you/ Don't ever let anyone step all over you/ Just open your heart and your mind/ Is it really fair to feel this way inside?"

The car was silent for the entire drive and Tess wondered where they were going. It wasn't long before they reached the Emergency Room though, and a nurse came out to greet them. Tess's parents explained the entire situation, and Tess was taken into an exam room. She explained what was going to happen but Tess didn't really care; she just wanted to curl up in her bed and forget the world. The whole process only took a half-hour and then the nurse asked Tess if she wanted to press charges. Tess was speechless; she had loved James, but now she couldn't have hated him any more. She nodded and a cop came in to take her statement.

At home the next morning, Tess sat at the breakfast table and poked at her toast. Everything looked disgusting and she thought about going back to bed. Before she could leave the kitchen though, her mom came in and sat next to her. She smiled and gave Tess a pat on the back. Everything will be ok, she said, sometimes life gives you things that you don't plan for. Tess smiled weakly. But then her mom started talking about "horrible James" and what an awful person he was – her anger was so great that Tess almost laughed in surprise. A few moments later, her dad came in and sat next to her. He looked her in the eyes and she could see tears. He smiled at her and told her that everything would be all right, because he would always be there for her. Tess didn't really know what to say – everything was changing so quickly.

On the radio on the way to the store that afternoon, Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young came on again.

"Rejoice, rejoice, we have no choice but to carry on..." Tess sighed.

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