



*Lacey Loves to Read 2016
Teen Writers Collection*

POETRY

1st place: Untitled by Claire Hill

2nd place: I Walk With Power

by Kayli Robles

3rd place: About My Grandfather by

Amber Granger

SHORT STORY

1st place: He Walks Alone

by Emma Wells

2nd place: The Infection by Aubrey Smith

3rd place: The Black Whistle

by Nicholas McClelland

Cover Art by
Vanessa Bronner

Partners of the 2016 Lacey Loves to Read Celebration, which include the Lacey Timberland Library, the City of Lacey, and North Thurston Public Schools, have created this work to recognize the authors and to promote the programs and organizations associated with Lacey Loves to Read. All creative works herein have been reproduced with permission by the creators and/or the creator's legal guardian(s). All rights associated with the poetry, stories, characters, and art included in this work are retained by the creators for their own use, and may not be reproduced by other entities without their express permission.

Table of Contents

Untitled by Claire Hill 1 st Poetry.....	4
I Walk with Power by Kayli Robles 2 nd Poetry.....	5
About My Grandfather by Amber Granger 3 rd Poetry.....	6
He Walks Alone by Emma Wells 1 st Short Story.....	7
The Infection by Aubrey Smith 2 nd Short Story	9
The Black Whistle by Nicholas McClelland 3 rd Short Story.....	13

Untitled

By Claire Hill

Mornings hold the hum of my guitar strings,
the echoes filling my apartment five levels up from the gum covered concrete, I
look out my window,
watch the children with their sticky grins skip down alley ways.

Time flies by like taxi drivers,
try to fit in moments to write,
too many words and never enough paper,
I've lost track of my wrist watch.

Afternoons move like symphonies,
a harmonization of chattering students and the scuffling of sheet music,
I hum in synchronization with the others roaming the hall,
we sing the same sorrows of young adulthood.

I nibble on apples under the mopey green trees of a local park,
waiting for a moment to spark,
for just that right leaf to fall or person to walk by,
I need some goddamn inspiration.

Nights are my favorite,
always too bright in the city to see any stars,
I began to look for them in your eyes,
always too many words and never enough courage to say them.

I spend time sitting on dusty stages in side street cafes,
read my heart off paper to an audience,
I look through the dark shadows hoping,
wishing you're there.

I Walk with Power

By Kayli Robles

I walk with the movement of a dancer.
I walk down the beautiful, beaten path.
My worries cured
With the setting sun.
Injuries that have healed
Become part of my journey.
I straighten my back.
I lift up my chin.
My feet make noise,
But who cares?
The shoes I wear
Are shoes I have chosen,
I shout to the clouds
Despite everyone who stares.
My voice turns heads,
My feet shake the ground,
Leaving marks in the miles I've come.
Looking ahead,
I have miles to go.
I will suffer, laugh, cry,
I will survive!
Memories cherished, losses mourned,
When I trip on a stone,
I get up!
Yes, I walk down the beautiful, beaten path,
And yes, I walk alone.
Yes, the sun shines,
And yes, I've heard thunder,
And yes,
Every day I go on.

About My Grandfather By Amber Granger

In my hand I hold
A marriage certificate
From June, 1960.

5 My grandma's name is
Written in her bubbly cursive
And then there's his name.

My grandfather's name is
Staring up at me and I feel
Queasy. There is a link

10 To a man who died
Before my birth in '98;
To a man who left.

He left my grandma
To raise four kids on her own.
15 Which angers me because

She changed her last name
From Nygard to Valentine
And he just left her.

20 But genetically
He stayed because he
Passed down his brown eyes

To me, his grandchild.
I wonder now when grandma
Looks into my eyes

25 Does she see you? Or
Does she see me? Me, who is
Trying to be your

Opposite. But then
She pulls me in for a hug
30 It's tight and full of

Love. All my worries
Fade away because I love
Her, and you did not.

He Walks Alone

By Emma Wells

he walks alone

The land was dry, red or brown or tan; the sky gleamed a bright periwinkle or peacock blue. Large landmasses towered over the area, with rings of rust and limestone. In their shadow, tiny succulent brushes dotted the landmass. The air smelled of dust and heat, and the sun burned on your skin. The ashes of hope got in your eyes and mouth, and tasted rough. You could hear nothing, except for the occasional harsh yellow bird call. Soon night fell and there was a creature; it had curly, long, red hairs and towered over you. And something, a figure, something, rode on its back. There was red, scarlet flooding over you, pain exploded in your arms and chest, the thing was trampling you and you felt ow ow ow ow ow ow ow it hurts

he walks alone

Later you were a miner, sleeping in a tent, bright orange and plastic; the red screeches of pure terror filled the air, and the sound of hooves, and you woke up while your tent collapsed, you were clawing your way out, and ... and... a creature, it was huge! .. it ran off into the night, leaving curly red hairs and cloven hoof prints ...

even the sun refuses to shine upon him

You then were Cyrus Hamblin, and you were an honest man... you rode up on your horse, a mare tan and spotted and soft. You smelled fear and it was yours, and there was a camel, and upon it sat a figure that was most certainly a human skeleton... the camel was large and red with one tall hump, but when you told your tale you were not believed ...

he walks alone

Again you were a miner, and you were with some friends... Seeing a large figure, you grabbed your guns and fired but you missed; your hair stood up on the back of your neck as a human skull dropped from the back of the camel. As you examined it you tasted bile. It was the white of bleached bone, with bits of brown hairs and pink skin

visible on some portions of the face; the right cheek and temple were covered in pinkish-white flesh that was stretched thinly over the bone...

his hope is dead, dead, dead

A huge screech echoed through the night, waking you ... you were camped out on the road... a huge creature, it must have been thirty feet! and you ran and you ran and you ran ...

it's no surprise that

A farmer, you saw a huge animal in your yard, grazing... you snatched your gun, smooth and wooden and brown, and shot it, and felled it in that one loud bang ... The animal, it was a camel, with soft, downy, curly red fur and though it had shaken its skeleton rider, the leather straps remained, causing scarring in silvery-red streaks all over the animal's torso from how hard and long upon him those leather chains had sat.

he walked alone

The Infection

By Aubrey Smith

Subjects are prepped and ready to start experiment F01. We will be injecting one dose of serum DP in each subject in 5 minutes.

Subjects one through ten are in the testing chamber with DP in their bloodstream. DP will take action in a matter of seconds. This experiment will go on for one hour and we will be observing how DP affects each subject. Individual encounters with subjects will occur every ten minutes.

Five minutes into experiment FO I and subjects are experiencing intense pain.

First round of interviews are in progress. Subjects one, three, four, and seven stated "I can't last any longer." Subjects two, five, and six begged to be cured. Subjects eight and nine statements were incoherent. Ten stated "There is so much pain. It comes in waves and just washes over you. You are drowning and there is nothing you can do about it."

We are at the halfway mark and nothing has changed.

Subjects have started fighting with each other. Some are physical but most are verbal.

There is no pattern in the fights, yet everyone is fighting with everyone.

The power went out and the doors are not opening. We are stuck in the observing room and subjects are getting more violent. There is no other option but to continue the experiment.

They are trying to get in. We have barricaded the doors with chairs but it's not going to last any longer.

There is no way out. The patients probably have one more push on the door to open it.

We are hopelessly trapped.

They pushed the door in. Tell my family I lov-

“Breaking news from Testing Labs Corporations last night,” the news lady says with perfect inflection. I always wondered how news voices were so perfect. Even when live, there are no stutters or um’s. Just one perfect sentence filled with hope even when reporting a hopeless story. “The study of the new drug DP turns devastatingly wrong when patients kill all of the researchers. Testing Labs Corp refuses to tell the cause of the violent upset but released the last bit of audio from the experiment.”

A fuzzy audio starts to play. At first I hear a loud thud like a metal door falling over. Then I hear the maniacal screams of about ten people and the shrieks of help from two. People are laughing crazily while the sound of escaped blood squishes against flesh. The laughs overpower the desperate screams of the nearly dead. This goes on for about two more minutes. “No escapees were found alive after the gruesome attacks. Researchers say they appeared to have died from heart failure.” The voice all of a sudden changed from serious to peppy. You could literally see her smile in her voice while she droned on. “In other news, puppies! A pregnant dog was brought into the Birthing Center last night and gave birth to eight healthy golden retrievers.”

I tuned out. There was no way to stop the transmission because the broadcasting was mandatory, but I started thinking about other things. In the mix of puppies and any other happy distraction, I thought about the real news. What was that new drug made of? Those patients *killed* people because of it. A deep, dark feeling was taking root in my stomach. The squirmy feeling spread throughout my body and sent sudden pangs of ice into my veins. What if it’s contagious? My common sense blocked out the terrifying thought. The Elders would never lie to us; we have the news transmissions every day for that exact reason. “To build a working city, trust must be emphasized from Elders to the public.” It’s even written in the Rules.

Yet, these dangerous thoughts kept flooding my brain. A nonstop stream of ‘What if?’ questions bombarded my common sense. I jumped up from my chair with put my palms flat on the table and tried to calm my ragged breathing and panicked nerves. Luckily my mother didn’t notice my sudden outburst. She was still listening to the brain news. The perfect news lady was now talking about ducks found in a lake. I tried to wave my mom out of her transfixion but she just sat there with blank eyes, still stuck in

her mind. I don't know why, but I was the only one that could tune out the transmission. I was too afraid to tell anyone. I decided to make us some breakfast.

As I cooked, I stared out the window over the oven. The sky was a watercolor painting filled with vibrant pinks and oranges creating a blood red sunrise. They were expertly blended together with the brilliant arch of the sun rising from the horizon, greeting the world with a beautiful hello. My eyes focused no longer to the outside world, but to the world inside my head. All I could think of were the insane screams from the patients. All of a sudden I heard a deafening inhuman high pitched screeching sound from inside my head. Along with that and the smell of burning eggs, snapped me back to reality.

"Damn it" I whispered to myself. I threw the eggs in the garbage and opened the window to let the smoke out. In the distance, I heard the shrieks of playing children. I turned to my mother who was still lost in the brain news, however I did not hear the flawless voice of the news lady.

"Mom," I said from across the room. "The news is over. Come back to life," I joked, but she did not flinch. The same blank stare was still engraved on her face. "Mom! Wakey wakey eggs and bakey!" Still nothing. "Earth to mom." My eyebrows furrowed and I walked over to her. "Hey, mom. What's wrong?" I went to reach for her shoulder when suddenly a hand gripped my wrist. She whipped her head around with lightning fast reflexes and she screamed. A blood curdling scream erupted from the depths of hell that were her lungs. Her eyes were filled with red veins ready to burst.

Horrified, I tried to yank my hand away from her death grip but it was too strong. She bared her teeth and pulled out the strained words "The pain never *ends*." She stared at me with eyes full of fury. She blinked and a drop of blood escaped from the popping veins in her eyes. She began to cry blood tears. With her eyes still locked onto my soul she let go of my hand. I risked a glance at my wrist for a second, for fear that she would attack me if I broke eye contact, and saw that bruises were already starting to form. Her face became slightly more human and I barely heard the words escape from her mouth "Run."

It seemed like I was running for days, weeks, maybe even decades. And the truth is, that wasn't too far off. I ran past the parks filled with screaming children. Not the

playful and giggly screams, but the screams of flesh being torn off their parents while they watched their neighbors, babysitters, even uncles, do it. I ran until there was no one else to run from because in the end, everyone caught the sickness. DP was not a drug, it was a virus. It was made by the Elders to wipe out the community. And I was the only one left.

The Black Whistle

By Nicholas McClelland

Once upon a time.....

A tall oak tree penetrated the placid clear sky of the town. Houses masqueraded the melancholy hillside, resting like ten thousand brown rickety birds on the aviary slope. Tall wavy green grass seemed to glow vibrantly on the hill, shifting with every meek blow of the zephyrs. A vast palace sat on its solid chair of rock inscribed into the peak. Hundreds of walls and smooth walled turrets weaved their way through the building, only stopping at the hulk of the regular and throne rooms. Above the city, clouds lolled around in the sky, decorating it with fluffy white marshmallows. Dirt paths weaved through the settlements, intersecting willingly at junctions shaped like plus signs. In the heart of the dull houses were several towering churches. Each was made of polished marble. Lines of polished bronze were carved into the corners where the walls met. An open window shaped like an oval was positioned about halfway down each building. At night, blazing candlesticks cast a gentle xanthic light out of them.

A small house stood isolated off to the side of the major neighborhood. It was a makeshift shack that looked like two unstable sticks stabbed into the ground that had a rough dark colored tarp laid over them. A crackling fire hissed warningly, devouring innocent tinder and sturdy logs. A vast steppe with short, prickly grass was layered out next to the shabby tent. Thousands of short haired sheep dwelled in the plain. In the approximate middle of the field stood a wooden pole hammered into the ground. A small twig-like peg protruded out of one side, and on it hung a black glistening whistle.

The person that resided in the house was well known in the town. She was covered in a maroon cloak that covered her face. It was dotted with swirling patterns of green, silver, and black. You couldn't see her face; only sleek, long, silvery hair dangled down. Small wrinkly hands were cracked from lack of moistness and had black nails to accompany them. Her fingers were long and wiry. Her back was hunched over. A

scrappy necklace of seven bone beads each painted a different color hung from her invisible neck.

Every so often the hag would swoop open the hide flap of her hut and venture out into the fields at dusk. No one knew if they were hers, and no one bothered to find out. She made her way to the pole and unhung the whistle from its perch. She fathomed up considerable strength and, with a single puff of air, blew into the whistle.

Piercing screams echoed through the expansive fields. Secretive musing whispers talked to the air. Chiding choruses of chanting voices littered the field. Eerie whistles recited themselves promptly. Sinister screeches penetrated through the darkness. And yet more screams followed.

The sheep gazed up to the stars. The cold wind whipped against the dancing grass. The sheep started stumbling towards the woman in a trance. Even though there were thousands of hooves pounding on the soil, not a sound could be heard over the tempest of screams and yells. When the first sheep reached her, she held out a skeletal finger and tapped it on its short snout. The sheep's form darkened heavily. It was like a cloud in the night sky. And then it screamed.

The perforating screech could be heard over the other screams of victims. The sheep's form was sucked slowly into the whistle's glistening shape, like black water being poured down a drain. She repeated this process until only a few sheep dotted the rolling steppes. It was nearing dawn when she was done.

The woman approached the pole and hung the whistle back on it by thin, peeling twine. Her smile was hidden as she sauntered with concealed glee back to her shack, where she spent the whole day sleeping soundly, the echoes of screams playing in her dreams.

The next day, the woman journeyed into town. She rested herself on an old wooden stool. In front of her was a rickety stall. A dusty black and white cloth was draped over two thin wooden poles. The poles were pressed into a long crate that rested on the ground. The stall was in the town square. The woman kept her hood pulled down very low. Several sturdy men with gruff black beards walked by. Numerous women dressed in long flowing red dresses carried young children and walked at a steady pace to keep up with their spouses. The hag smiled and began walking about

the square. She purposely brushed by people to see their clothes fall into abandoned heaps on the mud brick floor. A shining black veil of minuscule spiders erupted from the pile of a young man's red clothes. People scrambled out of the way to evade the creepy critters, screaming. The woman smiled and let the arachnids crawl up her and into her mouth and up her clothes. Suddenly a piercing yell cut through the frenzy.

"Stop!" A young man with dark olive skin and ruffled brown hair stepped into the woman's view. His sugar cane eyes were a light brown. They were tight with fury. He was dressed in a ragged mesa-colored shirt and ripped almost white jeans. The woman sighed. Each town had one: the hero. The one that was supposed to save them from the Swarm. The one that didn't save them from the swarm. The hero charged forward, brandishing a dull spear rusted with the color of grapefruit. The populace cheered with lackadaisicalness. They either knew that the hero would fail or they were assured that he would win, taking on a careless tone. The man reached the woman. He screamed as a dark flow of spiders appeared in substitute of half of his face.

The woman was enjoying herself.

She held the man's spear loosely in one hand, letting it rest at her side. The man wasn't giving up. He grasped the woman's skeletal wrist with a strange glove made of maroon leather. The woman howled with fury and determination. She tried to reach the man's soft skin, but her hands grasped the dry air.

On her third attempt to reach the man, he thrust her hand back towards her. The woman's hand brushed against her cloak. A bit of flesh dribbled away into insects. The woman's determined look wavered for a split second and then hardened into a mix of fear and anger. "Why are you winning?!" she hissed. "Nothing is happy forever after!" The man forced her hand into her stomach like her fist was a gleaming sword. The woman's stomach fusilladed into an eruption of spiders. She fell into a bed of insects, the sheets writhing beneath her. Endless waves of spiders began to fold over her. She was dissolving into a mess of arachnids.

And the woman let out the screams she had been keeping for herself at last.

The End.....