

*Sarah Mook Poetry Contest, 2018*  
*Second place, grades 6-8 "Together"*

The second place poem, "Together," in the sixth through eighth-grade group is a lyric that showcases nature's serenity during a father and son's fishing trip. Especially pleasing are the purposeful line-breaks, the use of sensory imagery, specific diction, and metaphor, plus the patience in revealing that those involved are a father and son.

The poem's opening suggests that there are two characters in the poem and focuses on the tranquil setting. "Two sets of hands slide a canoe into misty water" with "overhanging branches," swaying "cattails," and "the chirps of unseen birds." Notice that the sense of sound begins here with "chirps of unseen birds." I am especially struck by the line-breaks at "glisten," "branches, and "sway." This successful use of enjambment\* benefits the poem's flow and pace.

The second section offers more details of the setting, and puts the reader directly at the scene:

Sun beats down  
from its perch just above the tree line  
and thick air settles over the pond  
as two paddles guide a boat  
across the marsh.

The creative use of "perch" to describe the sun's location (really a metaphor\* comparing the sun to a bird 'perching' "just above the tree line") and the phrase, "thick air settles" gives the scene a visual and tactile sense. Also, the expert line-breaks in this section encourage the poem to enlarge its parameters.

The sense of sound continues in the third and fourth sections. The "raft emerges into frothing water / Two pairs of ears listen / as wind whistles through the trees / and water laps the hull." In the next verse, "two voices break the patterns of nature." The use of auditory imagery is refreshing in this poem.

The speaker reveals the poem's purpose and identity of the characters at its end. The moment is savored as "two sparkling lures / spin though dark water" by a "father and son." This late character revelation adds a bit of surprise and gratification for the reader. The solitude of the setting and the pleasure father and son take from it demonstrates their camaraderie. Also, the final reference to sound is the acknowledgment that they are "surrounded by the melody of nature."

This quiet lyric is not only visual but also auditory in its description; thus, the reader can enter this place with the speaker and delight in its beauty and solitude. This writer should keep honing his craft of writing exceptional poetry!

*Thank you for the pleasure of reading your work!*

Marie Kane, Final Judge  
Sarah Mook Poetry Contest, 2018

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\* Enjambment is the continuation of a sentence or clause over a line-break without a period. Enjambment ends a line in the middle of a phrase, allowing it to continue onto the next line. It gives the poem more flow when read and impacts the poem's mood and energy.

\* This is an especially deft metaphor. While the sun is compared to birds that 'perch' above the tree line, the word 'bird' is not mentioned; only an action associated with birds, "perches," is. So, the metaphor is accomplished without the second related object, 'birds.' One deduces the comparison because of the verb "perches."