

The Biggest Question Ever

(First Place - High School)

By: Griffin Wells, Group 3

My brother and I are shuddering in front of the space heater,
wiping the Carmex stains off of the Scholastic: One Thousand
Questions about Dinosaurs book so we can
leaf through and find the page where there are big letters
that tell us when the Earth will be engulfed by the sun,
and life as we know it will cease to exist.

At night we sweat and stick our fingernails into the drywall
thinking about...how it will finally feel
for our 5 billion year old skin to Touch!
the Sun! time to replace our bodies with camera metal
and apply that intergalactic SPF twenty zillion.

Uncle Jeff flicks the mala beads hanging in front of his
dashboard
while we repeat "Wenus!" and tug our elbows and laugh until
our tailbones hurt.
But I stop laughing when I catch a grimace
from that unswollen sun, sweetening
the apricot tree in his front yard.

Looking in at an Old Friend's Wake

(Second Place - High School)

By: Gareth Buhl, Group 5

I fumbled at my tie knot
Wavering between
Respectful and breathless.
Aware that I know no one here
Except the widow
And the boys,
I wait quietly in line
And bite my fingernails.

In the corpse-room (what is it called?)
Relatives stand as islands,
I tread water,
Visitor, voyeur,
Between them

Alone.
Do they feel throttled also
By charcoal tiles
Waves of slate curtains
And grey landscapes?
I heard drowning is peaceful—
This is not.

I wish her clumsy wishes,
Wait watery and useless
Choked at the closed casket, uncertain.
There's a bible and knee-rests
But I'm not a catholic.
I don't pray.
A look over my shoulder: countless
In line await approach.
So I pass on.

Neither of the boys cry,
In their eyes is not him but
Bloated slack face and
Slate hands, briny
Battered washed up blue
Bruised and brackish.

Light and distant,
I can silently slip into sun
And air.
I do.

(Take a story with me,
Leave a body behind)

Inside they still tread water.

Oranges

(Third Place - High School)

By: Elizabeth Patrick, Group 5

At christmas time the box arrives,
Same as last year same as next.
The cheap wood, with one dimensional colors;

Orange and Green. Together, simple depictions of
"Florida's Freshest." Telling us what we already know.

The box alerts me to my carelessness,
Reminds me of my grandmother, far away.
She thinks of me frequently,
I think of her many fewer days.
When we rip open the box my siblings and I,
Some green paper strips fall to the floor.
They fight over strawberry candy, scarce in fake grass
packaging.
An Orange is enough for me.

sleepy, gold cliches

(Third Place - Middle School)

By: Jordie Cornfield, Group 1

You're a tired cliché
A red rose or
A yellow sun
That's dripping
In broken promises
And jumped-to
Conclusions.
You're a love song
That belt-outs something like
'You're the only reason I wrote this song,
When you're here, nothing's wrong'
Something must be wrong, though
If the artist is depending on
Another person for
Their happiness and satisfaction.
Or a RomCom movie where
Girl likes boy, boy likes another girl
Who's blonde or rich or both
And by the end of the movie,
Miraculously,
The original awkward girl who had
A make-over halfway
Through the movie
And the cool jock whose main goal in life
Is a basketball scholarship to UCLA

are together.
You're a tired cliché
That I'm sick of hearing
On and on and on.
You're the girl wearing pink
Or the boy wearing blue
You're everything everyone hates
But they don't know anything else.
Their heads too small,
Or their pants too tight
Somehow the oxygen
Can't reach the part of their
Brain that's groping for the button
That tells them to
Run, run, run.
But my head is the right size
And my dress is floral and pretty.
So I can see
That you're a tired cliché
You're a diamond in the rough
Or something weird like that.
Ah, to be young and foolish
That's a cliché too.
It's kind of sad
But,
Only if you're old,
An old soul, you'd know
All that glitters is not gold.