

**Sarah Mook Poetry Contest 2017, Grades K-2, First place winner, "The Autumn Field"**

This brief, spare, and sensitive poem won first place in this age group due to its mature handling of the topic of loss. The poem is structured in thirteen short lines and written without much punctuation, thus making for a fast paced but meaningful reading. The poet first explores a natural setting that suggests neglect, then the loss of a grandmother, and finally recovery through images of nature—quite a feat for such a brief poem and young poet.

The economical word choice (diction) in the first six lines of the poem, suggests the somber mood. Words such as “old porch,” “cobwebs,” “unfixed screen,” and “no flowers anymore” evoke aloneness and neglect. The writer states that his or her “grandfather never fixed” the screen and that the garden has only “veggies” in it, “no flowers.”

The matter-of-fact seventh line in the poem gives the reason for this neglect: “My grandma died / Her grave under the oak tree.” The inference is that perhaps the grandfather has no energy to fix anything, nor grow flowers as perhaps she once had. The outright statement of her death is mature. Many students might begin or end a poem with this powerful information; however, this student wisely gives setting first and then the reasoning for that setting with a grandmother’s death and burial.

The poem lightens in imagery and tone in the last five lines as if the acknowledgment of her death is enough to lift a weight of sadness:

The rain plunks down and  
Washes the field anew.  
A sea of blue and light  
Flowers waving in the night  
Sparkling, shining air.

These lines bring illumination to the poem, in spite of the “rain” that “plunks down”—a terrific sound image. The “sea of blue and light / flowers” that “wave in the night” give the poem a “sparkle and shine” it does not contain in the opening, and suggest relief from sadness.

This understated poem points to this young poet’s talent with setting, image, diction, and tone that usually are the hallmarks a much older writer. Bravo!

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

Marie Kane  
Final Judge  
Sarah Mook Poetry Contest, 2017  
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