

Mississippi Poetry Society, Inc. 2021 Contest Winners

Best of the Fest: “Stick Horse Rider” by Tommy Little (Brandon, MS)

Category 1: Mississippi Poetry Society 2021 Award

- 1st Place: “Home is Where...” by Patricia Butkovich (Gautier, MS)
2nd Place: “Red Bluff and the Blues” by Tanya R. Whitney (Sorrento, LA)
3rd Place: “Ever So Softly Home” by Linda Watson Owen (Brandon, MS)
1st HM: “A Box of Old Letters” by Brenda Brown Finnegan (Ocean Springs, MS)
2nd HM: “Mississippi Delta Hill Rider” by Doris Jones (Madison, MS)

Category 2: MPS North Branch Award

- 1st Place: “Faltering Steps” by Judy Davies (Gautier, MS)
2nd Place: “Watch and Pray” by Grace Fletcher (Kosciusko, MS)
3rd Place: “Sonnet for Talia and Matt” by Brenda Brown Finnegan (Ocean Springs, MS)
1st HM: “Tasteless Words” by Patricia Butkovich (Gautier, MS)
2nd HM: “The Alpha Squirrel” by Robert K. Goddard (Brandon, MS)
3rd HM: “Forever Friends” by Ann Carolyn Cates (Southaven, MS)

Category 3: MPS Central Branch Award

- 1st Place: “Opus” by Linda Watson Owen (Brandon, MS)
2nd Place: “Your Music” by Patricia Butkovich (Gautier, MS)
3rd Place: “Strings on My Mind and in My Heart” by Catherine Moran (Little Rock, AR)
1st HM: “And the Music Soars” by Judy Davies (Gautier, MS)
2nd HM: “Stormy Music” by Tanya R. Whitney (Sorrento, LA)
3rd HM: “Music Magic” by Ruth F. Richmond (Lexington, MS)

Category 4: MPS South Branch Award

- 1st Place: “Pandemic Celebration” by Ann Carolyn Cates (Southaven, MS)
2nd Place: “Angels” by G. Mark LaFrancis (Natchez, MS)
3rd Place: “A Time of Self-Examination” by Janice Canerdy (Potts Camp, MS)
1st HM: “My Garden Grows” by Tanya R. Whitney (Sorrento, LA)
2nd HM: “Porch Visits” by Brenda Brown Finnegan (Ocean Springs, MS)
3rd HM: “He Restores My Soul: Streams in the Pandemic Desert” by Linda Watson Owen (Brandon, MS)

Category 5: Sound and Sense Award

- 1st Place: “When Past and Present Intersect” by Janice Canerdy (Potts Camp, MS)
2nd Place: “All the Fragments in the Park” by Catherine Moran (Little Rock, AR)
3rd Place: “As Simple as Survival” by Jerri Hardesty (Brierfield, AL)
1st HM: “Jumping the Fire” by LaVern Spencer McCarthy (Blair, OK)

Category 6: Barron and Dessie Caulfield Memorial Award

- 1st Place: "The British Royals" by Janice Canerdy (Potts Camp, MS)
2nd Place: "Royal Appeal" by Sara Gipson (Scott, AR)
3rd Place: "Antisocial Media" by Doris Jones (Madison, MS)
1st HM: "Trooping the 'Colors'" by Linda Watson Owen (Brandon, MS)
2nd HM: "Affection for Strangers" by Ann Carolyn Cates (Southaven, MS)
3rd HM: "Royal Training" by Grace Fletcher (Kosciusko, MS)

Category 7: Childhood Memories Award

- 1st Place: "Apples..." by Linda Watson Owen (Brandon, MS)
2nd Place: "Mother Planted Daisies" by Sara Gipson (Scott, AR)
3rd Place: "Woodland Memories" by Doris Jones (Madison, MS)
1st HM: "All the Beginnings I Remember" by Catherine Moran (Little Rock, AR)
2nd HM: "My Christmas Heart" by Steven Leitch (West Jordan, UT)
3rd HM: "Eagle Badge" by G. Mark LaFrancis (Natchez, MS)
4th HM: "Memories--May They Always be There for Me" by Janice Canerdy (Potts Camp, MS)

Category 8: Biblical Voices Award

- 1st Place: "Why" by Sarah E. Morin (Fishers, IN)
2nd Place: "Mephibosheth's Prayer" by Stephen L. Curry (Jackson, MS)
3rd Place: "When Angels Speak" by Janice Canerdy (Potts Camp, MS)
1st HM: "Blind Man" by Victor Klimoski (St. Paul, MN)
2nd HM: "Calvary Hill" by Tanya R. Whitney (Sorrento, LA)
3rd HM: "Eve's Lesson" by Jerri Hardesty (Brierfield, AL)
4th HM: "Another Try at Eden" by LaVern Spencer McCarthy (Blair, OK)

Category 9: Ferguson Enterprises Award

- 1st Place: "I've Learned to Move Along" by Ann Carolyn Cates (Southaven, MS)
2nd Place: "Molded in Sand" by Tanya R. Whitney (Sorrento, LA)
3rd Place: "Vintage Rose" by Linda Watson Owen (Brandon, MS)
1st HM: "Places in 5" by Nick Sweet (Shepherd, TX)
2nd HM: "Rain Dance" by Jason Ervin (Canton, MS)
3rd HM: "Night Jazz" by Jerri Hardesty (Brierfield, AL)

Category 10: Helen Kressmann Taylor Award

- 1st Place: "Unsolicited Passengers" by Tommy Little (Brandon, MS)
2nd Place: "Clowns Teach Writing Classes" by Janice Canerdy (Potts Camp, MS)
3rd Place: "The Vixen Meets Her Match" by Ann Carolyn Cates (Southaven, MS)
1st HM: "Santa" by Mark Hudson (Evanston, IL)
2nd HM: "Fur Goodness Sake" by Judy Davies (Gautier, MS)
3rd HM: "A Grand Plan" by Jerri Hardesty (Brierfield, AL)

Category 11: Doctor's Dreams Award

- 1st Place: "Encounter on a Forest Trail" by Sarah E. Morin (Fishers, IN)
2nd Place: "Aunt Pearl" by Linda Watson Owen (Brandon, MS)
3rd Place: "To Med or Not to Med" by Von S. Bourland (Happy, TX)
1st HM: "Advancement of Women's Health" by Ann Carolyn Cates (Southaven, MS)
2nd HM: "Ultrasound" by Doris Jones (Madison, MS)

Category 12: Bank of New Albany / Potts Camp Bank Award

- 1st Place: "Come Set Ye' Down" by Gail Denham (Sunriver, OR)
2nd Place: "Mom Made Gravy" by Ann Carolyn Cates (Southaven, MS)
3rd Place: "The Morning" by G. Mark LaFrancis (Natchez, MS)
1st HM: "So What Does a Poet Do?" by Linda Watson Owen (Brandon, MS)
2nd HM: "Waiting for the Chance to Do-Over" by Catherine Moran (Little Rock, AR)
3rd HM: "Late Summer" by Jason Ervin (Canton, MS)

Category 13: Narrative Poem Award

- 1st Place: "Autumn's Providence" by Carey C. Myers (Horn Lake, MS)
2nd Place: "Central Park in Spring" by Brenda Brown Finnegan (Ocean Springs, MS)
3rd Place: "Cold Harbor" by Christian Shute (Cheyenne, WY)
1st HM: "The Cobbler" by Nick Sweet (Shepherd, TX)
2nd HM: "Harmony of Nature" by Tanya R. Whitney (Sorrento, LA)
3rd HM: "On Looking Back" by Robert K. Goddard (Brandon, MS)

Category 14: Mix it Up Award

- 1st Place: "Changing Some Writing Habits" by Catherine Moran (Little Rock, AR)
2nd Place: "Coffee" by G. Mark LaFrancis (Natchez, MS)
3rd Place: "Persons, Places, and Things" by Jerri Hardesty (Brierfield, AL)
1st HM: "The Block of a Blank Page" by Gail Denham (Sunriver, OR)
2nd HM: "I Cannot Run" by Linda Treat (Blue Springs, MS)
3rd HM: "Peek-A-Boo!" by Linda Watson Owen (Brandon, MS)

Category 15: This Beautiful Earth Award

- 1st Place: "Beautiful in His Eye" by Carey Myers (Horn Lake, MS)
2nd Place: "A Morning Walk" by Douglas Taylor (Como, MS)
3rd Place: "Pausing with the Seasons" by Catherine Moran (Little Rock, AR)
1st HM: "God's Glory" by Tanya R. Whitney (Sorrento, LA)
2nd HM: "Silver Morning" by Von S. Bourland (Happy, TX)
3rd HM: "Settled in a Fixed Pew after 'It was Good'" by Ruth F. Richmond (Lexington, MS)

Category 16: Ekphrastic Award

- 1st Place: “The Darkness of the “Nighthawks”” by Catherine Moran (Little Rock, AR)
2nd Place: “Ekphrastic Sonnet on a Scene from Kurosawa’s Seven Samurai” by Stephen L. Curry (Jackson, MS)
3rd Place: “Caravaggio” by G. Mark LaFrancis (Natchez, MS)
1st HM: “The Cattle Drive” by Sara Gipson (Scott, AR)
2nd HM: “Was I Too Late?” by Gail Denham (Sunriver, OR)
3rd HM: “The Christmas Card Picture” by Patricia Butkovich (Gautier, MS)

Category 17: Terry Family Memorial Award

- 1st Place: “Valley of Death” by G. Mark LaFrancis (Natchez, MS)
2nd Place: “Vietnam Impressions” by Sara Gipson (Scot, AR)
3rd Place: “Flashback” by Tanya R. Whitney (Sorrento, LA)
1st HM: “I Hate Chocolate” by Steven Leitch (West Jordan, UT)
2nd HM: “Grosgrain” by Doris Jones (Madison, MS)
3rd HM: “Visions of Vietnam” by Jerri Hardesty (Brierfield, AL)

Category 18: Ruth Richmond Award

- 1st Place: “The Brightest Star” by Ann Carolyn Cates (Southaven, MS)
2nd Place: “The Promise” by Terry Jude Miller (Richmond, TX)
3rd Place: “When Everyone is Running” by Linda Watson Owen (Brandon, MS)
1st HM: “Seasons for Promises” by Catherine Moran (Little Rock, AR)
2nd HM: “Promises Made Well Worth the Claim” by Grace Fletcher (Kosciusko, MS)
3rd HM: “What You Say” by Jerri Hardesty (Brierfield, AL)

Category 19: Transitions Award

- 1st Place: “Stick Horse Rider” by Tommy Little (Brandon, MS)
2nd Place: “Part of You” by Judy Davies (Gautier, MS)
3rd Place: “January Journey” by Brenda Brown Finnegan (Ocean Springs, MS)
1st HM: “Sensory Impairment” by Ann Carolyn Cates (Southaven, MS)
2nd HM: “The Butterfly Prophets” by Terry Jude Miller (Richmond, TX)
3rd HM: “Expect Trouble” by Gail Denham (Sunriver, OR)

Category 20: Love Thy Neighbor Award

- 1st Place: “On This Journey” by Jerri Hardesty (Brierfield, AL)
2nd Place: “Godly Love” by Sara Gipson (Scott, AR)
3rd Place: “Christmas Eve, 2020” by Mark Hudson (Evanston, IL)
1st HM: “Law Officer View” by Grace Fletcher (Kosciusko, MS)
2nd HM: “Father’s Love Sublime” by Steven Leitch (West Jordan, UT)
3rd HM: “Poet’s Theology” by Stephen L. Curry (Jackson, MS)

Category 21: Grands Award

- 1st Place: “Newborn” by Doris Jones (Madison, MS)
2nd Place: “A Child’s Ears” by G. Mark LaFrancis (Natchez, MS)
3rd Place: “All for You, Grandma” by Ruth F. Richmond (Lexington, MS)
1st HM: “Whetstones” by Jerri Hardesty (Brierfield, AL)
2nd HM: “Grandpa’s New Life” by LaVern Spencer McCarthy (Blair, OK)
3rd HM: “Grandpa’s Game” by Steven Leitch (West Jordan, UT)

Category 22: Peggy Duke Memorial Award

- 1st Place: “Home Invasion” by Ann Carolyn Cates (Southaven, MS)
2nd Place: “The Cost of Kindness” by Christian Shute (Cheyenne, WY)
3rd Place: “Dissertation on Peanut Butter” by Judy Davies (Gautier, MS)
1st HM: “Crippled Love” by Dick Ramsey (Des Moines, IA)
2nd HM: “The Aisle 3 Cashier” by Nick Sweet (Shepherd, TX)
3rd HM: “People” by Robert K. Goddard (Brandon, MS)

Category 23: Fletcher Award

- 1st Place: “Abundantly Blessed” by Janice Canerdy (Potts Camp, MS)
2nd Place: “No End to Our Blessings” by Ruth F. Richmond (Lexington, MS)
3rd Place: “Reservoirs” by Steven Leitch (West Jordan, UT)
1st HM: “A Pause to Remember” by Catherine Moran (Little Rock, AR)
2nd HM: “Worshipping During the Pandemic” by Ann Carolyn Cates (Southaven, MS)
3rd HM: “Thankful Blessings” by Carey C. Myers (Horn Lake, MS)

Comments: (The following comments were submitted by judges in their sponsored or assigned category. Opinions or beliefs expressed within the comments are solely those of the individual judge.)

Category 2:

I realize that I am supposed to judge them, not grade them, but it is so difficult to see a set of rules laid out before me, then ignore them. Sonnets have strict rules in both rhythm and rhyme, as well as form, none of which can or should be ignored, especially by an old English teacher. I liked some poems that did not follow the rules, so if you won or lost, it was mainly due to this set of circumstances or the topic chosen by the author.

Category 3:

Three judges from Central Branch participated and “Opus” placed 1st with 17 of 18 possible points.

Category 5:

Enjoyed reading the 16 poems—all were good ideas. But there were far too many non-iambic feet in many of the submissions along with needless words (adverbs and adjectives) inserted in order to fill out the rhyme and meter. Sonnets are a difficult form of poetry and require a lot of polishing.

Category 6:

All of the winning poems were good, and I could have gone either way on some of them. I ended up giving preference to those that used a rhyme scheme or adhered more closely to what I would call “verse”.

Category 7:

There were a lot of great poems submitted and I truly enjoyed the opportunity to read them.

Category 8:

The winner in this category is an exemplar of free verse. The poet who wrote “Why” used exquisite and effective poetic techniques throughout the poem. A ‘just right’ dance of figurative language and lyrical quality are present in each line. The choice of the voice of one of Job’s ‘comforters,’ without the mention of any names at all, adds to the appeal and beautiful use of technique in this poem. “Why” also reflects thoughts from the speaker within the parameters and latitudes of responsible Biblical interpretation. Each entry was a joy to read. Congratulations to all for poetic jobs well done!

Category 11:

Poetry must envelop the reader, capture with words that sing, themes that compel, rhythm that shakes. Simply telling a story, even an interesting one, a prose that the author chops up, leaves the poetry aficionado dry. Lovely phrases such as “glitter-trimmed stories,” metaphors like “I am a brown bear,” and cute phrases like “Smarts and Wisdom” (referencing Smith and Wesson) make a poem stand out.

Category 12:

I almost felt I had bitten off more than I could chew, because these were all so good! I was wowed by how good the entries were!

Category 14:

My process: I got a first impression with an initial reading through all of the poems. Then I spent time with each poem. I wrote reactions, thoughts, suggestions, etc. I think spending time with the poem is very important. There was no poem where I did not have a reaction to something. After that was done, I was able to pick out the top poems. To sort out the poems at the top into first, second and third place, I did another reading (or several) to get a second overall impression. And I also consulted my notes. I used the same final sorting process to select honorable mentions.

My general judging philosophy: I look for creative expression. Beyond that, anything goes. So, what is creative? You are! I try to let the poem tell me what is poetic, rather than imposing my own ideas of poetry upon it. I learn more that way! There's no way I would have thought to look for all of the creative things you guys did.

To everyone who submitted your work, THANK YOU. I really appreciate the hard work you put into your poems. I got wonderful things out of every single one of them. That's not a nicety, that's the truth. I hope maybe the category inspired you to try something new.

By the way: If you've never judged a category, I highly recommend it. It's a very worthwhile experience.

Category 17:

So many good poems, so hard to choose.

Category 18:

My Simple Philosophy When Judging Poems-

Best Poems:

-Show simple truths

(may zero on one truth, idea or subject)

-Stretches the imagination, not overly festive or factual

(may use allegories and specific stories to illustrate a point)

-Is Different

(Sometimes takes a turn from the obvious to an unrelated thought; may move independently or dependently of time, place, character.)

-Is original in subject, plot or use of words-

varying expressive speech; ways a subject is depicted.

-Follows rules for poetry-form, rules of grammar, not letting these blot out meaning; avoids forced rhyming and worn-out subject or words.

-Expresses something beautiful, joyful, not so much remorsefulness and woefulness.

Category 19:

I wish I could give more awards in this category. There were many delightful poems.

Category 20:

The turmoil in our country which set neighbor against neighbor inspired the theme for this contest. The last four years seemed to create rifts in our minds and hearts. Hopefully our nation will make a turnaround and learn to love our neighbors again. Poets can be the leaders!

Category 23:

1st place has a great rhyming scheme!