



CONTACT: Nancy Cook-Monroe
May, 2020

Aline B. Carter Poetry Prize winners announced

*The prize, which carries monetary awards,
is for San Antonio high school students.*

A citywide poetry competition for high school students is awarding six young poets with monetary prizes in the second annual Aline B. Carter Poetry Contest for Young Poets, co-sponsored by the [Maverick Carter House](#) and [Gemini Ink Literary Arts Center](#). Poems focused on the theme, “The Natural World of Texas.”

Winning Best Overall Poem is Jacqueline Halldórsson, a senior at Claudia Taylor Johnson High School, for “Only Texas Knows.” The honor comes with a \$1,000 prize. Second Prize, with a \$500 award, goes to Devyn Moore, a senior at the Young Women’s Leadership Academy, for “The Life of a Rock.” Third Prize winner is Thelo Lewis for “Odyssey of the Sonne.” Lewis is a senior at Health Careers High School.

The judges, chosen for their varied approaches to poetry and esteem in the literary community, chose the three top winners from 20 finalists, out of nearly 100 entries. They also selected the best poems in the categories of Free Verse, Form, and Spanish language.

Judges include 2018-‘19 San Antonio Poet Laureate Octavio Quintanilla, former English teacher and poet Mobi Warren, and spoken word artist Anthony “The Poet” Flores.

Winners in the three categories are William Rowden of Brandeis High School for Best Poem in Free Verse, Gina Yu of Health Careers High School for Best Poem in Form, and Ricardo

Rodriguez of North East School of the Arts for Best Poem in Spanish. Each award carries a prize of \$100.

“We were thrilled to have nearly twice as many submissions than in our inaugural contest last year,” said Marline Carter Lawson, granddaughter of Aline B. Carter, who sponsors the contest with her brother Paul Carter. The competition honors Aline’s championing of young writers through a similar contest in her lifetime and poetry readings at her family home, the historic Maverick Carter House, downtown. Carter served as Poet Laureate of Texas from 1947 to 1949, co-founded Poetry Day in Texas, and continued writing poetry until she died at age 80 in 1972.

A winners reception with readings and check presentations was planned in the Maverick Carter House but had to be canceled due to COVID-19. Readings of poems by the top three winners are available on the Maverick Carter House [website](https://maverickcarterhouse.org), maverickcarterhouse.org.

Best Overall Poem 2020
Senior at Claudia Taylor Johnson High School

Only Texas Knows...

By Jacqueline Halldórsson

What happens outside while I'm asleep? Does the White-Tailed Deer still saunter? Does the Honey Mesquite still weep?

Does the Free-Tailed Bat still dangle? Does the Bigtooth Maple still drool? Does the Texas Frogfruit still tangle?

Does the Edwards Aquifer still vein? Does the Monarch still voyage? Does the moon still wane?

Does the Willow Oak still shade? Does the breeze still whisper? Does the Snow Goose still wade?

Does the Cicada still drone?

Does the Mexican Plum still ripen? Does the Woodhouse Toad still moan?

Does the natural world join my doze? Only Texas knows...
Only Texas knows...

Second Prize 2020
Senior at the Young Women's Leadership Academy

Life of a Rock
by Devyn Moore

I wish I was a leaf.
I wish the wind could pick me up and let me soar past trees and buildings,
looking down upon bluebonnets, cows, and oil rigs as far as the eye can see.
But I am just a rock,
and not a pretty a rock:
a dull, jagged, boring rock.
I'm no collector's item or work of art.
I wish I was a flower.
I wish someone would see my beauty and pick me to take home and put in a vase,
but no one ever plucks me out of desire;
the only movement I experience is a few feet away when I'm kicked by dragging feet.
I usually stay still and watch everything happen around me:
I watch the trees darken as winter comes
and the rodents burrow into the ground under the Texas sun.
The life of a rock is a lonely one.
I'm a part of our world but no one sees me as such.
Without me the ground would not be solid enough for longhorns to run upon
There would be nowhere for aquatic turtles to sunbathe,
And no way for bats to make their cavernous homes
Yes, being a rock is a thankless job,
but that is my important role,
Yes, I could be a leaf but if I were floating in the air
Who would be here on the ground
Making sure our earth stays together

Third Prize 2020
Senior at Health Careers High School

Odyssey of the Sonne

by Thelo Lewis

A webbing highway stretches onward west,
Of gleaming thread, of rising eastern sun.
The road now thins which once was awf'ly dense:
Worn vessel of our country's boiled blood.

Bright stars are lit and shine across the state,
Outstretched akin to swollen spider's prey,
Now stuck in webs, now fools to tricky fate,
They pulse with life, determined still to stay.

We flee the light, we ride across the sky,
So quickly shunning all which glitters false,
As gold Apollo reins his horses high,
Beyond, out west, to nature's light we cross.

And when with stressful life we must contend,
We yearly take our trip to old Big Bend.

The sun is high above the two of us
(A Buc-ee's stop in five more miles now!)
The endless sky is blue and quite enough
Within the quiet peace that we have found.

The ABBA CD starts again from one—
The surest marker of an hour passed—
You roll the window down to spit out gum,
I holler as the wind shrieks by; we laugh.

We barrel on now seventy per hour,
On barren road forsaken by the tourists,
I spy revolving, glinting, tall wind-towers
That make our classic Texan green white forests.

Nature blooms from modern urban scenes
As hectic life to quiet heat recedes.

We travel straight through rocky hills beyond

To rising mountains which horizons bless.
The burning sun now kisses earth, thus calmed
By weary journey through our Lone Star mess.

The hated desert teems with silent life,
With butterflies and deadly snakes galore.
Prickly pears and desert grass delight;
I wonder at the vultures as they soar.

The crimson sunset beckons with its taunts
Of reckless beauty in forgotten nooks,
I'm mesmerized by colors that it flaunts,
A siren's call unknowable from books.

We've reached our haven, unforgotten friend,
And eat (just us) steak dinners once again.

So now the tiny stars light up the night
(I lay without a roof above my head)
And call to me that everything's all right;
I count them as they blink above my bed.

With lullabies, they sing me soon to sleep,
One streaks across the sky in desperate dance;
To keep my eyes awake is quite the feat;
A thousand glitters brave a single glance.

Soft cicada calls obscure my thoughts
Of everything which causes me such grief,
The sky is stained by Milky Way across,
My cheek is wet with awestruck disbelief.

From nature's grasp eventually we fly;
Against the sun, it's just my dad and I.

Cuna Tejana

No hay nada
como el soplo de una
baja brisa Tejana
mal-presentada en una
noche de verano húmeda
levantando las cortinas espectrales
que se mueven como muchachas,
vestidas de seda, media-desnudas...
corriendo por el monte

Desde aquí — desde
esta aislada ventana
puedo ver la frontera quieta —
con procesiones musicales
y orquestas y óperas
de chicharras invisibles
Andando con su festival
o triste funeral
A la orilla del cuerpo envejecido y mal-nutrido del gran río,
ya medio seco y sin profundidad.

Aquí hay una nube
más legendaria, más perfecta
que las mismas neblinas de
caracola que circulan
el mismo Monte Olimpo
— Estas nubes fueron pintadas
por un pintor, por un tal Dalí,
o una tal Kahlo,
para que los mismos Arcángeles
salvajes del paraíso
jueguen en ellas y
Nos vigilen desde los cielos— para entretenerse,
Para que bailen y armen
sus castillos de algodón vaporoso,
Para que se bañen y descansen
en hamacas mojadas
Empapadas de sudor.

Y las ninfas Tejanas
y Mexicanas, cantándole al
zopilote nocturno y el ratonero plateado,
en una noche, al llegar esa hora gris crepuscular,
La soñolienta madrugada
que empieza ver el destello fino de color

a las flores de pradera y trozos de oro
en el río

Ahí llegó el amanecer,
las nubes anunciaron
sus trompetas con cascadas
de rojo, rosa, y naranja
reluciente por los cielos,
como si hubiese derramado sus acuarelas
por un techo de azul ligero
Y ahí, un cardinal inyectado
con un suero rojizo furioso
se perco en una rama retorcida, respiro
hondo, y dejó salir una serenata
 que por un momento pensé
Vino de la boca de mi madre
cantándome una canción de cuna
en aquel tiempo perdido,
En una mañana lejos y remota
tan Tejana cómo está.

Best Poem in Free Verse 2020
Brandeis High School

The Run of the Deer

By William Rowden

I crunch bees under my feet, yellow metal animals.
They can't stop the bullet shots of blood careening through my arteries with each step. Years ago, the forest was fertile with the children of moss and mulberries
Whose leaves I ate up, flicking my head back to chew them gone,
The mortar and pestle of my flat, white teeth making dirt of them again.
I watched the sun trickle the brightness out of the brown of the branches
And the red of rabbit's skin and innards, that lay abandoned on the ferns.

The arms of my antlers are empty—they have no oak limbs to brush down, No others to wrestle with on the grass for a chance at rebirth:
The doe standing with her legs together, demure as dawn,
Coming to the trophy mate, the bruised winner.

They were quick enough to run when they heard that
Boney, orange monsters were trampling us along with the trees:
Our homes of leafy bedding, then our green foods, then our sleeping children. They ran blind, but I wanted to be like God, undaunted.

Yet what was I turned into when the trees fell, all at once, in a wave of stone-slick, Lifeless, chromium shells, pushing them away like hell's lions, like true predators, Making mounds of carrion, splintered as snapped bone,
And wrenching me deep into the crowded forest,

Where there wasn't a tree to sleep by or a single weed to eat.
Half the forest had died
And the hours it took night to spread its dirty, black hands over the River City, And I had, no longer, a home.

So I turned to life as a streak of spotted brown alongside these Technicolor monsters that blare bright noises, like starved tigers,
And stop before me, as I stare and stare at these new reapers.
I blaze over the mild high gates with the grace I once used in seclusion. Homeless and scarred and scared, I looked back

At my shattered shelter, now a training ring for the mechanical meteors As the practiced turning bedrock into pebbles.

My hoofs chip on this hard ground, and my ears are deafened by the morning's moans That start
at dawn, when I sprint by in hopes of finding a patch of underbrush,
Bright or dull or berriless, that I can fit past my bleeding lips

And shiver in someone's backyard
As the juices drip down my throat, fresh as meat, clean as fat, in keeping me alive In lustfull long
enough to find someone to make darling children
That will also, one day, streak, mud brown, past bright-light steel exoskeletons That swerve like
jaguars around us—the weight of our bodies, their only fear.

The men inside them dress up like tree trunks and watch us
As we pick at scraps, until we start to notice them, our heads bobbing up and down To truly see
past the camouflauge, only to feel the throbbing sting of a bullet
Cross through us, fast as rain, then come close to see us slowly expire.
This is how I'll die now:
At the hands of these things, shrewd as snakes and willing me to fall
Into their cages before they saw off my head
And plaster me to their walls, like I've seen done to so many through open windows-- Dead with
their souls propped up like glassy eyed dolls.

Best Poem in Form 2020
Health Careers High School

The Unplanned Visit

By Gina Yu

The stairs light blue painted like floating sky
Were finely matched with vivid flowers' bloom
The memories caught within the webs of sly
The warming sun stream seen like precious loom
The booming storms roll through with ominous cloud
Reluctantly the trees dance under wind
As rain pours down on rocks: thunderous and loud
The shower leaving flowers as they grinned
The storm soon goes away after it brewed
The bugs, the plums, the leaves, they breathe a sigh
With still composure in a calming mood
Replenished by the healing sun nearby
All birds fly back, all flowers sigh I see
My backyard falling back in place with me

2020 Aline B. Carter Poetry Contest links to winners reading their poems

Jacqueline Halldórsson. Best Overall Poem, "Only Texas Knows"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fd2OeLZNzJc&feature=youtu.be>

Devyn Moore, 2nd Prize "The Life of a Rock"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mmObnLM9YZs>

Thelo Lewis, Third Prize, "Odyssey of the Sonne"

<https://youtu.be/LRQzw8VJlhw>

Gina Yu, Best Poem in Form, "The Unplanned Visit"

<https://youtu.be/zrdF63xabDM>