

Winners of Combining Voices Literary Competition 2020-2021

5th Grade 1st Place

Tyndell Crafton

“By the Arbor”

I am a dark shadow under the tree
I am staring in the distance to an unknown object,
wandering through the woods to find my true love
The dead leaves crunching against the ground
The wind whooshing against the Earth
I hear something behind me
The fresh air blows by with a gentle push of the arbor
The cold dew drops have a soothing noise that calms the Earth's surface
The cold air against my lips is wonderful and soothing
There is someone behind me
I am confused and scared in many different ways
I don't know if this is right, I don't think I actually love him

6th Grade 1st Place

Foster Emerling

“A Shelter Is A Home”

The tree is more than a plant.
It is more than a part of a forest.
It is the most important place to
the creatures who call this tree home.

This tree is a sanctuary.
A squirrel has an untidy pile of leaves,
Warm, dry, and cozy,
Nestled in a hollow, safe from the storms.

This tree is a shelter.
A badger creates an underground burrow,
Dark, earthy, and snug.
A place to raise and guard her cubs.

This tree is a shield.
With a canopy of leaves that protects the nests.
Canyon Wrens, Barn Owls, and a single red-tailed Hawk
Perch on dull, speckled eggs where new life begins.

This tree is home away from home,
For a little boy who scrambles up the branches.
Seeking peace, solitude, and time with his thoughts.
This tree is more than a forest, more than a plant, and more than ordinary,
It is a house with all the hidden tales that make up a home.

8th Grade 1st Place

Reed Woodward

“Snake Chair”

A wooden chair that sits alone in the dark
Cut and carved from a tree's bark
A colorful chair waiting for a fool

This chair is not just a chair or a stool
Wooden snakes twist around its frame
Dangerous it is; that's why it's locked by a chain
Daring you to sit in its seat
It wants something to eat
It may look harmless, but the chair is alive
It stays docile for now, or is it a lie?
Wooden snakes; make no mistake; by what some say
If you take a seat, then dead you will stay!

9th Grade 1st Place
Lanie Coronel

"A Game of Baseball"

Brenda, Steve, Ronnie, Lou
Come one, come all and join us to
A glorious game of great surprise
A ball that soars across your eyes
It's baseball
Every person from the town
All come down to sit around
The field so wide and lit up bright
It blinds the people with the lights
Over baseball
Mother, sister, father, brother
Buy and enjoy with one another
Hot dogs, popcorn, soda, too
They will last the whole time through
At baseball
Pitcher flings and gets a strike
Batter swings with all his might
Doesn't see the ball fly by
Whacks the catcher in the eye
That's baseball
The game is over, the game is done
Some have lost and some have won
Cheers and sobs are shared alike
Now it's time to say goodnight
To baseball
A brand-new day has come to rise
The sun wakes up the sleepy eyes
Brenda, Steve, Ronnie, Lou
They invite everyone to
A game of baseball

10th Grade 1st Place
Kindle Reeves

"Medusa Chair"

The eyes are the window to the soul
and all are opened around her,
pointed towards her.
She leaves her viewers stuck in stone.
As they glance, they grasp, and their stories unfold
unrolling, unravelling, a vision of similars
paralleling each others' pasts.
Flash! a smile, a connection takes root.
Squeezing and curling, adjusting the memories
found and cautiously shared.

It's surreal how one sticks in the mind.
Familiarity is glue, protection from weathering unknown.

Concrete are the roots, burnt into the ground like sienna
only a hint is seen or felt.
No reason to oppose all she knows,
Shed her skin and become anew
But the question is, does she want to?

Abstract expressionism to observe them as they stare.
Grow more limbs, arms and legs on the Medusa Chair.
Essences dance upon the gaze throughout every introduction
with proper manners, the eyes are the window to the soul.
What would happen to her if that window closed?

11th Grade 1st Place
Pandora Keele

“Home”

My name is Pandora Keele. I was born February 5th, 2004 to Stephanie Russel and Jeremy Fuston. In the month of May, 2004 the Department of Children's Services took me away from them. They weren't mentally or physically stable enough to take care of me. I was immediately put into a foster home and on that same day, Elizabeth Keele decided to foster me.

I am not very fond of my birth mother. I've only met her once that I can remember. I met her May 25th, 2019. When I speak to her, I call her by her name. I am open to having a relationship with her, but I feel as if it could never be a mother-daughter relationship. A mother to me is more than just someone who shares the same blood as me. A mother is as altruistic as a dolphin in the ocean.

My Mama adopted me September 7th, 2007, although she did foster me from the time I was 3 months old. She waited to adopt me to give my birth mother a chance to get herself physically and mentally stable enough to take care of me. After 3 years of getting to know Stephanie, my Mama thought that the best decision for me was to adopt me. Being as young as I was she was automatically “Mama” to me, and her son was automatically “Bubba”. She was the person who I woke up to every morning. She fed me, bathed me, clothed me, and most of all loved me like I was her own. No one could make me think that she wasn't my Mama.

On a typical Monday in October, I woke up and went to school. I had a great day, as I did everyday, in first grade. I went home, and when I got there Mrs. Andrea told me to come into her room. In her room stood my “Bubba”. I was excited to see him, which I was excited to see him every time I did. I jumped on him and hugged him. Every time I see him to this day I jump on him and hug him. He looked at me and he said “Mama is flying in heaven.” My heart completely shattered. I had never thought that God would take her from me out of all people.

From that day forward I stayed with Mrs. Andrea, which is who I stay with now. She deserves to be called Mama just as much as my Mama did. She didn't have to take care of me, but she did. I appreciate her so much for everything. She was my Mama's best friend. I know that my Mama is so proud of me. Home will always be with her, never anywhere else. One day we will meet again, and on that day I'll be able to feel what home feels like again.

12th Grade 1st Place
Jordan Turner

“The Deceiving Truth”

The blank space hiding the truth.
The truth hiding itself.
The broken smile deceiving all
The broken smile deceiving itself.
The sleepless nights ceiling gazing.
followed by tear streaming.
Only to find nothing but dark circles that showed only exhaustion.
That was only a misdemeanor to the bigger picture.
Thoughts swarmed her mind at the darkest hours like a colony of ants searching for a way to survive.
But the answer to the only question they asked would be "I'm fine" with that deceiving smile.
They never dug deeper.
So the deceiving became a routine of survival.
Survive the questionnaires because they never gave the answer.