

**THEODORE GARRISON CREATIVE WRITING AWARDS
WESTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
CREATIVE WRITING FESTIVAL 2005**

POETRY

First place:

Casey Johnson, Macomb High School
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Second place:

Kara Brown, Pekin High School

Third place:

Desiree Craig, Pleasant Valley High School

Honorable Mention:

Cody Morris, Pleasant Valley High School
Doug Addy, Pekin Community High School
Phillip Schissler, Pleasant Valley High School
Christina Richards, Macomb High School
Michael Bloom, Macomb High School
Jessica Miller, Southeastern High School
Stacy Hankins, Rochester High School
Rita Trentadue, Pekin Community High School
Megan Christianson, Pekin Community High School
Steve Long, V.I.T. High School

FICTION

Honorable Mention:

Shea Sims, Rochester High School -
Phillip Schissler

I can easily imagine dying of thirst; I am thirsty every day. I will do anything to feel a splash of pristine liquid against every inch of my flesh again, to smell the crispness of water and be able to do more than just quickly slide it past my parched lips and into my throat. I crave the feeling of water running down my bare body again, how clean and pure and fluid it would feel. I thirst for more.

equally patiently for them to let me be because I know I will never accept the fact that water is forbidden for my skin, and all I want to do is swim in it.

like me on Dateline before and

-depressive, anxiety-stricken girls just

hic death predictor. A rainstorm calls for a hundred-percent chance of at least one suicide per day, it seems, as people run out of their houses into flash flood streets and dive off of bridges into polluted waters. And a snow flurry can be worse because humans of assorted ages roll around in the standing snow until they too are frozen snowflakes of crystallized skin. Just more excuses for people to complain about the weather or any thing else, for that matter.

drowning. If I every dive into water again, I want it to last forever.

I remember the last time I really felt water on my skin. It was during the period when nobody y fingers underneath

not believe them and would not deprive myself of the sensation of running water streaming between my fingers. Then the tra

I hear the front door open and I look up in a daze. The rain seems to close in and I open my
and eagerly soaking in every drop of rain that clambers for his skin.

My mom and I both freeze at the entrance of the door, and we are aware that we are helpless victims once again, forced to accept this choice of fate. Instinctively I want to stop him, but I understand him more than ever now, as he plunges haphazardly into the rain. His determination is beautiful. To witness a suicide is so beautiful, I realize now, because it is the most elaborately courageous and bold death there is.

They say that you should always dance like nobody is watching you. My brother is dancing in skin, and the agony becomes evident in his eyes. Yet he is still joyous in his death, as his limbs melt and fall beneath him, letting his entire body sink into the water and soil and become muddy with it. He bathes in the glory of his death, thrusting his hands into the air with the last amount of strength he has, as though the sky is his savior and its rain is the blood of the Lamb. I watch numbly as he dissolves away into a fantastic bloody mosaic of lifeless, flesh-colored liquid.

My mom, standing next to me, has water in her own eyes, and she fumbles in her pocket for her tear suppressant pills before she starts crying and destroying her skin. She hands me one as well, but I

Days pass by in blur of sympathy cards and syrupy phone calls and I am bitter all over again. I no longer look at the lingering puddles outside and yearn to jump in them, but I like to glance inside them understand him.

On the way to his funeral it begins raining, and my mother curses as she flicks the windshield wipers on. Somehow they console me, the monotone slap, slap as they slick their squeegee blades rhythmically against the glass. They seem in as much of a trance as my mom and me.

Voices as monotone as the windshield wipers drone on at the funeral, and I ignore them as I walk
-drenched soil. It is simply
tradition carried on to soothe the

Second Place Fiction

**Katie Gettinger
Macomb High School**

I impatiently glanced down at my watch, desperately hoping that the hands might have moved on to some larger numbers since the last time I had checked. Unfortunately, only three minutes had past and I was still ten minutes early for the city bus. I took a seat on a bench near the bus stop, a little leery about the thought of having to stall until my transportation arrived. A pleasant looking young man on the bench looked up from his novel and smiled as I sat down, graciously scooting himself over to allow some room for me. He seemed warm and friendly, but I still felt uncomfortable having to sit and kill time while waiting for the bus. I had always been fond of punctuality, and patience was not one of my strongest virtues.

I heard a rustling of papers and I looked across the street, a poor sight awaiting me. An older man sat with his back against the decaying brick front of a building, taking his place amongst a pile of waste. With delicate, deliberate and concentrated motions, he stuffed wads of old, dirty newspaper into his stained and worn out garments in an attempt to insulate himself for the coming winter. A small shoebox sat on the sidewalk in front of him along with a tattered corner of cardboard

Like a creeping fog, several young boys appeared, slowly drifting towards the homeless man as he continued to concentrate upon his task. The boys were lean with finely chiseled faces, and a chilling look of evil mischief sparkled in their stony eyes and played upon their lips. They circled their prey like hyenas, cackling and snickering softly to each other as they closed in. Every motion was slow, casual, and precise, and soon the old man took notice of the slithering company and he halted in his work, his eyes darting to and fro as he surveyed each of his foes. He set down his papers and frowned in confusion, finally pointing to his handmade sign after several long seconds of silence, thinking perhaps the boys would be kind enough to leave some spare change.

In an instant they were upon him ripping at his clothes and pummeling his frail body. Hollow thuds and muffled sho looked around, wondering if anyone would put a stop to these young hooligans and save the poor man. However, I realized that the only people in the general vicinity were the young man sitting next to me and myself.

I have to do something, I thought to myself, I have to go save him. I repeated it over and over in my head until suddenly I realized that I was still sitting on the bench, watching the fight with a drooping jaw. While half of my body screamed at me to go help my fellow man and to rescue this innocent soul who just happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time, the other half of me stayed firmly planted to the park bench.

I need to step up. That man is in trouble, and I am the only one who can save him right now. What if his life depends on me? Perhaps the boys will beat him until his heart goes out, and his only chance of survival will be my intervention. No, I think to myself, more likely the boys would let him live. They would let him live out of spite, just to let the old man be forever ashamed of himself and

Cut that out! Leave him alone

Doubt raced within my mind like freight train, plowing through any thought that stood in its way and cutting all the cohesiveness out of my plans. The boys could have reasons for attacking the man, I supposed, trying to rationalize the situation. Perhaps he had stolen their money or he is some sort of s arrest. No, that should be taking place here is one I would make through my intervention into the fight. Those boys a cheap

nal and quick to judge. Besides, do I really want to extend myself out to someone like him? Sure, what the boys are doing is unlawful, but does the man really deserve to be saved?

The question is whether I should really risk my own neck to try to help someone of his standings. wild dogs? I would have to be a fool to take a risk like that. Why should I try to race back into the burning building

rescue of the homeless man. My bench mate outweighed me by at least thirty pounds, and he was, after efficient than me. I watched as he just sat there, staring at the fight with a look of pity gleaming in his eyes. He made no motions to get up and help or to reprimand the boys.

Once more I thought of shouting, perhaps just to distract the attackers long enough for the old man to crawl to safety. But then what would happen? Once they discovered that they had lost their prey, would they ten descend upon me? Would my bench mate than perhaps try to defend me, or would he simply stare, his jaw slack, as I was beaten to a bloody pulp? Was my worth to him anymore than the homeless man on the street? Whatever the case, I c

I turned my head and began to read the front page of the newspaper in the dispenser next to the bench. I listened as the struggle winded down, and by the time I had read the first column of the paper it sounded like the boys had dispersed. The city bus groggily pulled up, and with a hiss it came to a stop and opened its doors. As I made my way to the bus and began to enter, I heard a soft, muffled sound. I looked across the street and saw the old man, his scraggly face buried in his hands. He was softly weeping to himself. I heard his whimpers and I swallowed hard, about to walk over and comfort him when suddenly my thoughts were interrupted.

me as I paused with one foot inside and one foot outside the bus. I came to my senses and remembered how long I had been waiting for the bus, and slowly, hesitantly, I climbed the stairs and found myself a seat. I sank down and sighed heavily, and finally my heart and mind agreed with each other and let my entire body feel the heavy impression of guilt.

