

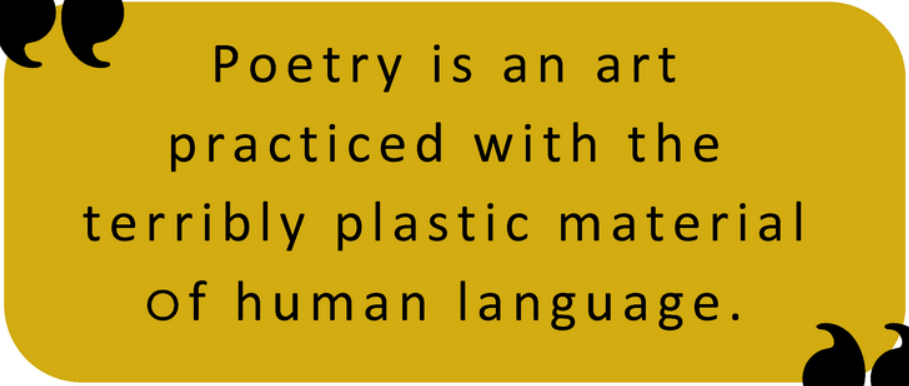


35th Annual  
Carl Sandburg College  
Poetry Competition

Fall 2023



Don't  
in certain  
Pellucos  
Francis Booth  
D. Harmon  
Boys



Poetry is an art  
practiced with the  
terribly plastic material  
of human language.

*Carl Sandburg*

*38 Definitions of Poetry*

Good Morning America (1928)

# The 35<sup>th</sup> Annual Carl Sandburg College Poetry Competition

Our college's namesake, Pulitzer Prize-winning poet and Galesburg native Carl Sandburg, wrote that "Poetry is an art practiced with the terribly plastic material of human language."

Human language. At a time when advancements in artificial intelligence are making it increasingly possible to let computer programs do the writing for us, we still believe in the power and the importance of human language. In all of its forms, poetry uses the medium of language, "terribly plastic material" that it is, to convey a snapshot, reflection or insight about what it means to be human. This is true for writers ages 5 to 105.

We're happy to host this annual contest that celebrates the very human act of writing poetry, and we're thrilled to present this year's winners.

~ Sharon Trotter-Martin & Meghan Angle  
Poetry Competition Coordinators



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# Elementary Division

## First Place

Flowers by Anna Rozny

## Second Place

The Magic of Opal by Opal Ponce-Little

## Third Place

Long Division Cinquain by James Rozny

## Honorable Mention

Love by Maria Rosa Ponce-Little

An Ode to My Cat by Grayson Hannam

## Flowers

By Anna Rozny

When I pick a flower  
My heart starts to devour  
All the bad  
Thoughts I have.  
All the things that were oh so sad  
And throw them all away  
In a box that will never see the day.  
This is all from a flower,  
So I will make a beautiful bouquet  
For I will only have good thoughts and never stray  
From the path that will make my day.

# **The Magic of Opal**

By Opal Ponce-Little

When you put it in the sunlight it glows and gleams and has all the colors.

But when you put it in the dark it still has its colors it just doesn't glow and gleam.

So, if you are Opal I say you gleam and glow like stone.

This goes for everyone but especially the Opals.

# Long Division Cinquain

By James Rozny

Long Division

Cool, fun

Stimulating, intriguing, entertaining

Feeling stressed and proud

Mathematics



# Love

by Maria Rose Ponce-Little

Love is where you love somebody  
And love is where you break someone's heart  
And where you come back together  
And so, love can bring you flowers and candies

## **An Ode to My Cat**

by Grayson Hannam

I adopted my cat in July 2020  
He is fluffy and yellow  
He really likes to love on people  
His purr is as loud as a boat  
He takes naps with me  
His fur keeps me warm  
He sleeps with me  
He is my favorite cat

# **Junior Division**

## **First Place**

The Traveling Boy by Erik Dockins

## **Second Place**

The Never Ending Staircase by Rylan Doyle

## **Third Place**

I am More Than Just Hair by Lexie Anderson

## **Honorable Mentions**

Alaska by Max J.T. Johnson

Nature by Kylie McClellan

# The Traveling Boy

By Erik Dockins

The boy, traveling all along the countryside, traveling far and wide,  
scrounging what food he could find

He'd been traveling for days, eating whatever he could find

Drinking from the streams and rivers he had found along the road

He was so lonely

But he didn't need anybody

He had his backpack and guitar with him

The boy would play his guitar every night under the beautiful stars

Gazing above as he strummed the strings to a melody in his head

Humming a soft tune as he would drift into the land of slumber

He would often travel into towns he came across

He would always talk with the locals and play music for some money

The boy never lived anywhere

He only briefly stayed

He was lonely

But had the stars and his guitar

And he quite enjoyed this life.

## The Never Ending Staircase

By Rylan Doyle

Endless staircases.  
Up, down, up, down.  
But what happens when you can't find the end?  
Learn that it's all a trick of the mind.  
Learn that it's all an illusion.  
Climbing, running, panting, but all that appears,  
is the sad sight of sad people climbing sad stairs.  
Out of breath, stuck in a trance.  
Must keep moving! Must find the end!  
Giving up, ready to quit,  
telling yourself you won't go any further,  
only to start back up again out of pure persistence.  
In the terrible illusion of the saddened mind,  
there is no end.  
Up the stairs, down the stairs.  
Absolutely exhausted, ready to look for help.  
Once help is found,  
maybe, just maybe,  
the exhaustion will end.  
The stairs will continue no longer.  
You'll finally be on the floor you needed all along.  
No more stairs,  
just a straight pathway,  
to the door of happiness.

# I am more than just hair

By Lexie Anderson

I am more than just hair,  
My roots run deeper than that,  
Like the roots of a tree,  
Let me take you all the way back.

In earlier times,  
In the warm sub-saharan parts of the motherland,  
I'm seen as a symbol of identity, of strength and of pride,  
Worn as a crown on the heads of many.

During the trade,  
While my people were being carted away,  
I was often shamed,  
Though I continue tugging, twisting, and wrapping myself in unique new ways.

During a time in chains,  
I was often braided into long and lengthy rows,  
Each unique and frizzy row,  
Weaved into charted patterns that helped guide my people to a better home.

During a time of great civil change,  
The roots of my people's pride sprang back into play,  
Cries of unity would constantly tear through the air,  
I was happy to know that our pride was still there.

As you can see I am more than just hair,  
I am creative, resilient, and proud of what I am,  
Anytime I feel less than I travel down through my roots.

Everytime I do I am pleasantly reminded that my heritage is special too,  
I am more than just hair,  
I am big, blissful, and bright,  
That's enough to make me feel alright.

## Alaska

By Max J.T. Johnson

The cold water on your feet  
The cry of the falcon in the sky  
At night with neon green strings going through shining stars  
Like the end of the earth  
The animals there  
The mighty moose and the Canadian goose  
The grizzled grizzly  
The calm caribou  
The white wolf  
The big bison  
The optimistic orca and  
The proud polar bear  
The dark green pine tree sway in the freezing wind  
And Mount Denali standing above  
The crystal lakes and rivers  
The history of the natives that live there  
The call of the wild goes through you  
Where the mountains sing,  
the rivers crash, the animals roam,  
and the Great Spirit is in the Sky is ALASKA.

# Nature

By Kylie McClellan

Nature is pure,  
Like mankind, with our hearts  
Nature is intelligent,  
Like mankind, with our smarts

Nature is trustworthy,  
Like mankind, with a friend  
Nature is immortal,  
Like mankind 'til the end

Nature is sweet,  
Like the nectar of a hummingbird  
Nature is musical,  
Like the sound of a mockingbird

Nature is beautiful,  
Like the rainbow in our sky  
Nature is ever-growing,  
Like the mountains that stretch up high.



# Intermediate Division

## First Place

Clay Vessel by Emma Racke

## Second Place

In Between by Emily Katelynn Bredemeier

## Third Place

Sold My Soul Waiting In Line At Hot Topic  
by Madelyn Sackett

## Honorable Mentions

What do you mean it was *fake*? by Alleah Rickard-Stone

One Door Opens by Grace Manning

# Clay Vessel

By Emma Racke

All around  
I see what seems to be finished  
projects  
Am I finished?

I feel molded  
Like clay  
I don't know if I'm myself  
Or what people shaped me to  
be

I think I've been molded  
But I haven't dried yet  
I feel so dry

I don't know if I can change  
I try to mold myself  
But you can't reshape dry clay

When I do try to shape myself  
People notice  
Because I'm cracked

I'm twisted and turned  
Kneaded and hit

They know I'm cracked  
But they don't try to help  
They spectate

Until I fall apart  
Then I'm rushed to  
They pour their water on me

I begin to feel like I can shape  
myself  
But, I need more water

But they can't see I'm dry inside  
Because I'm fine outside

I'm on a potter's wheel  
In a cycle  
Struggling inside a spinning  
vessel

So I stay as clay  
Constantly being molded  
Being changed  
Because I'll never be perfect  
enough

## In Between

By Emily Katelynn Bredemeier

I was walking too fast  
Said the girl with stone blue gray eyes  
I was walking too slow  
That's what the girl with chocolate brown eyes said  
I was walking just a little too in between  
Those words came out of my mouth  
In between  
It's in the middle of it all  
Not too close to the bottom  
Not too close to top  
Can I really fall from there?  
Can I rise from there?  
Will I always be stuck there?  
It's that little piece that gets discarded  
Goes unnoticed  
The reason  
Yet makes no sense  
The built it just to be left  
The always there  
But silent  
And in between

# Sold My Soul Waiting In Line at Hot Topic

By Madelyn Sackett

A broken mirror is all I see  
Between the glare and cracks  
Dead ends and yellow teeth

Socially inept, I seethe  
Shoulder to shoulder  
And still not seen

Hold me, my feet beneath  
Nobody's there  
Teenage girl, attention fiend

A calcium cage; calcium sheath  
A fiery rage builds up  
The spite and hate never seen

Let the demons out to breathe  
Or I'll grow a set of horns  
And a pair of wings

## What do you mean it was *fake*?

By Alleah Rickard-Stone

Unbeknownst, it concealed a secret, veiled from sight.  
A bowl of lavish colors, wherein falsehood evolves.  
Glistening peaches, crimson apples, so delightfully arrayed,  
So carefully crafted, facades that look so nice.

Oh! The treachery of taste, a mockery quite rude,  
A symphony of flavors, illusions entwined.  
Laughter echoed through the halls, mocking my dismay,  
For I had been deceived by the fruits of disarray.

## One Door Opens

By Grace Manning

One door closes and another opens  
But what if that door was my favorite  
What if I never wanted it to close  
What if I don't want to move on?

I know it'll be better once I do  
It's hard to move on from something you hold so dear  
It's hard to imagine a life outside those four pink walls  
The walls in which that door stands

Soon that door will just be a distant memory  
I can still see them all in my mind  
Perhaps I'll still remember the laughter  
But they'll all be fog soon enough

How can you move on from something  
When that something is all you know  
When that something is all you have ever known  
How can I open another door when I don't want this one to close?

# **Adult Division**

## **First Place**

story left by a coffee cup in the wee hours of the morning  
by Gary M Armstrong

## **Second Place**

Afternoon Heavy with the Closeness of Rain  
by Brooks Carver

## **Third Place**

Songs for Former Gifted Kids by Melanie Delbridge

## **Honorable Mentions**

The Essence of You by Dorothy Dobson

I am the Sky by Amos Kipkemoi

## Story left by a coffee cup in the wee hours of the morning

By Gary M Armstrong

He began constructing her  
from growing up moments,  
beginning, with an image of his  
mom  
angelically smiling down at him,  
like the Madonna must have  
as she looked upon  
the baby Jesus in a manger,  
though in his case  
it was a crib that his dad  
had laboriously put together  
from nearly indecipherable  
instructions  
with the aid of a screwdriver  
and a few colorful expletives  
unfit for a child's ears,  
or so he was told.

And thus he gave her his mom's  
smile,  
followed by Snow White's eyes,  
sometimes brown, sometime  
blue,  
depending on the year,  
and her rosette cheeks too,  
hating those dwarfs because  
they  
got to spend so much time  
with such a knockout,  
but also because

at that age ...well,  
it shamed him to say,  
he looked like one.

The sweetness of his  
first grade teacher, Miss  
Waters,  
on whom he had a crush,  
became part of her nature,  
though he rejected his teacher's  
diminutive  
stature - she was all of four foot  
five,  
give or take the length of a six-  
year-old's thumb.

No, he made her a smidgen  
taller  
like Scarlett in Gone With the  
Wind  
with a touch of her grit to boot,  
but only  
a touch because having too  
much grit makes guys  
like Rhett Butler want to give  
such a woman the boot.

By and by, her legs got longer,  
and her figure



began to resemble the  
hourglass perfection  
of every heartthrob that  
rejected him  
during his public school years.

When he finally went off to  
college  
she had become a pinup torn  
from the thirteenth month,  
if one existed,  
of a Playboy calendar,  
and so the search for her  
began.

A pinup being too saucy  
though,  
he instead went on a quest  
for the Holy Grail, or  
rather the Holy Girl,  
that Madonna he recalled as a  
child, and  
a Miss Snow White, Miss  
Waters, Miss Scarlett,  
all rolled into one...in a word,  
Aphrodite,  
the perfect woman.

And he was looking for  
Aphrodite when he spotted  
a petite brunette across a  
crowded dance floor

in the college union - he,  
wearing his  
signature black dickey and  
yellow long-sleeved shirt,  
she, a pink blouse and dark  
flats,  
and so, they began to dance  
in '65 and have never  
stopped.

Now, I know that we have a  
rule about dispensing  
with anniversary cards and  
gifts,  
after nearly sixty years,  
the memories alone  
were enough,  
you said.

But I decided to break that rule  
(though it irritates the hell out  
of you)  
by gifting you a story about a  
young man  
searching for the perfect  
woman,  
but finding a perfect love,  
instead.

By the way, I still have the  
dickey.

## Afternoon Heavy with the Closeness of Rain

By Brooks Carver

Clouds churn and ascend  
Like a heavenly stairway  
Out on the western  
Edge of the world  
Just beyond the tree line.

Deep-throated thunder grumbles.  
Flickering wires of lightning  
Stab at the ground.  
Cornrows sway to hot puffs of wind.

The monotonous flatness  
Of vivid green patterns  
Breathe stored-up stifling heat  
In weighted air.

One more pass down the field  
On this old tractor.  
My day is, at last, nearly done.  
I can see the barn from here.

## Songs for Former Gifted Kids

By Melanie Delbridge

Some days it's hard to be a princess  
When deep inside you know you are not  
So put on that smile, pretend you're not stressed

A perfect facade painted over a mess  
Those jewels can get itchy, those crowns can get hot  
Some days it's hard to be a princess

Standing not sitting, don't wrinkle your dress  
Glass slippers may pinch but they're all that you've got  
So put on that smile, pretend you're not stressed

Second place is garbage, you have to be the best  
No sleeping, no resting, just take your shot  
Some days it's hard to be a princess

How long you will last, is anyone's guess  
Cryings for babies, mustn't get caught  
So put on that smile, pretend you're not stressed

Pushing too hard to be a success  
Never say no, always say yes  
Some days it's hard to be a princess  
So put on that smile, pretend you're not stressed

## **The Essence of You**

By Dorothy Dobson

There are those who say that I must be lonely since I live alone

But from each of you who has stepped through my door a trace still remains.

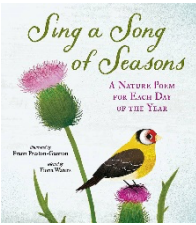
My house remembers the purest melody of your laughter, your voice,  
and long after you've been here and gone, the essence of you lingers on

# I Am The Sky

By Amos Kipkemoi

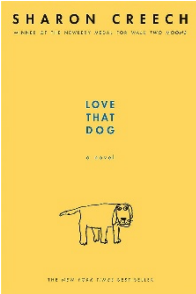
When my life gets heavy and dark,  
And I can't hold it anymore,  
I let my tears pour down with might,  
And, like thunder, wail as my voice cuts across homesteads like lightning.  
I break trees and cause turmoil,  
I cause storms and drown ships.  
I get mad at a slight provocation.  
Some days I wake up bright,  
Give smiles and hope to everyone in need,  
Put on my blue dress with a touch of a white ring,  
That shines yellow and orange from afar,  
A clear day? No blemishes. no regrets.  
Other mornings I wake up gloomy,  
There's a lot to let go of but I just can't,  
I feel like pouring them out, but I can't,  
I become cold and very cold,  
It's a sad day. I feel bitter. I feel bad,  
And for a day or two, I stay pale,  
Dead and alive.  
Yet other days I wake up with ease,  
Shower the earth with blessings,  
Quench your thirst and satisfy your hunger,  
Give life and strength to the feeble.  
Some nights I shine with stars and the moon,  
Perhaps I get lost in the silence of the night,  
Or maybe engage with bats and crickets.  
The darkness might overwhelm me,  
But every time, I find a way to the light.

# Prizes



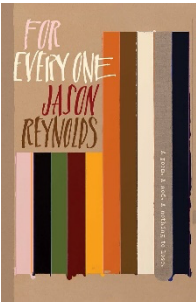
## Elementary

*Sing a Song of Seasons* by Fiona Waters



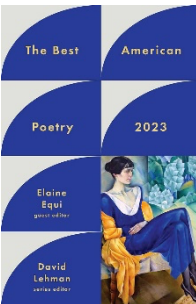
## Junior

*Love That Dog* by Sharon Creech



## Intermediate

*For Every One* by Jason Reynolds



## Adult

*The Best American Poetry 2023* by David Lehman

# Judges

Carl Sandburg College thanks the following individuals for judging this year's contest:

## **Sonrisa Nolan**

Sonrisa "Sunny" Nolan is a speech instructor at Carl Sandburg College. She has been teaching Speech and English for 24 years.

She enjoys poetry because of the way it allows writers to express themselves through sound, rhythm and words without being confined to more traditional prose-writing techniques.

She admires the link between the spoken and written word captured uniquely by poetry in its various forms.

## **Kylie Price**

Kylie Price is the assistant dean of assessment and assistant professor of English at Carl Sandburg College. In her writing courses, she emphasizes three components: The development of critical thinking, the importance of revision and the power of writing communities.

## **Marla Turgeon**

Marla Turgeon is the instructional librarian at Carl Sandburg College.

She has been a community college librarian for 20 years.

She enjoys poetry because it moves along quickly and leaves room for personal interpretation.

## **Jenny Wright**

Jenny Wright is an assistant professor of English and the English & honors coordinator at Carl Sandburg College. She is passionate about helping her students become more critical readers and writers in her various composition and literature courses.

# Acknowledgments

Thank you to the following people for making this competition possible:

## **HFA faculty members**

- Sonrisa Nolan
- Kylie Price
- Marla Turgeon
- Jenny Wright

Thank you for judging this year's competition.

Meghan Angle, HFA support specialist, for leading this project and for making it happen.

Sharon Trotter-Martin, English instructor, for assisting with the project.

Barb Coleman for printing.

The Marketing & Public Relations Department for help with many aspects of the competition, including a special shout-out to Eric Thatcher for help with our webpage.

Dean of Humanities and Fine Arts James Hutchings for believing in and for supporting this endeavor.



# Poetry writing prompts

We all need some inspiration sometimes. Here are some interesting prompts to get you back in the creative mindset!

- Use the words “despair” and “summer.”
- What is your favorite soup? Tell us a memory associated with it.
- STEM themed
- Your alter ego
- Open the book closest to you to page 17; title your poem whatever the sixth word is.
- What happened in the world on the day you were born?
- Your favorite animal
- Take two of your favorite poems you’ve written, and combine them.
- Write about Shrek’s swamp.





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