

First Prize

Michael McCabe, Oriel High School 6th Form

Ah, the tomahawk you say? That sweeping sliver of river-born silver
that can sweep through the air like arrow from quiver. And how
does she fair, that u waya with the oaken hair? Hurt- crippled in
the hunt, wounded in the woods- from the blade you say?

O! O! O! The brother's finger too? She took it from him they swore, a thug's
idea to the dohi maiden's sword.

How she runs o how she runs! she

Gallops from,

Sprints from,

Stalks from,

dives

and

hides from prying eyes.

Home at heart, prison in her psychosis, the wary gigadanegisgi cannot
bear, to ever dare to see her parents' angry warchief's stare...

But is she a gang-blade, a hooligan, a girl with fiendish aim?

Or was this bludgeon simply child's play, a harmless woodland game?

Fighter or wronged assault, ayastigi, it matters not to them.

When she acts so mad, so young, 'spite the crimson fissure on her finger.

Side note – the non-English words are Native American, specifically from the language of the Cherokee people.

"u": strong of heart

"wuya": wolf

"dohi": healthy

"gigadanegisgi": blood taker

"ayastigi": warrior

Waiting for the Past

by Les Murray

Child Logic

The smallest girl
in the wild kid's gang
submitted her finger
to his tomahawk idea –

It hurt bad, dropping off.
He knew he'd gone too far
and ran, herding the others.
Later on, he'd maim her brother.

She stayed in the bush
till sundown, wrote
in blood on the logs, and
gripped her gapped hand, afraid

what her family would say
to waste of a finger.
Carelessness. Mad kids.
She had done wrong some way.

First Prize

Alice West, Surbiton High School

Deep Lane

I wrote a letter this morning
to Chasm, Back Garden, and childishly dreamed
it rode into the core of Earth's palpitations where I could see it no longer.

The hole, eight inches wide, still stands
among other newer vessels, the pulse of the heart in my chest.
I never knew where it led –

And once we brandished a twig
to probe, I suppose in curiosity
(I have always been determinedly curious,
popping questions like grapes swallowed whole).

There was always something and nothing in the hole
and when it stirred I would shriek and run into the house,
insides leaping to dizziness, cascading -

I remember making my own decrepit tunnels in sand dunes, running
my hands through the crumbling channels,
and later eating sandwiches with feet buried.

My mother said I was a *nightmare*
as she scrubbed my scalp bleeding brown, after I learnt
that chasing rabbits down rabbit holes
belongs only in stories.

I still remember the taste, wet grit beneath bitten fingernails,
wide eyes gazing into midnight earth, lost inside the grins without a face
who never knew why rabbit's hollow was so impenetrably real,
and always dreamed of where it might lead.

Deep Lane

by Mark Doty

Deep Lane

Trying to pick radishes before the rain begins,
though the verb's not right; *pick's* a quick and singular jab
of an action, when what's required

is to squat and peer among the ragged leaf-towns
for dome-tops risen dusty ruby or scarlet, eggshell or violet,

and then to grasp the whorl at the base and yank
upward, lightly, so the whole plant lifts
in a sweet-scented loose clump.

good mineral dirt falling from the white roots
and the accomplishment at their center: jewel-toned

Russian somehow, artful, varied, contradicting Leonardo,
who wrote that nature foes nothing unnecessary;
how would he account for this two-toned cylinder,

voguish red giving way, near the tip,
to a ghost-swath of muslin...

Then the first unsettling rumble
through the spatter
that's begun to muddy

then wash our hands, gathering body
until it suddenly seems to pass, like a wave, through the
clutches

of radishes we're holding,
and then we can feel it, in our own hands:
the force that rings the air,

drives through silt possibility from nothing into wet dirt-
speckled presence:
the two impossible bundles of thunder we're holding.

Runner-up

Ellie Chatteron, The Priory Academy LSST

Sweetheart, Come Back

The way you make your tea with too much sugar is enough.
The way you dance across the cold floor without your striped socks with holes
in the toes is enough. Mind the coffee table. Check for a bruise.
There is no bruise. Only a insouciant grin. That's more than enough.
The scar on your wrist from a battle with the stove. My God that makes me
laugh. Your multicoloured hair because you change your mind more often than you
lose your it. Somehow you're strong in a delicate way like the teacup you've
had since you were five, or the spiders web in your room or the last slivers of the
afternoons sun that lingers long enough to give hope it'll stay. Your innumerable yet
utterly useless talents like the ability to recite french love songs, even if your
accent verges on spanish. Even the way you chew you pen til your lip resembles
the colour of my coffee. Every time! Absentmindedly leaving arbitrary pocket dials
to fill up my answering machine every evening. That one look you have that
I've only ever seen you use for me, all for me and me alone,
that's enough. Your tattered sketches or the doodles you leave on the windows
that have been grace with the cold weathers translucent and ghostly imprint.
Even that. So sweetheart return to me again even if in the warm smile of
a stranger. Im doting on divine intervention. Sweetheart return to me.

Beauty/Beauty

by Rebecca Perry

Sweetheart, Come

All the tea and buttered toast in the world is not enough.
All the beaches with their sandy beating hearts and their glittery shores are not enough. Hold up your boots. Check for mud. There is no mud. Walk right on through. This is not enough. Not your adorable dog wanting to be my friend. My god I want that too. Not a sweater the colour of a Christmassy satsuma, which is the most particular orange. Not most love which is weak like the crumbling root of a grey tooth, or the Georgian windows or the plants that welcome you home like a litter of green tongued puppies. The couple who can walk and kiss at the same time and not lose balance, not even. Not even the sad panda at the zoo chewing into something resembling happiness. Finally! Not guessing first time round which is the soft eye of the coconut. The friendliest looking lemon cake in all the world, dedicated to you and you alone, is not enough. Not your scratched or the fruit flies hovering around a bowl of sweet brown bananas and snow-peaked oranges. Not that. Just sweetheart come to me in a swarm of insects pulsing through the sky. Sweetheart come and settle at a place near me.

Runner-up

Dexter Simpson, Eton College

For Claudia Rankine:

Citizen: A Haiku

There is imbalance

Where there should be equality

Claudia, I'm sorry.

Citizen: An American Lyric **by Claudia Rankine**

In line at the drugstore ...

In line at the drugstore it's finally your turn, and then it's not as he walks in front of you and puts his things on the counter. The cashier says, Sir, she was next. When he turns to you he is truly surprised.

Oh my God, I didn't see you.

You must be in a hurry, you offer.

No, no, no, I really didn't see you.