

First Place, Teen Category

Favorite Thing to Watch for on the Roads: Overcompensation.

| Without cruise on the highway, mindlessly dipping miles, one-two tires pressing on a rumble strip; drifting. Come back to life and hit ultraspeed, flying from barely seventy-three to well mid-eighties. The passing lines now taste tire for a moment before re-re-correction. | Catching on a bit late through the poorly-plowed country backroads to snow drifts stretching to the road's center, almost plunging into tall banks. Break through to the other side of the pavement, too eager for escape. |

Driver.

| You need not try so hard to right your wrongs. | Subtle correction is best, most effective, least overwhelming. You prove nothing by swerving wildly, flipping wheel opposite way. You prove nothing but the danger of eagerness, careless correction following careless mistake. | Wetting the wound before the bandage. You can't skip wiping soreness dry just because it takes time. |

- **Asher Schroeder**

Second Place, Teen Category

Planting Seeds

What's done is done

Words remain the silent one

Actions scream with untested fury

I planted a seed today

Thinking it would wither away

Instead, it sprouted amidst the choke of weeds

Basking in rays of a falling sun

What time has broken, can't be fixed

Reality doesn't care

If we mourn

Or turn to indifference

Fresh rain lingers in the air

Soon the touch of spring will be born

and my seed will meet the breath of the wind

I planted a seed that day

Many moons ago

Now the branches reach for the sky, like a child to their parent

And I don't know what will happen with actions

If we shall rise against injustice

Or fall to the lies they teach us

We planted seeds that day

Individual sprouts

Rooting together as one

What's done cannot be undone

- **Lillian Gantzer**

Third Place, Teen Category

Returning Library Books

Never let someone return and pick you up six times.

For the sixth time, the same book
drops in the library exchange box,
returned by the same person's hands
each occasion. When those palms

come back inside to snag it
from the shelf again, they grip
softly. Stark contrast to the chucking
experienced when returned in due-back;
junk barely worth the effort of lifting.

Regardless of wear and unwanted,
the book is allowed its space
placed again on shelves if so desired,
where anyone may take it back
down and smooth through its contents.

What knowledge is unhelpful to one
saves another; complex or linearly-lined,
it should not hide, stashed in plastic bins
in the library annex, or beneath shelves
collecting dust unseen where others
need not fuss between papers
hopeful for repairing.

After all, pages do tatter,
covers indeed scar, pieces
of delicate paint
peeling their parts–

the only thing truly and
wholly unappealing,
turning away hands worthy
of page turning,
is keeping each edition locked away
where no one can reach.

- **Asher Schroeder**