

9-12

Third place: Sam Libutti, 12th grade

"In Reverence of My Saxophone"

My fingers sink into her groves
as she sinks into me
drawing curves under my lips
coming just a bit closer
so I can feel
her body the aspect of warmth
as if I was puffing my love
into a temple of hope and sanctuary
as if I was caressing
more than pearls.

She owns every gallon of my soul

and I happily pour it out for her.

Unable to discern her meaning or glimmer
small eyes simply shone along every inch
of the sea of silver and gold before me
Filled with joy,
but not knowing what for,
I did what I could and played.
It started as no more than a warm breath on a colder day
yearning for a warm hug
yearning for a friend.
Thus I gave until my lungs gave
and she was satisfied.

A small sum for such a sweet sound
and I happily pour it out for her

into a starless sea of song
where the ferryman of old cadence comes and goes
his oar engraved with the praise of an angel
his rough cloak protecting nothing of his blue boned body
not shivering nor alone.

The only toll he takes
is the truth of time.

‘Tis but a gift
just a tune for his dead old mind.
It does not matter the contents
only that it is there and whole
only that he may raven on it
only that he exudes the effort of everything
only that he may shove it into his gullet
devouring every last piece
until the man has been tapped dry
yet
man’s soul has been filled.

And I happily pour it out for them.

Second place: Jaden Jacino, 12th grade

"An English Assignment; In Which My Teacher Forced The Class to Add a New Unplanned Verse Everyday, Not As a Unique Poetry Assignment But Due to Poor Planning on His Part"

I wear a dark jacket, be it gray, blue, or black, always with a collar that can stand up. To reinforce my neck, and keep my head on straight. To make every moment of my head pronounced, as the collar moves with it.

I carry a silver chain, an Italian artifact inherited from my Uncle Joe. Along with the guitars I inherited from him, my duty to live my family's legacy is being fulfilled.

I carry the shoes on my feet, worn black hightop vans with an insert for my misshapen arch, the only thing preventing the pain of the ground, which would otherwise inflict my sole.

In my ear I carry a raycon earbud to absorb the tune, so powerful that I am bound to it, rather than the antithetical roar of reality.

My relationships carry me, the bonds with my mother, brother, and friends tie me to reality, as they are what gives reality value, they force me to turn off the tune, and remove my shoes.

2nd verse

I carry music, not just that which I consume, but that I release, inspired by that consumption, that cleanses me.

I am not wise but I carry wisdom, imparted by both the wise and the reckless. I strive to be wise with my wisdom, to use the proper knowledge and act in the proper way, but it comes with age, because I am only as wise as my experience.

I carry foolishness born of want, a teenage phenomenon that in conjunction with simple poor judgment causes disasters that are tragically avoidable and cause deep regret, yet still yield a less painful result than they should, thanks directly to my mom, and by extension the very state of childhood.

I carry the hope, and the belief, that I will override the previous as often as possible, not to clean up a disaster but to prevent it from the outset, so I can pave the way for my eventual success.

3rd verse

I carry Jared around, both in reality and in my head.

I've spent nearly my whole life with him, and I continue to, so he is always a factor in my decision making. My existence is a reminder of his, and vice versa, to everyone who sees us apart. When we are together, it's more natural than best friends. We are permanently tethered, in our minds and in the conscience of the world around us. He is me, just rearranged (literally, as in his DNA) and so he carries much of the same weight that I do; Italian artifacts, cool clothing, shoes, and even me. We both carry me. He could write this exact same paragraph but replace his name with mine, even this last part.

4th verse

I carry the memory of the first verse, once the entire poem. An understandable, short, simple, relatable, and comedic stroke of sudden brilliance, now warped by its extension; like a stand alone film turned franchise. Each verse is further from the original poem's bottled lightning, as they have become progressively self-aware to feel important to the overall. The third verse is a departure in structure and now the fourth a departure yet again, but just like any good run-on franchise, the writer will eventually return to the roots, go back to basics, or even-reboot.

5th verse

I carry a light forest green checkered flannel, with a black cotton hood, that is only put up in extreme situations and not for style. The string that tightens the hood was

forcefully removed in the drier machine, and the resulting shape of the hood is quite out-of-style.

I carry a birthmark directly in the center of my chest, in the same spot that a superhero's symbol would be. It rests under a frayed blanket of italian chest hair, which itself rests under my uncle joe's chain. Behold the power of my heritage.

I carry the weight of my body on my feet, which could be why they hurt all the time. Another explanation could be their odd, sort of dainty shape, which makes them an excellent foil to my chest, and face.

I carry a beard. I believe all true men must have a beard at some point, so this means I'm able to claim my manhood immediately at 18. An argument could be made for other manly qualifications, like say your first drink, or woman, but no qualification will be so instantly visually definitive, as a beard. My signature black and gold earbud brings out the singular blonde hairs in my beard, and my hair brings the consistent brown full circle, literally.

I carry very little. Everything has meaning to me, and as I write I can make each subject more profound. But my situation is simple, and sheltered. Despite the light-hearted nature of this whole "poem," the origin of this style must be acknowledged. Vietnam veterans' lug around a cargo boat, and a book written about their weight is the basis for this whole assignment. I humbly acknowledge my weightlessness in this context. Nonetheless I enjoyed entertaining the idea that I indeed carried something, other than self-indulgence, and irony.

First place: Sadie Pine, 11th grade

"(Sittin' On) the Dock of the Bay - Song by Otis Redding"

Lonely and low, the bass enters solo; faint wading water is the bass' only companion. Otis' voice comes in, worn, soaked in smoke and tobacco, reminiscent of the late nights that led his throat to its eroded tone. The chords buffer between the tonic, the dominant, and occasionally a leading subdominant. The two percussion instruments are behind the beat, slowing down the time; the drums and Otis have little to do but watch the "tide roll away." Otis is alone, nowhere to go, having been left behind.

Suddenly, the chords change! The B section is discontented. Otis is angry and helpless, his life is pointless, he's just running out the clock. Quickly he realizes nothing is going to change, so he returns to his idle state of forced content and passively, he remains the same. He whistles, nothing else to add, as it fades out exactly as it started.

This song is about wasting time, thinking about wasting time. Forcing yourself to romanticize puts pressure on what you really want to spend your time on. I sit and hypothesize constantly about what I'd love to do, but am so worried about it not being the right choice that all I can do is sit there and think. I sit and think about what I'm not doing instead of taking it step by step. This is hopeless, given up, not getting out of bed music. Still, he ends the song whistling, accepting where he is even if it is just "wastin' time."

His sense of contentment is something that I envy. If I could be okay with sitting down, I would be a lot more carefree. I ruminate on to-dos to the point of paralysis. He is okay with stepping back; and who knows, maybe after this song Otis got up off the dock and did something he felt was meaningful, or maybe appreciating the waves was enough. He had the courage to take the break without thinking he'll never get back up. He watches the tide, he whistles, and he waits for his inspiration to come. I want to wait for something to push me; I want to find my inner locus of control. Otis is fine with not knowing where he's going. I envy his serenity.