

4th Annual
TWC
Winners

Marlborough Public Library



2015

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About Our Judges

Our Judges had different backgrounds in writing and Teen Literature. We're so grateful that they volunteered their time to read all the submissions and came to the library to discuss the winners. Our thanks go to **Samuel Witt** (award winning poet, writer, and journalist), **Jenny O'Connell** (YA author of *The Book of Luke* series), **Sam Paradise** (published fiction writer, finalist in the 2012 World's Best Short-Short Story Contest and Assistant Managing Editor of The Worcester Review), **Jeff Adair** (editor of the Sudbury Town Crier, managing editor of the Community Newspaper Company, and an award winning journalist), **Sarah Sapienza** (co-founder of Worcester's Poets' Asylum), **Diane McKamy** (high school librarian), **Regan Carmody** (Teen Librarian) and **Cathy Rosenstock** (former middle school librarian).



Click. Click. **Xochi Hopwood**

Click. Click. Goes the disguised keyboard
Most don't realize its a double edged sword
Tears streaming down, trying to forget the hate
Sometimes your insulting words were my fate

Ding. Ding. Go the endless notifications
Wretched reminders are the vibrations
Engulfing my thoughts, packing my mind with
lies
Jabbing me with inescapable knives

Drip. Drip. Goes the water flowing from my soul
If crushing me was your ultimate goal
Well I can say that I have gone insane
Watching my happiness fade to eternal pain

Tap. Tap. Go the others joining in
Why do these words keep getting under my skin?
Yet, it's okay to cry, it's okay to feel
I have been strong through this battlefield

Ha. Ha. Goes the laughter at my expense
Words are so brutally intense
Cyberbullying is never all right
Words can ultimately end a life

Dawn Tranquility **Keerthi Balaji**



I stand alone in the dawn
where the sun has yet not risen.
Nor have the tulips lost their dew.
I faintly hear a sparrow calling,
and a squirrel chattering on a nut.
I listen closely and I am rewarded,
with the tapping noise made,
by a red-breasted woodpecker.
But then the monsters arrive,
with tires for feet,
and headlights for eyes.
They mean me no harm,
yet they cause the world harm.
Breathing out harmful gases,
breaking down trees to move.
But when the monsters leave,
and silence begins again.
Then I can hear,
the tapping noise made,
by a red-breasted wood-pecker.

**Book of
Verse
Lillian Mills**



A little volume-
there it sat
upon a table
at the last

But who would take
such simplicity
'mongst such a depth
of books of other things

Modst tales of pirates
and medieval times
Oh, who would take
a small book of rhyme?

But one did not
simply pass by
Perhaps the book
Had caught her eye

In any case
It might not rest
For she did not leave
it there in the nest

But claimed it hers;
Like 'twas meant to be
The little book
was hers to keep

In any case
It might not rest
For she did not leave
it there in the nest

But claimed it hers;
Like 'twas meant to be
The little book
was hers to keep

O blessed book!
The girl was me.
That little book
Was as if wings.

Wings of the soul...

9th-12th Grade Poetry

Bloodstreams

Hailey Escobar



I know people who cut open their veins with the thorns of roses
And expect petals to grow from their bloodstreams.
People who kneel down before flickering streetlights as if they are the holy light
That will show them the way back home to purity and peace of mind.
I know children my own age who pacify the blazing fire in their nerve endings with poison
In the form of pills and the closure that comes with knowing that
The world does not care whether they live or die.
I am the type of person who erases hate messages off of school desks.
But I would deface a city if it meant I could heal all wounds.
Because presently I am writing on paper that is as pure as the heroin rushing through
Boys I knew yesterday who are now sitting on couches in suburban towns in the form of vacant
ghosts.
Wounds do not always leave bloodstains.
There must be a million unmarked graves in the deepest parts of my mind
Where I have buried truth after truth, even if they are not mine.
And the truth is,
No one is fine.
My words are merely figures in burning buildings praying for the fire escape to appear
And I hold open the door, but
Sometimes my words do not get out in time.
Sometimes my words die.

This is my fire escape, and my reason why.

The Winterborne Flower

Jacob Suvalskas



Rays of sunlight tumbling down
Like thin strands of gold,
They dapple about, tossed by the wind,
Beautiful against the cold.

Bright blue beacons light up at my ap-
proach
They pierce the frigid air.
A brilliant flash of trembling petals
White as ice and just as fair.

The Winterborne Flower reaches towards
me
Where I halt on the frozen ground
Never did I see such raw beauty,
'fore the Flower that I had found.

Cold forgotten, my hands rise up,
And caress her elegant bloom
She steals my breath and my heart,
Angelic as the winter moon

Her sweet scent billows about me,
Consuming all that I am,
Capturing all my love and desire,
The Winterborne Flower destroys a man.

Growing Galaxies

Grace Corunter



I walked like a Sunday morning
And you talked like a Saturday night
Shown me a way and now I am learning
That without you I would be without light

I sip your soft spoken words like champagne
The stars will envy the eyes that gaze
While your rough calloused hands bear me no
pain
Touch as soft as a sweet summer daze

I was once silver and turned me to gold
Living in blindness but now have open eyes
Forever your hand mine will hold
You painted my world, coloring my skies

If ever a day our love has to go
Always look for eyes that have my glow

The Writing's on the Wall

Chloe Wing



I can't wait. The warm, Amsterdam evening air whipped past Jess White as she pedaled down the crowded, honking street. She was so excited to finally see *the house*.

Jess gazed at the ancient, fading, peeling yellow plaster house that she could now call her new home. She loved history and old objects; and that's why she got this house.

Some may say it smelled, but Jess loved every single aspect of the old plaster building. The house, nicknamed "Schuil," was from the 1940s. "Schuil" meant "hiding place" in Dutch; it was named that because it was rumored that Jews were living in the house during the Holocaust. Jess personally loved that part the best.

The young woman slowly walked up the creaky wooden stairs into the old faded yellow house squished between two new, shiny houses.

Dust flew into the musky air as Jess wandered around the creaky estate. She skimmed her fingers across the wall fiddling with frail blue wall paper until she peeled it back slightly, expecting stained plaster.

She wasn't expecting this.

Words. Scribbled, messy, cursive words scrawled onto the wall. Jess's eyes widened as she scanned the text. She felt sorry for the old wallpaper, but she felt like she had to investigate. She carefully peeled off the wallpaper, revealing that the whole wall was covered in script. She stepped back, awed. Who wrote this? Jess decided to find out, and started reading at the top.

1942. Amsterdam, Netherlands.

I've been in this house for what seems like forever. Nothing's getting better. Stealing food is almost impossible and worry is heavy on my shoulders. Just the guilt filled fact that my sweet little Rebekah is still in one of those horrible camps is killing me the most. Every day I wonder if she's still alive. If I ever survive this, the first thing I would do is find her.

I'm writing on this wall because I ran out of space in my journal. But I refuse to stop—I won't die without leaving something. Someone needs to find this; and if that's you, whoever's reading this, thank you. I know I'm getting out of here. As soon as we triumph over those awful Germans, I'll leave this journal somewhere in the house.

Isaac Windner

Jess blinked as she read the last word. She scrambled to her feet, mind reeling. Recordings of the Holocaust are rare; finding one randomly had to be a one in a million chance.

The young woman quickly started reading the next wall, intensely curious.

1943

I can't stop thinking about Rebekah. She's the only reason why I carry on every day. I hate those obsessed Nazis who still think someone is in this house. I think they know. If they found me, I'd be killed. Or worse, I'll be sent to a concentration camp, like Rebekah.

Life is getting harder. Nazi followers are walking outside every night, making it nearly impossible to obtain food anymore. I sense a stirring in the Nazis. I read a newspaper I sneaked yesterday and it warned of Americans. To the Germans, that is bad news. But maybe the Americans are nicer than them. Maybe they'll free us from our cage.

Jess realized she had read all the walls in the room. She ran upstairs, hoping, wishing...

Her feet tingled, sending her a pins-and-needles feeling from sitting so long. But she didn't care. She skidded into the attic. If it was dusty downstairs, it was even *dustier* up here. Spider webs covered old chairs, and it smelled distinctly of rot. But Jess was too excited to notice at all. She tried looking behind the wallpaper, with no avail. Her racing thoughts veered to a halt. Her heart took a dive in her chest.

Is it not here? She rubbed impatiently at her stinging eyes rid of tears. Jess sank to the floor, her face in her hands. An old floorboard creaked underneath her. She lifted it inquisitively, hoping desperately...

A weathered brown notebook lay underneath the floor board. Jess dared to look at the last page. She couldn't breathe as she opened the leather journal, her hands shaking slightly.

Dear finder,

Congratulations. I'm guessing you found my writing on the wall.

If you're looking for answers, see me at Jan Tooropstraat 164, 1061 AE. Patient ward 5, room 203.

Isaac Windner

Jess stood, her mind reeling. She had so many questions. But Jess knew one thing for sure: she would drive like no tomorrow to that address.

When Jess got to the location, she realized it was a hospital. How old would he be now? 96? Jess asked the desk where his ward was, and ran all the way there.

She opened the door, stepping into the white room.

"Hello," she heard a hoarse voice come from the bed to the left of the room.

"Isaac," Jess gasped. Her eyes followed the voice and found him. He was an old man, to say the least. His white hair was neat and orderly, and smile lines were indented in his face.

"That's me. I'm guessing you have questions," his smile deepening.

Jess nearly ran to the side of the bed, her head a frenzy of conflicting thoughts. Isaac sat up slightly, beaming.

“Did you find Rebekah? How did you survive? Did Rebekah survive? How...”

He laughed heartily, and took Jess’s hand in his. “I found little Rebekah. She had hid the whole time, and came right to the city after. She’s so intelligent, my Rebekah,” he said proudly. “I can’t believe you found my writing. I was worried no one was going to figure it out...”

“But I did.”

“Yes, and I’m so glad for it. And, ah...”

“Jess,” Jess said breathlessly.

“Jess. Would you mind doing a favor for an old man?” Isaac asked quietly.

“Yes.”

“Could you tell my story?”

As Jess left the white building, a smile crept upon her lips. Everyone would know who Isaac Windner was. Everyone would know his story.

Angel in the Sky

Jaelyn Kasso



Once upon a time in a large, busy, city there was a father who lived with his daughter, Angel. Angel loved her father dearly. Her father, who was a painter, had no work, and they were struggling, yet they still loved each other. She dreamed of being rich.

One hot sunny morning father sent Angel out to sell his paint supplies, \$100, no less. He couldn’t stand to see his little girl not having enough to eat, so he wanted money for food, fast. Off Angel went with her father’s paint supplies. On the corner of Avenue B and 3rd street a young lady came up to her and asked, “Are those fine paint supplies for sale?”

“Yup,” said Angel, “It’s all yours for \$100.”

“\$100! That’s crazy! I don’t have that kind of money! But I do have three magical pills that can cure any type of disease or sickness!”

Angel, being a little hesitant, said, “Are you sure they work?”

“Of course they do! I had a lung disease, and I took one of the pills and now I can run a mile without even getting out of breath!”

“Alright I’ll take them!”

“Ok deal.”

That was that. Angel walked home, head up and proud. She thought that she had just gotten the best deal for her father’s supplies, but when she got home and showed her father, he was upset.

Angel told the strange story of the young lady and her cured illness.

Her dad confided, “Angel this is hard to say, but the only reason I had you sell my supplies was because I couldn’t support us.”

When Angel heard that she immediately felt guilty, like she let her father down, and the bad food they ate, worn out clothes they wore, and all their debt was her fault.

For the next few years they still struggled. One snowy day Angel started to feel sick, but she thought nothing of it, or the pills. It all started out like a normal cold with a runny, stuffy nose and a cough or a sneeze now and then. One night she got such a blood curdling pain in her stomach that she made father call an ambulance. She knew that this was just going to put them more in debt, but she really needed help.

When they arrived at the hospital, Angel couldn’t breathe. All she could say was, “It’s getting worse,” After three hours of examining her, they found something very unusual, a hole in her stomach. Nobody knew how, or when, it had happened. All the doctors knew was that it was a very expensive procedure to close this hole. They didn’t have the money to pay for it.

Angel was in severe pain. She sat on her comfy, white-sheeted hospital bed and cried and thought and thought until one of those thoughts was of the pills. The strange woman had said to Angel that the pills could cure any type of sickness. She had no choice but to try one. That night when her dad came to visit, Angel told her dad her idea.

She said with much excitement, “Father let’s try the pills! The pills! What do we have to lose?”

Father quickly ran home, grabbed the three small pills from Angel’s green chevron dresser and ran back. He sat right next to Angel as she placed the tiny round white pill on her tongue, unscrewed the cap from a clear plastic water bottle, and took a huge gulp. Sitting impatiently, they started to hear a loud grumbling in Angel’s stomach. Suddenly, something was pushing up her teal short sleeve shirt, so she pulled it up to find a fat green stick coming out of her belly button. It just kept growing and growing. It went through the roof and continued to grow until it went out of sight, up through the ceiling and out into the bright blue sky.

The doctors came rushing in and screamed! Angel had a plant growing out of her stomach, all the way to who knows where! They asked what she did, and she explained the pills and the lady. The doctors didn’t know what to do. Do they cut it or climb it?

Before they could decide, Father started climbing. He had a fully charged cell phone and nothing else. A day later, he called down to earth to say that he had reached the top, and that he was on the highest cloud with a fairy, whose name was Benny, and who claimed to be a master medicine maker.

Father explained Angel’s situation to Benny. He was in shock! He had never heard of this situation in all of his 124 years of making medicine. They talked and bickered and bartered until they finally worked out a deal. Benny would make a medicine in exchange for the other two pills. Father quickly climbed down to get the pills while Benny carefully made the medicine. Father returned quickly.

“Give this to Angel. Tell her to drink it in one gulp. By the morning, she should be cured,” promised Benny.

“Alright. Will do.”

Father reached the ground in a flash and immediately told Angel, “Chug this green liquid.”

Angel did exactly as she was told. She touched the glass bottle to her pink lips, tilted her head back, and gulped down the sour green liquid.

Angel fell asleep instantly.

When she awoke, there was no green stick in her belly button, and there was no hole! No hole in her skin, no hole in the ceiling, and no hole in her stomach! She felt like nothing had ever happened. Everyone was amazed.

That night Angel went home and her and her dad spent the night together. Sitting on the couch, they realized they had always been rich because they had each other and were both in good health!

In time, Angel and her dad both found jobs. They became financially stable, and continued to live happily ever after.

How Photography Changed My Life

Karsyn Canale

“There is only you and your camera. The limitations in your photography are in yourself, for what we see is what we are.” - Ernst Haas, a famous photographer



As I zoomed in, held my hands steady, and focused, I just knew this would be a great photograph. That starry night, the moon looked so majestic and magical, I just had to snap a shot of it!

Photography has been a great influence in my life and has helped me become more observant, appreciative, and aware of my surroundings.

My interest in taking pictures started at the age of 5. My dad always has his camera with him wherever we go, whether he is just sitting on the couch, or when we go to Niagara Falls. Since I first picked up a camera, my parents have always given me great advice, but especially my dad because he also loves photography. He always says that to take a great picture you have to consider good lighting, straight angles, perfect composition, patience, and most importantly, focus.

Another person that has given me great advice is Ozzie Sweet. Ozzie was a close family friend to us. We always went to visit him and his wife Diane in York, Maine. Unfortunately, he

passed away in 2013 at the age of 94. Ozzie Sweet was a famous photographer and had 2,000 magazine covers. He was someone who always had a smile on his face, was always positive, and was a great role model.

My favorite subjects to photograph are wildlife, animals, people, and landscapes. One experiment I like to do is wake up at 4:00 am and shoot the sunrise with my dad. To capture that moment, we go to the Clinton Dam and take some beautiful photographs. When we got there it's pitch dark, and all you can see is the moon reflecting off of the ice cold water. Then the sun slowly starts to rise and we photograph all of the vivid colors.

For many years, I used my dad's camera. However, for an early birthday present I got a Canon Power Shot camera with a 50 times zoom lens last year. Getting a camera has given me more confidence and independence.

Photography is a fantastic hobby because you can do it throughout your life and learn from your mistakes. In my opinion, photographs are little pieces of memory you can have forever. Just like Kari Lagerfeld said, "What I like about photographs is that they capture a moment that's gone forever, impossible to reproduce."

9th-12th Grade Fiction & Memoir

Violet KD Zagzoug



My favorite time is when it isn't quite night yet, but it's also not day. When the sky is dark blue and the horizon is the color of the traffic cones that line the cul-de-sac where we live. Mostly everything is quiet, except for the echoed squeals of the neighborhood kids playing manhunt in the streets and the high-pitched songs of birds perched by their nests.

I call this time "in between" because it feels like everything stops when the sky is navy and the horizon is orange—like I'm in between life and whatever comes after it. The only problem I have with this time is that it never really lasts. Eventually the orange sinks into the ground and the sky turns completely dark and I'm forced to go on living the life that I live when I'm not in between.

I like to watch the sunset from the balcony that leans outside the window in my sister's bedroom. My sister's name was Violet. I say *was* because she's dead now. I guess Violet is technically still her name even though she's dead, but I wanted you to know. I don't know why. It's not like it's important—it's just sort of become something that I tell people, even when they don't ask.

The sunset reminds me of Violet. I guess that's why I like to watch it out here. She was like that—always in between Violet would be twenty now—two years older than me. She went

a community college a couple towns away and drove a crappy, beat-up ford fiesta that my dad bought from his great uncle for two hundred bucks. On the day of her funeral my dad pulled that piece of crap grey car down to the shed out back where the forest meets our lawn and he beat the hell out of it with an old baseball bat. He was mad at her for dying, Dad was. It's creepy, the car just sitting there—covered in vines and all bashed up. I can see it from here, just under the sunset. I wish he'd let one of us move it, but he throws a fit every time we even mention the car. Anyway. Violet worked at the Starbucks down the block and I'd get free drinks sometimes, because I'm her little brother and all. I still do, because the baristas behind the counter know me and they feel bad because I have a dead sister. But I don't really go there anymore.

The house is quiet without Violet. Alex has his own family now and Lucas lives down at Northeastern; he hardly ever visits us here. Violet and Dad were fighting constantly about anything they could—school, the car, her hair, piercings, boys, girls, cigarettes, emptying the dishwasher. It was such a pain in the moment, it's weird to think how much I miss it now.

Violet was funny. Her hair was turquoise and her laugh was loud. She's the kind of person that laughs at her own jokes always, even when no one else does. She was obsessed with Sprite and thought it tasted better out of the soda machine at Burger King than in a can or a bottle. Her eyes were brown.

Mom sleeps on Violet's bedroom floor. She has every night for eight months—since Violet died. She cries most nights, too. That makes me sad. Mom doesn't deserve that.

Sometimes I'm afraid we're all going to fall apart. Sometimes I'm afraid she was the only thing that kept us together.

The sky is dark now. I miss my sister.

Dead Foot

James Sauger



A puff of air. A bitter light.

“I see it captain!”

A resounding cheer broke the quiet of the night as the crew of the Revealer went into a frenzy, shouting hurrahs at the new discovery. Captain Williams flipped up the silver spyglass.

Through the fog was the wreckage of the lost galleon, the Dead Foot. A lost vessel coasting along the ice, frozen over like a floating mirage.

“We found it boys.” Warm air blew around Williams as he puffed the pipe, trying to keep warm in the unforgiving chill of the ice fields.

If only the recovery job had been in the tropics.

The crew huddled together in the soft glow of the torches, whispering excitement about the prospect of a hidden treasure and future tales. They became quiet and looked on as the full

sight of the ship cruised into view. The quiet behemoth loomed over them, eclipsing the moon.

They were witnessing a ghost come to life. Williams smiled at the almost dreadful beauty of such a sight, thinking nothing of sailor superstitions.

A gust of needles blew out the torches. A cold gale ended the celebration and curious looks as well. It became deathly quiet.

Each torch eased out with a silent death flicker, a gasp in the quiet. The moonlight that shone off the startled faces grew dim as the ship slowly blocked out the light. In the water ice broke. Wooden creaks and sharp cracks.

“Look a body!” The first mate broke the quiet with his cry, his baritone calling all to the edge.

Not one body, but hundreds. Ghoulish corpses that floated under the ice, an ever shrinking moonlight hiding the moving displays of cruel rigor mortis.

They grinned at the sailors, grins that became wider. Eyes blinked. The first mate tumbled off into the dark.

The ghost ship glowed in the gloom, the sails unfurling as spectres laughed shrill screams.

Williams did what any captain worth his salt would do. He called the crew to arms. Terrified shouts littered the deck as metal clanged into action and footfall stomped.

A flintlock fired down into the cold, a dying light in the darkness that was encroaching.

“Steadfast men!” Williams voice was a whisper among the varied shouts. “Steadfast!”

Ghastly abominations that lingered in the nightmares of older men climbed from imagination into reality.

Williams shuddered and brandished the cold steel of his blade, charging off into the mob of the undead. He spun, sliced, and danced into the horrors of the dark ocean, gripped in the battle between the living and dead. Life and death in every sense of the word.

An ear-splitting noise brought all the action to a halt, and the grizzly visage of death himself stood on the bow of the Dead Foot, shambling to the tune of an empty song.

“It seems we have a new boat for the fleet!” The undead Captain’s semblance of speech was a low moan that carried itself on the wind to the living sailors.

“Over my dead body!” Williams defiant cry rang out.

“As you wish.” The Captain’s lipped curled into a smile before the men met their ultimate fate.

The moon glowed brighter, and the sky grew darker.

The Succulent Man

Rhiannon McEachern



Once there was a man who decided to give up on his lifestyle.

There wasn't anything horribly wrong with it—he lived quite comfortably in a wealthy city with plenty of entertainment and food to eat. But that was exactly what he was worried about.

He had friends and enemies alike grow dependent on their wealth and food, and had seen them become fat and angry and squabble all of their money until they were destitute. Fearing his future if he continued to live by his society's standards and die old and poor and angry, he decided to leave everything behind.

I'll travel to the desert and find an oasis, he thought; there I'll live away from the city and this materialistic society.

The man-whose name has been lost to the ages-packed some food for his journey. He packed figs, honey, nuts, dried fish, blackberry and dandelion juice, and cactus fruits. One morning at dawn, with a kohl smeared under his eyes and his food on his back, he set off for the desert.

He traveled voraciously, stopping only at night to drink some juice and eat a little food and rest, but as soon as the sun peeked over the horizon, he was off again. He traveled for days, seeing no sign of an oasis he could call home. Days bled into weeks, which turned into months, and the man still could not find an oasis. He saw plenty of mirages, and his feet began to become horrifically sore and calloused from the burning sand, but still, he trekked on. The man soon began to run out of food. He had not packed much since he had expected to find an oasis by now. He hadn't even seen any animals or insects.

If I don't find an oasis soon, I will die, the man thought.

The man was almost at his wits end. He had run out of food and drink, and had resorted to eating the small succulents he found growing in small patches around the desert. But even these patches were small and few.

The man would bite into them, every single leaf, and suck on it until it was as dry as his skin. Even then, he still felt as hungry and thirsty as before.

The man's stomach wasn't the only part of him that suffered. His lack of proper food led his skin to take on a greenish tinge, and he had walked so much that his feet were closer to stumps than actual feet. The kohl under his eyes had mostly worn off, and only small streaks running down his cheeks remained from his constantly-watering eyes. They ran from grit and sand, the sun, and the thought that he would forever be lost in the desert. His eyes alone had turned a milky white, almost entirely blinded by the glare of the sun on the sand.

One night, after managing to find an agave plant, the man collapsed. The agave leaf hung out of his mouth limply.

When the man awoke again, it was morning. In a haze, he heard an unusual rustling, and felt a strange weight on his head and back.

The man tried to push himself up before realizing that he could not use his arms. In fact, he didn't seem to have any at all. Where his arms should have been, he saw small, fleshy green nubs growing next to his collarbone. The man continued to struggle getting up, finally succeeding after using his head to push him onto his knees. The weight on his back seemed to be shifting and rustling, while still staying on top of him.

When fully standing, the man twisted his head around, looking at his back.

His back was entirely covered with succulents. Hen-and-chicks covered his left shoulder. Cacti grew out of his right shoulder, sprouting flowers and bearing fruit, while agave and living stones sprouted on his lower back. Fleshy-leaved vines covered the rest of his back, in green and silver and the occasional purple.

The man inspected the rest of his body. Where he had been bony and thin before, he was round and fleshy, much like the plants on his back. And, for the first time since the beginning of his journey, the man felt complete.

The man, satisfied with his journey, continued throughout the desert, aimlessly wandering with succulents growing on his back and neck.

Some say that if you traverse the desert as well he can still be found wandering around, as content as ever.

And why was this man so content?

He had become the oasis he had so desperately sought.