

Adult Category

Gettysburg, Pennsylvania

by Ashley Wellington

First Place

I.

Even the field, sweating through dusty pores,
Reeked of brass and drying blood
As a cluster of gray coats waited to spill
Out into the open.
In the soggy July heat, the stench of decay.
A wounded soldier, resting in the shade
Of a cannon, was struck by an officer for sitting down.
The officer later fell from a bullet not shot by his enemy,
And his skull cracked like a clay pot.
The soldier died near him
With outstretched arms and twisted neck,
His trampled carcass stripped to the sinews.

II.

You and I stop here, not as they stopped
In the roar, face down, blood seeping up
From the ground into dirty clothes and hair –
But to climb little Round Top, see Devil's Den,
Probe our fingers into bullet holes
In tree trunks. It is so quiet now,
As if the land, washed clean by so much rain
And stripped for souvenirs,
Wants, impossibly, to be just a field again.

Milkweed Pods

by Colleen Dwyer-Lulf

Honorable Mention

During World War II, children were encouraged to collect milkweed pods and turn them over to the U.S. government. Because the silk was buoyant and lightweight, it was used for stuffing in flying suits and life vests. The “hair” was used to make bandage liners. The leaves of the developing plants are also a favorite food of Monarch butterflies.

Each spring, below the old schoolhouse,
Water floods a swath of land
Sheltered by birch and diamond willow.

It leaves a trail of milkweed and summons
Monarch butterflies
That flit and filter in the shadowy grove.

We children tromped one fall to gather milkweed pods
And split their rough brown bellies
To loose the white silk bursting from the vessels.

Amid the willows and the golden leaves
And blue sky curled around our hearts in cool, neat curves,
The pods, into our hands, spilled cloudy foam and seed.

We bundled up our stock to send away,
To save sailors, we were sure, and cushion heads
Of brave young soldiers with languid smiles.

In the coat room, heavy with the smell of barnyard boots
And sodden wool, Gerald caught my hand and asked
If I would write him when he'd gone.

For months when letters came,
The imprint of his hand on mine still lingered
And I'd kiss my knuckles softly.

But when he does return, he huddles in his mother's house.
His one good hand shields his ravaged face.
(The other's left in France, curled and empty, on a forest floor.)

Sometimes I see the old man walking in that shadowed grove,
Hiding his empty wrist inside a pocket,
And poking his cane among the milkweed plants—

Sometimes stirring butterflies,
But most often amid the stiff, empty pods
That rattle in the wind.

Stolpersteine
by Susan Roth
Honorable Mention

“But to carve the name of a single person on a single marker is to say,
‘Look, this individual lived – lived right here at this actual address.’”
Gunter Demnig, artist and creator of *Stolpersteine*,
stumbling stones of remembrance marking the homes of those
deported in Germany during the Holocaust.

In Cologne, city of the Rhine and the massive Dom,
where roads wind past the forgotten names,
he is carving a poem on the stumbling stones.

Once a bang on the door meant another name gone
and the cruel boot to an Adler, a Drucker, or Stein,
erased from Cologne, city of fire and the blackened Dom.

Now he bangs on the stones and names are brought home
to the ground where you walk on shattered rhymes
of the broken poem he carves on the stumbling stones.

Hier wohnte Rommni or Sinto or Cohn,
here lived thousands deported in the fiercest time
of Cologne, city of war and the battered Dom.

Names are lines in a poem where the secrets of bones
buried deep burst from the letters he signs
in the tomb he craves on the stumbling stones.

Brass shocks the dulled cobbles, all honed
to gold by your steps, while cathedral bells chime
the toll in Cologne, city of ghosts and the haunted Dom,
where he carves our lost lives into stumbling stones.

Youth (13-18) Category

the ungodly hour

by Jennifer Hu

First Place

even he felt the heat
on a night like that one
weighing on him
like giles corey's stones

in the darkness he hugged his gun
and saw puritans in the village
creeping by the devil
witchcraft in the forest

but he knew it was only his platoon
hiding in the woods
burrowed under sweaty blankets
the puritans had nothing to fear

he might have been mistaken though
maybe there *was* witchcraft
in the forest that night
waiting under a starless sky

because in the morning the land was hell
lit up with mortar rounds
and the devil's prey
lay strewn on the ground

a burnt girl
a soldier
a cow with shrapnel in its side

***BOMBS AWAY.
CIRCA WORLD WAR TWO
FLORENCE, ITALY***

by Emma V. Ginader
Honorable Mention

Remember a time
When the avenues and the alleys
Were safe to walk upon?
When our legs were as free as our minds?

Not any more,
All I see are chisels of cobblestone.

Remember when we debated
Mussolini's politics
Beside the river bed?

The bombs drilled
All of the bridges into ruin

Remember the art
I introduced to you?
You didn't like it,
Your mind was blocked off,
Buried in the deepest trench.

The art is hidden
Somewhere. Shut off by bricks.

Remember the days we went window-shopping
Our eyes glimmering in the clear glass?

The sandbags are in the way
Blocking the view with their lifeless and denses mass.

Remember the passion I had for you.

Remember how I loved you?

Remember
when you were alive?

Youth (12-Under) Category

The Light is Shining on Us

by Xiao Jin Jackson

First Place

Inside a shooting star are wolves so fast
they make the star shoot

 Inside a shooting star is cold air
 pushing to get out

Inside a shooting star are frogs
croaking so loud it's like an elephant yelling
into a microphone that has a speaker that runs
all the way around the world.

 Inside shooting star is peace
 trying to make its way to Earth.

Inside a shooting star is laughter,
everybody is happy.

 Inside a shooting star is light,
 light shining on us.

Healing Over

by Virginia Hinchman

Honorable Mention

The door hangs dejectedly off its hinges
like a wounded soul
The roof is caved in:
crumpled, helpless, unloved.

Chipped paint and rotting wood
are all that's left
of what was once a someone's safehaven,
someone's home.

Harsh red spray-painted numbers
tattoo the place with the memory
of the dead.

Bags of rotting trash
are spewed across the side walk.
Plastic, wood and metal
poke out of a teared trash bag.

Small moss framed flowers grow
in the cracks of the house,
pushing their delicate Violets' heads
determinedly through the broken concrete.
Grass weaves through the broken boards.

The flowers, like New Orleans
are not ready to give up.
They will never give up.