



word UP!

winning

poems

2012



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Howard County Library
Administrative Offices
6600 Cradlerock Way
Columbia, MD 21045

Word UP! poetry contest is sponsored by Friends of Howard County Library.

Many Thanks

Howard County Library System extends its appreciation to Friends of Howard County Library for supporting students in this opportunity to express their creativity.

Judges

Patricia Van Amburg: professor of English and creative writing at Howard Community College and editor of the Muse Magazine

Laura Shovan: poet, author, and educator and winner of the Harriss Poetry Prize

Susan Thornton Hobby: writer and consulting editor for the Howard County Poetry and Literature Society

Claire Meitl: retired English teacher and English Resource Teacher in the Secondary Arts

Kristen Blount, John Jewitt, Ginny Leslie, Joanne Sobieck-Lingg, Maggie Smith, and Aimee Zuccarini: Howard County Library System staff

Truth Thomas

For his poetry readings and words of encouragement at the Word Up! Winners' Circle reception, held at the HCLS Miller Branch in Ellicott City, MD

Library staff

For the contribution of their time in making the Word Up! Poetry Contest and the Winners' Circle successful

It is the diction of despondence,
 Of walking and sleeping with ghosts.
 So while it is the vernacular
 Of romantic hypotheticals
 And high, pathetic goals
 It is not the language of love.

Then, there is communication
 Rarely written and never spoken in the sense of
 Forming words with hopes of making an exchange
 In mutual confirmation
 Of the greatness in human discourse;
 It exemplifies the devotions
 Of companions shy and mighty.
 It is the unknowing assertion
 Of the right hand
 When the left toils sincerely.
 Silence is the language of love.

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First Place, 6TH - 7TH grade group

Jisoo Choi

GRADE 6, BURLEIGH MANOR MIDDLE SCHOOL

Catch the Wind

On breezy days when the wind is out to play,
I run outside into the arms of the breeze.
I close my eyes and spread out my wings,
And wait for the wind to pick me up.

And when it comes,
It arrives with a gentle kiss on my nose,
And a playful blow at my hair.
I greet it with a friendly smile,
And I take off,
And
I
Fly.

My hair billows out behind me,
And I raise my face to the breeze.
I close my eyes and let the wind tickle my lashes.
I am a piece of the wind, the sky, the universe.

And when it settles,
I float slowly down to the ground,
Left with a longing for more.

So I close my eyes and spread out my wings again,
And wait for a chance,
To catch the wind.

Honorable Mention, 10TH - 12TH grade group

Ethan Goff

GRADE 12, GLENELG HIGH SCHOOL

The Language of Love

There is a dialogue
Often utilized in notes signed with hearted 'i's,
And on the greeting cards found in the pink localities
Of Hallmark stores,
And other sticky-sweet lectures of poetic benevolence;
It is a euphemized palaver
Of flattery and pet names,
But while it is the vocabulary
Of swallowed butterflies
And dangerously contagious smiles,
It is not the language of love.

There is a tongue, for the young,
Often stuttered in oscillation with heavy breathing,
Reckless decisions, guilty grins, and stares that stun
With or without intent,
Forming in whispers that incite blanket avalanches;
It is the id's favored lexicon
Of compliments and obscenities,
But while it alludes
To fiery infatuations
And the firsts and lasts of desire,
It is not the language of love.

There is a dialect
Built upon the semantics of pity and martyrdom
Penned in the unlocked diaries of disillusioned optimists
Who leave room for notes
By a better-half that never filled life's glass;

to dip my fingers
again into my
private, silken,
rainbow.
Where the reds
made your hand-
catch fire-
and the greens
were far more
than relaxing-
No, they were
ether, that made
nap time a-
safe haven, not a-
battle ground.
I want to-
hear the swirls,
these colors
made on the paper,
listen as the colors-
formed by the blobby
vortex-filled, version
of a spring day-
that my five year old
mind imagined.
I want to be-
be able to go inside
that picture again,
follow one of its
vortexes down-
and stay for a while;
sinking in the cool,
slipping blue,
and remember.
My childhood.
Again.

Second Place, 6TH - 7TH grade group Cecelia Wood

GRADE 7, LIME KILN MIDDLE SCHOOL

As Fake as Fake

You're as fake as fake,
You're as trustworthy as a liar,
Your deceit makes me shake,
You're like a fibber for hire.

You spread gossip like it's a contest,
You love to make others frown,
I think you're becoming obsessed,
With trying to put me down.

But I'll never stay quiet,
I'll never step back.
It'll be a one woman riot,
When you come to attack.

You think you're so great,
You think you're so popular, it's true.
But just you wait,
I'll do things ten times greater than you.

Third Place, 6TH - 7TH Grade Group

Heather Ailinger

GRADE 7, LIME KILN MIDDLE SCHOOL

The Journey of a Flower

A single,
Frost covered flower
Pokes its way
Into the barren world

It shivers in the wind
Ice and snow nipping
At its frail petals
But still it stands

Its tender green stem
Seems no match for winter
And the sharp claws of cold
But still it stands

Struggling to send its roots
Deeper into the ground
The hard, frozen ground
But still it stands

A snowstorm
Smothers it in ice
Dragging it down
But still it stands

Finally, spring
Bursts into the world
In a flash of color,
And the flower stands

Honorable Mention, 10TH - 12TH grade group

Liesl Krause

GRADE 12, MARRIOTTS RIDGE HIGH SCHOOL

Finger Painting

Put me back in pre-school.
I want to be able to feel
the color blue again.
The way it smeared and
slipped my index finger
across the page, as I-
dreamed the sky,
leaving baby blue ink
in the deep swirls
of identity that-
mark me as unique.
I want to have to
scrub the sun's yellow-
from beneath my fingernail;
so that I may be allowed
to dip my hands into the
red of flowers to be,
imagined onto the
soft green grass I-
created.
I want to watch,
as the colors of my
world slide off my-
skin into the warm
water, down the basin.
Feel the water-
and soap-
alert every cell on
my palm that I-
would have to wait through snack,

Honorable Mention, 10TH - 12TH grade group

Gabrielle Gaimaro

GRADE 11, MOUNT HEBRON HIGH SCHOOL

The Perfect Life

Painting the perfect life,
nothing is broken.
Stuck together with glue,
all the cracks are filled.

Nothing is broken,
time saved not stolen.
All the cracks are filled,
everything in line.

Time saved not stolen,
forever cherished.
Everything in line,
people seen and heard.

Forever cherished,
feelings expressed and known.
People seen and heard,
colors fill the room.

Feelings expressed and known,
nothing too big or small.
Colors fill the room,
painting the perfect life.

Honorable Mention, 6TH - 7TH grade group

Audrey Hager

GRADE 6, BURLEIGH MANOR MIDDLE SCHOOL

Everything and Nothing

You are silent
a secret being told, a gap between the stars

I am awake
rushing water, flock of birds

You are afraid
a revealing wind, monochrome colors

I am courage
a birds call, treacherous forest

We are incompatible
black and white, past and future

Together we are
the hole that no one knew was missing

I am nature
human's deadliest enemy, Mother Earth's secret weapon

You are
unknown

Honorable Mention, 6TH - 7TH grade group

Emily Mathis

GRADE 6, TRINITY SCHOOL

Bacon

Buzz, Buzz goes my alarm,
A growling, grumble from my belly.

Bad case of the breakfast blues.

Crack go the eggs,
Pop goes the toaster.

Buzz, Buzz my alarm clock again!

Sizzle, Sizzle makes me smile,
Bring on the biscuits!

Bacon is the cure for the breakfast blues.

Third Place, 10TH - 12TH grade group

Mallory Walker

GRADE 11, MOUNT HEBRON HIGH SCHOOL

His Hands

He was an old man – his white hair and crooked posture revealed that much to me.
We sat next to each other in silence,
An optimistic smile on his face.
The dull whirl of the subway car filled the cold air around us.

I looked down;
This man's hands sat obediently in his lap,
Wrinkled and frail – they told a story.
His hands were the life he had made for himself.

They were his childhood spent chasing countless dreams and teenage girls,
They were the twelve hour days he worked to support his family,
They were the cradle that held his children and grandchildren,
They were the good and bad – everything that made him the man he is today.
All this wrapped inside the hands of the quiet, smiling man who sat next to me.

My voice split the quiet blur of noise around us.
“What's it like?”
My question summarized a million others I wanted to ask – but it was enough.
This elderly man stared at me with wise eyes,
He took my hand and squeezed;

In a moment he was gone.

Second Place, 10TH - 12TH grade group

Kaijail Gomez Wick

GRADE 11, HOWARD HIGH SCHOOL

Touch

I want to touch my bones

Stroke them, feel the smooth on my cheek

Grasp my femur in my hands

And squeeze to see how it feels

I want to dig my fingers in my muscles

Hold in my palm the arms that can hold so much

Push the nails into my diaphragm

And never let go

I want to kiss my nerves

Thank them for endless eternities of raw pleasure

Lay my lips in joy on the bare flesh

And smile, too, as they kiss back

I want to know this body with my hands

Hold it as my closest, first lover

Know it better than I know the labyrinth of my mind

And curl, warm, into existence

Honorable Mention, 6TH - 7TH grade group

Kate DeBlasis

GRADE 7, LIME KILN MIDDLE SCHOOL

By That Much

Dashing out the door,

Down into the street,

I'll never do this again,

I swore,

But here I am,

Picking up my legs and feet,

Dashing out the door.

Running to the bus stop,

Screaming as I go,

Stop,

Stop,

Stop!

But no.

The bus passes by,

Meaning no harm,

But here I am,

Screaming at the top of my lungs,

Running to the bus stop.

My neighbors board the bus,

Not caring what I do,

As the bus quickly stops,

And I lose a shoe.

Trying not to lose my balance,

While picking up my shoe,

My neighbors board the bus,

And I don't know what to do.

The bus takes off,
Leaving me in the dust,
So I turn around slowly,
And walk back to the house.
Moping as I go,
Thinking,
“What a waste!”
As the bus takes off.

Then I hear an engine,
When I enter in the house,
The bus is coming back to pick me up,
And I think,
“Oh snap!”
I turn around like a rocket,
Spinning like a top,
As I grab the door open,
Yank it with all my worth,
Dash out the door,
Run to the bus stop,
And miss it by that much.

First Place, 10TH - 12TH grade group

Patricia Carmona

GRADE 11, MOUNT HEBRON HIGH SCHOOL

Where I'm From

I am from black notes on white pages
from Fiesta Ware and hummingbird feeders.
I am from car rides back home
where my heart beats with city pulses.
I am from tree swings and star gazing,
wishing I could fly with the birds who soar,
up above the calamity and darkness.

I'm from no sight and insight
from tiny clay buses filled with plantains.
I'm from the hot-bloods
and the cool attitudes
from fear and intimidation.
I'm from holy days and immigration
with dreams to go to Canada
and staying to fall in love.

I'm from humanist ideals
violins and guitars
from thoughts and feelings too grand to put words to
the universal language not enough of us know

Under my stereo lies an indigo journal
a collection of bits and pieces
my heartbreak
the days I wish I could hold the world in my hands
the best words I have ever heard, then the worst
I am from those lines
bending them so I can breathe

Honorable Mention, 8TH - 9TH grade group

Raghav Srivastava

GRADE 8, LIME KILN MIDDLE SCHOOL

I'm No Shakespeare

The phrases are not sticking in my brain
I'm not so smart with poems, you can tell
Creating sonnets is such a big pain
The English poem lessons are pure hell

The language is confusing, that's a fact
There're over 'bout nine-thousand words to use
My meter itself is a bit abstract
And I just can't decide, which words to choose

I am no Shakespeare, nor do I pretend,
To try my best is always what I've done
But letters aren't exactly my best friend
B's and C's for grades are never fun

Without my work how'll I present on stage?
I guess I'll use some other person's page.

First Place, 8TH - 9TH grade group

Marya Topina

GRADE 8, LIME KILN MIDDLE SCHOOL

Red Lace Gown

She stands-
Pale skin, dull eyes.
Shrouded in misery,
Draped in red lace.

The crimson threads
Entwine her arms,
Criss-crossing to form
A gown of despair.

So carefully crafted,
Each line its own story.
So many tears shed
While shaping this cloth.

This beautiful garment
Seems fully complete.
Yet she continues to add
To the intricate weave.

Plaiting, knitting, a blur
Of nimble fingers fast
At work as scarlet drops
Merge with clear, salt beads.

A few days pass, the fabric
Dries. New strands appear,
Replacing those worn and
Faded – lost.

And so she lives,
Never quite pleased,
Always changing the
Pattern in her dress.

Second Place, 8TH - 9TH grade group

Camila Rodriguez

GRADE 8, COLUMBIA ACADEMY

Turn that racket down

We own the night
we are forever young and reckless
nobody can tell us what to do
we leave footprints, of sneakers, of five-inch stilettos
snapping against the pavement, resounding like gunshots
the ubiquitous thrum snakes around our subconscious, sending a chill
down our spines
so excited we can't stand it, sliding down the banister of the stairway to
heaven
we don't care what people think
layers and images shed like matryoshka dolls, butterflies spreading their
wings for the first time
until all that is left is the pure happiness, the spark inside
capture the moment, and make it last in the future to the present and
then blast it to the past
our world, the juicy fat red-cheeked fruit
At the top of the tree, the one all the kids try to grab
but can't. The weight of the world's on their shoulders
we float like helium balloons, any way the wind blows, soaring to
The highest crescendo of the symphony
before the bass drops and dissolves into a throb, a pulse
bodies convulse under the sickly bright neon strobe lights
a sea of hands reaching for the stars, suffocating
the whole crowd moves as a single entity
they rejoice, flailing arms ensnare the rainbow arcing above us in the
dark

Honorable Mention, 8TH - 9TH grade group

Taruna Emani

GRADE 8, BURLEIGH MANOR MIDDLE SCHOOL

Bullying

They
They made fun of me
The way I looked
How I walked
The food I ate
The sound I made

My many legs
My dull green color
My big round eyes
My figure, which was a little fuller

My eyes
They welled up with tears
I wept and despaired
I became very unkempt
I slept and slept
The winter away
Until, until
The first day of spring came

I stretched and yawned
And to my surprise
My arms and legs
Were of a butterfly!

With wings that fluttered
And colors so bright
They stared at me
Stared in delight

As I
Now strong
Lifted my wings
And flew away
To do great things

Honorable Mention, 8TH - 9TH grade group

Sridha Krishnan

GRADE 8, LIME KILN MIDDLE SCHOOL

Macula Silentium

'Tis an arcane Renaissance silhouette
With a maiden's poise so enigmatic.
Surrounding da Vinci's poignant vignette,
Countless find it idiosyncratic.
Set in sepia tones, visitors awe,
Admiring her laconic disguise,
Thinking there's a certain je ne sais quoi
Upon her subtle smile and hazel eyes.
Acerbic persons only see the lies:
A face, withering and very somber,
A smirk, aloof, predatory, and wry,
And lachrymose irises some place yonder.
You may think or decipher whatever,
As her essence will stay secret, fore'er.

grabbing onto the hopes and dreams they had lost
finally screaming joyfully, the ecstatic cry of happy children
life is the song! and it is too short to wait for the bridge, to cross it later
it's all about tonight
when day finally breaks and the first hours of pale white dawn scrape at
the dark
the last song has played, and everyone has drowned in the madness
revelers dripping wet in sound, the metronomes in their chests still click-
clicking
we all awake from the happy illusion, encircle the world spreading all the
emotion
nobody can remember, but everyone can bask in the joy
and maybe for a brief eternity, when we get sick of everything,
we can put on our headphones
and smother the numbing pain with the music.

Third Place, 8TH - 9TH grade group

Diana Towner

GRADE 8, LIME KILN MIDDLE SCHOOL

Apollo

He was dead.

Now he wakes.

Slowly, sluggishly, creaking, shivering with the cold,

The thin light of sunrise at his toes,

He floats softly from his bed of stars

And hits the ground, landing on bronze knees.

Two golden eyes creak open and he lifts his head.

The sunlight is his hair, its rays falling across his face in delicate patterns

He exhales slowly, melting the ice of night away

And begins his climb.

His head breaks the surface of the low-hanging, velveteen cloak of night

And he shakes it off, brilliant beams of light donning the morning in a

cape of flawless cerulean.

He climbs a tree,

Leaps across the cotton puff of a lone cloud,

Hanging on to a lingering star

As he scrambles atop his high and mighty throne of gold and glittering

diamonds, gleaming in its firmament

And pure warmth and joy flood through the sky.

The creatures come out and bask in his sun, his glory

And he watches them, fascinated,

And, on a whim, he drifts closer to them.

The purple shadows elongate, but he does not notice

He is too exultant, too arrogant, too engrossed with his domain

But soon his eyelids grow heavy; he feels himself slipping.

He slides farther in his chair, a contented smile splashed across his face

Peering closely at the beings below, thinking that maybe he could get a

little closer to see more of them,

For they interest him very much.

So he does it.

He leans.

And in that moment, the warmth, the happiness, the beautiful light, his

powerful, wonderful kingdom of the air-

It all comes crashing down.

He falls.

He screams, but no one hears him.

His creations, the beings- they don't pay attention.

He hits the ground, the cold seeping into his body, the stars clustering

around, but it's too late.

He awoke.

Now he dies.