

NAHS Robert Frost Poetry Awards 2010

Fish, Friendship and Poetry

What do a fish, friendship and a sleep disorder have in common? All were subjects of winning poems in the first ever North Andover High School (NAHS) Robert Frost Poetry Awards. Gayle C. Heney, Poet Laureate of North Andover, awarded gold, silver and bronze medals to the winners at the NAHS Awards Day Assembly on June 10, 2010.

Ms. Heney taught three classes at NAHS in which the students responded to multiple three to five minute exercises. “The students’ poetry brimmed with candor, humor and powerful insight. I wanted them to continue writing poetry, so I created these awards. I approached Mark Schorr, Executive Director of the Robert Frost Foundation, with the idea of having students write poems in the spirit of Merrimack Valley’s native son, Robert Frost. He graciously provided the medals.”

The contest was open to all NAHS students. Corey Hocking, a junior, won the silver medal. His 70 line poem, “A Hardcore Fight between a Boy and a Bass” reads:

There was a boy who loved to go fishing
To hook a bass is what he was wishing
At the pond’s sloped edge he would wait all day
While waiting for bites he’d watch birds of prey
His bobber went down when he turned his head
When time to reel up his bait was then dead
“I’ll try a new tactic, maybe a lure.”
So he opened up his top water drawer
A popper, buzz bait, a black Spro frog
With an old wood lure he then walked the dog
A side-to-side motion, hard to resist
A small bass arose through the morning mist
He quickly reeled up, threw his bait spot on
Hoping the bass was not suddenly gone
A few small twitches with his rod tip down
A splash on his lure got rid of his frown
He reeled up his slack and then set the hook
Five seconds too late, too much time he took
Discouraged and all made some more casts
The boy verses the bass, we’ll see who will last
A new technique with the green rubber worm

By flicking his wrist it looked live and squirmed
As he reeled his lure right back to the shore
He could feel the worm hitting the pond floor
His line tightened up, he jerked his rod back
“I knew that the worm is a sure bass snack.”
Struggling to reel he brought all the line in
Then lifted his rod back hoping to win
A long thick branch, not quite the expected
The boy is hopeless and feels rejected
The day had ended dawn had turned to dusk
He packed his gear; tomorrow he'd have luck
“A new day is here, I'm ready to fish.
I hope to catch that bass, just as I wished.”
The boy's first instinct was to use what worked
The old wooden lure that rattled when jerked
He threw it five times, but nothing had bit
Back at his box he pulled out a jig kit
Four colors to choose from, which would work best?
The white coated jig, thrown over a nest
Once hit the water, he let it drop down
A few small flicks then he heard a strange sound
A splash indeed, the fish were near and out
“Then my jig was hit and boy did I shout.”
He set the hook well, and the bass then breached
“The sight was amazing, my goal was reached.”
Then out of the blue the tension was gone
“The fish was gone; boy I'm such a moron.”
Once again the boy's heart had been broken
He slowly walked home not a word spoken
One last day to fish, school starts tomorrow
Without his prized bass school starts with sorrow
The night before, he looked up new tactics
Whichever would work, without being hectic
He started off throwing the black Spro frog
The perfect summer morning, hot with fog
A throw over the weed bed was just right
Patiently waiting hoping for that fight
A fish struck the frog, the boy set the hook
Just as it said in his Bassmaster book
A bass it was, the boy was on a ride

He brought the bass in and held it with pride
A nice twelve pounder, the boy was so shocked
And so was the crowd that sat by the dock
The next day at school the kids told stories
The boy was ready to talk after Tory
He told the story of his twelve-pound bass
When one boy asked if he caught it in Mass
“I did indeed, I caught it down the street
And boy was it ever so god darn sweet.”

Marissa Ranahan, another junior, was the bronze medal recipient. She wrote a seven stanza, quatrain poem entitled, “Friendship”.

Friendship

I admire your courage my friend
Each and everyday
I reminisce about our childhood
The way we ran and played

My parents were together
And yours drifted far apart
You witnessed abuse and vile language
But you still kept a kind heart

Through academics you soared
To yourself you remained true
You went on to achieve greatness
And attracted kudos towards you

You always listened to your peers
With loving, open arms
When you walked next to me in the path of life
The path of life did me no harm

We drifted away towards college
“Keep in touch” you always said
I never forgot your face however
Our memories were never dead

Our roads crossed on the path of life
And I witnessed your face
You glanced at me with a crooked look
My memories had been erased

It pains to know how close we were
And now the friendship's a dull yawn
I admire your courage still my friend
Even though the friendship is gone

Ms. Heney was impressed by both the number of poems submitted and the students' efforts. "It was a privilege to read those seventy poems, all of which were judged without identifying marks. The students spoke with honesty about joys, fears, working through relationships and hope. I look forward to reading next year's entries from such imaginative students."