

The Jim Harrell Poetry Scholarship Awards

Alabama High School Poetry Competition

First Place: a \$1,000 scholarship • **Second Place:** a \$500 scholarship • **Honorable Mentions (5):** a \$100 scholarship each

In an effort to encourage the youth of Alabama to pursue literary exploration and excellence, the Jim Harrell Poetry Scholarship Awards have been established.

Contest guidelines:

1. The competition is open to any high school senior (or equivalent) in the State of Alabama who intends to enroll at the University of Montevallo. This includes students in public schools, private schools, home schools, or any alternative education.
2. All entries must be original and unpublished.
3. Each contestant should submit one (1) poem only, typed on 8 1/2 x 11-inch paper. Four (4) copies of the poem should be sent. Clear photocopies are acceptable.
4. The poem should not be more than one hundred (100) lines long.
5. The poet's name should not appear anywhere on the poem.

6. A cover sheet should be included that lists the poet's name, address, telephone number, the name and signature of the guidance counselor or sponsoring teacher, the name of the high school the student is attending (if applicable), and the title of the poem submitted. The following statement should be included on the cover sheet with the poet's signature:

"I hereby certify that the poem (insert title) is my original work and that all rights to this poem are mine. I am entering this poem as an honest and true representation of my own creativity and unique artistic vision."

7. All submissions should be sent to:
The Jim Harrell Poetry Scholarship Awards
Dept. of English and Foreign Languages
Sta. 6420
University of Montevallo
Montevallo, Alabama 35115

8. Manuscripts must be postmarked by February 1 of the current academic year. No late entries will be accepted.

9. All entries will be recycled once the contest has concluded. Do not send your only copy. No manuscripts will be returned.

10. The winners will be recognized at the Montevallo Literary Festival in the spring.

11. The awards may be applied toward tuition, fees, and books during the first semester's enrollment at the University of Montevallo. No cash will change hands.

12. Award is a one-time scholarship and is non-renewable.

Judging: Entries will be judged off-campus by professionals in the field. Criteria for judges include creativity, originality, imagery, artistic quality, and mastery of poetic expression. Poems in traditional form and rhyme are encouraged.

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University of Montevallo.
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James N. Harrell.*

For more information,
contact Dr. Jim Murphy at:
murphyj@montevallo.edu

Classroom Prompts

- As Jim Harrell discovered in his classroom in Marengo County, poetry can arise from unlikely places. Look around you right now and find one interesting object to describe in a poem. Try to use unusual or surprising terms to describe that object, taking it out of its everyday context.
- Often the natural world provides inspiration for poetry, as is the case in Jim Harrell's "From my Window." Recall or imagine a particular setting in nature that might be the inspiration for a poem. What do you see? How do we make meaning from the impressive displays of nature all around us? How

best to communicate that meaning to a reader?

- Over the course of Jim Harrell's long life, he's traveled to many places. Try to recall or imagine yourself far away from home, in a setting that's unfamiliar to you. What sights and sounds seem especially interesting or intimidating to you? How does this place compare to your hometown? Does anything about this place make you appreciate home more, or does anything about home make you appreciate this place? Explore these feelings in a poem.
- Jim Harrell has written a novel about the U.S. Civil War, incorporating people and places well-known from American history. Consider some aspects of history that you find fascinating, and engage these in a poem of your own. Try to get past the dates you

learn in class to the dramatic potential between the real people involved.

- Certain timeless themes are often the subject of poetry: matters of love, the family, and the spirit among these. In your own way, consider what tangible elements of your life are involved in these special relationships and explore them in a poem.
- Remember that poetry is one of the great, free human enterprises. You can write a poem about anything you wish, provided you attend to your subject with the care and thoughtfulness that poetry requires.

From My Window

by James Noble Harrell

From here I see a lake half hidden
By young crowding limbs, unbidden
Moss and wilderness of leaf,
Encroaching stems and nettles under-
neath.

Slow shifting arms of darkness, sun;
Bright crystal drops on webs half-spun.
Across this lake: the farther shore,
There stand six cranes or – maybe
– more.

I watch them, wise and tall and white,
While shadows swell at turning night.
A lone gull glides above the ledge
Where six cranes guard the water's edge.

Another swoops with plaintive cry
Beyond the trees that hide my eye
From nested creatures, sleeping deep
Inside the dark woods' tangled sweep;

'Neath ferns and fronds and reaching vine
That mat the bank to waterline.
Soon dusk will turn a purple-gray
And darkness wrest my sight away.

But what I've seen: this place, this day,
Will ever in my memory stay.

James N. Harrell



James N. Harrell was born and raised in Alabama. He served with the 351st Heavy Bombardment Group in Europe during the Second World War, and was educated at the Virginia Military Institute, the University of California-Berkeley, and the University of Paris. Throughout his long business career, he has maintained a love of literature, and has authored *Death of a Lizard and Other Poems* and the historical novel, *Their Last Ten Miles*.

Discovery & Poetry

I grew up in a very small town in Southwest Alabama. Our high school served part of the county, so many of the students came to school by bus. And, because my growing up took place during The Great Depression, many – no, most – of the boys and girls who attended Marengo County High School were from poor families. Many came to school barefoot.

The schoolhouse was in pretty poor condition as I recall. The windows in the auditorium, which served part-time as classroom and study hall, were not exactly wind-proof; so there was a big potbellied stove standing against the north wall to keep back the chill. It was this stove that one day caught my attention. For reasons that I really don't remember, I picked up my pencil and notebook and attempted to describe this stove. I remember that I was groping for the "right" word to describe it. "Stupid" didn't sound quite right. "Funny" was wrong. I wasn't comfortable with "potbellied," so I went over to Miss Lenoir, our teacher, and she suggested "grotesque." I liked it, but I didn't know how to spell it. Miss Lenoir picked up a dictionary and taught me how to find this word. As I continued to play around with describing this grotesque stove, I suddenly realized that I was

writing something that (almost) seemed like a poem.

I showed my partially finished "project" to my teacher. She made a few suggestions for which I thanked her. I then proceeded to polish up my "poem."

Miss Lenoir read it and gave me a hug, which I didn't entirely appreciate, as I was a grown-up twelve-year-old. She then talked to me about poetry, told me how this form of expression was almost as old as civilization itself, how poetry could express feelings and describe things and people and events in a way that ordinary writing called prose could not. I listened carefully to what she had to say because most of it was new to me, and it really got me thinking.

I must have listened hard because although I didn't try my hand at poetry writing again for a number of years, I later picked it up.

Writing poetry has given me great pleasure through the years. And, if I am to believe my friends, I've given them enjoyment, too.

I know that Miss Lenoir has passed on, but I will never forget her gift to me.

— Jim Harrell