

The Muses' Gallery - Spring 2009

We are very pleased to present the poetry selected from the 2009 Poetry Challenge. This year we asked poets to find inspiration in either Abraham Lincoln, in honor of the 200th anniversary of his birth, or Astronomy, in honor of the 400th anniversary of Galileo's first use of the telescope to explore the heavens.

Many thanks to our Selection Committee - Charles Schwartz, Fred Gordon and Sue Roupp - who read and evaluated over 80 submissions. Thank you to all the poets who responded to this year's Poetry Challenge.

Highland Park Poetry always welcomes submissions of poetry and photography for this gallery. Please send poems or photographs electronically to Jennifer@highlandparkpoetry.org. We are accepting submissions for our Summer Gallery which will be posted in late June. There are no themes for the Summer Gallery - poet's (or artist's) choice.

And to all poets - keep on writing!

Highland Park Poetry 2009 Poetry Challenge



Young Abe Learns To Read

By Michael Brownstein

1st Place Adult Resident

I teach children how to read
two hundred years later,
hard working children,
natural reading children,
struggling children, children
of slave ancestors,
children of sharecropper
grandparents, children
brilliant with reading.

Young Abe found strength
in words, power in the light
of fire. He held to them
courageously, as he did
great oak in need of clearing.

They say he did not end slavery,
but at war's end, slavery
was dead. They say he did not
understand state's rights,
but he kept the states united.

Young Abe gre into what was needed,
the fire in the fireplace burning,
the gift of light nourishing him,
the gift of words, a way with words,
reader, intellect, man.

I teach children how to read
two hundred years later,
children who understand value
once not given them as a right,
children who sit in the front
of the bus with books, children
bright with words, children
remembering Young Abe
and how he learned to read.



Robert Klein Engler, Photographer

Visiting Tombs on a Sunny Day

By Robert Klein Engler

1st Place
Adult Non-Resident

From afar, the gold leaves fall like coins.
Piles of treasure accumulate on the ground.
Such a wealth of dying, all afford it.

Today, you come upon Lincoln's tan house
with green shutters through a row of oak trees.
Tourists line up, America looking for her saints.

I grew up in a wooden house built like this,
clapboards around our immigrant loneliness.
Rusty locks hardly kept out the wind and poverty.

There is something of darkness, something
of shadow that embraces this man, gone away
from Springfield, a train of sparks his destiny.

Down the street, the Capitol dome shimmers.
There, marble halls echo with the language
of lawyers, and leather footsteps left behind.

What more can I do for his memory than pick
up acorns and try to put back on their little hats.
My life of words is gone the way it has as well.

At Oak Ridge, the stone tomb opens its dark
mouth of doors with the damp suction of a kiss.
Flags, names, schoolchildren, the friction of eyes.

Think of the primeval forest once here.
Great trees let loose their leaves to the wind.
A carpet of tan shavings covers the ground.

Worlds hold by their roots, are as they should be.
Say only sorrow is a shadow across the centuries,
across dark eyes, a beard, the tall, black hat.

Because life turns to good, the heart needs
a place--let the heart's nest be allowed here.
Something of glory comes out of Illinois.

Night

By Rachel Powers

1st Place Astronomy - Student

Staring at black sky
Watching still moon, floating stars
Wondering about night

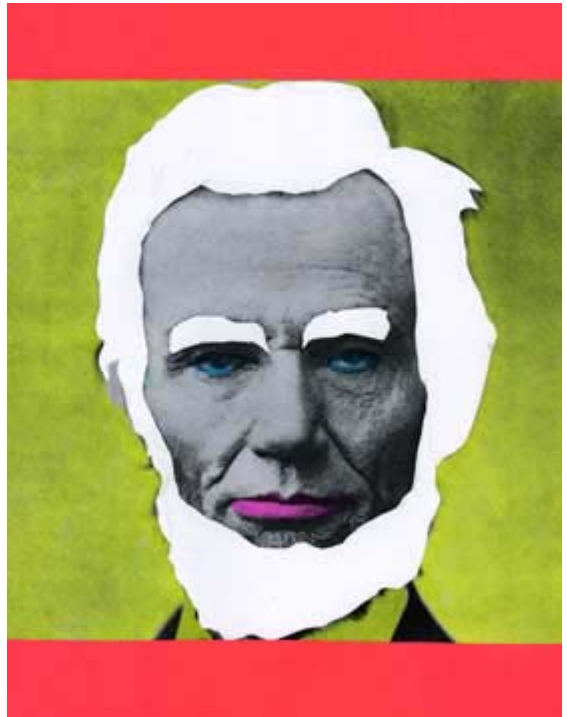
As If By Magic

By Arielle Van Deraa

1st Place Lincoln - Student

As if
by magic,
a boy was born.
As if
by tragedy,
the mother died.
As if
by fate,
the family was poor.
As if
by childhood,
the boy grew.
As if
by chance,
he entered politics.
As if
by love,
he was married,
soon with four sons.
As if
by luck,
he became President.
As if
by desperateness,
he attempted to stop the Civil War.
As if
by goodness,
his wish was granted.
As if
by time,
four days passed.
As if
by madness,
a man shot the President.
S l o w l y
f

a
l
l
i
n
g
for a day.
Then
As if
by sadness,
a funeral was held.
As if
by death,
President Abraham Lincoln
was gone.
As if
by history,
his legend remains.
And as if
by magic,
we thank you.



The Simple Country Life

By Charles Zafonte

2nd Place Adult Non-Resident

I
Get on up at the crack of dawn
Light the fire, stifle a yawn
Gather the eggs, mend your boot
Scrape the callouses off your foot
Feed the chickens, water the squash
Clean the stable, hang the wash
Fix the fence, prime the pump
Take all of last year's trash to the dump

My Pal, Gal

By Carol Spielman Lezak

2nd Place Adult Resident

Galileo, you great big lug, you son of a gun, you....

You were brilliant beyond belief.

There you were—you practically just started shaving and already you were timing oscillations and measuring amplitude and what did you discover? Just the isochronal nature of the pendulum.

(And did that nutcase Poe thank you when he wrote The Pit and Pendulum? Nada!)

U. of Pisa let you sit on their faculty—
and my G-d, you were barely drinking age.
Your buddies were still trying to figure out
which way was up, but there you were—
what an overachiever—you were ballsy enough
to shock those Aristotelians to their boots with your
outta-this-world ideas on laws and bodies of motion.
Awesome, the angst you caused. You said
projectiles' paths are parabolas...who'd a thunk it?

But, Gally, did you go too far? You dared
to show that cockamamie telescope to Rome.
You thought Copernicus had it right with
his solar system idea, but those Romans
told you to stifle. I gotta tell you, you sure stood up
to those Inquisition folks. What chutzpah!
The earth? A moving body? What gall you had.

So, I hope you liked Siena, where they sent you—
maybe not your first choice—it's no Pisa, I can tell you,
but at least they didn't boil you in oil.
And that last book of yours—your Dialogues on Two New
Sciences—
whew—at least the Inquisitors left your body intact
so you could keep on your quest of scientific truth.

I read every word you ever wrote, buddy. Did I always get it?
Are you kidding? No way, you brainiac, you!
Your telescope was about as far as I could get,
but, wow, did it ever open up my universe!

The Star

By Arielle Kimbarovsky

2nd Place Astronomy - Student

The Star
Like dew at dawn
Moving across the darkness
Sparkling against the night sky
Glitter

Lands O' Lincoln

By Anne Greene

2nd Place Lincoln - Student

Oh, Lincoln he was of Kentucky
He was born quite a poor lad
In truth he was really quite plucky
He lived along side of his dad

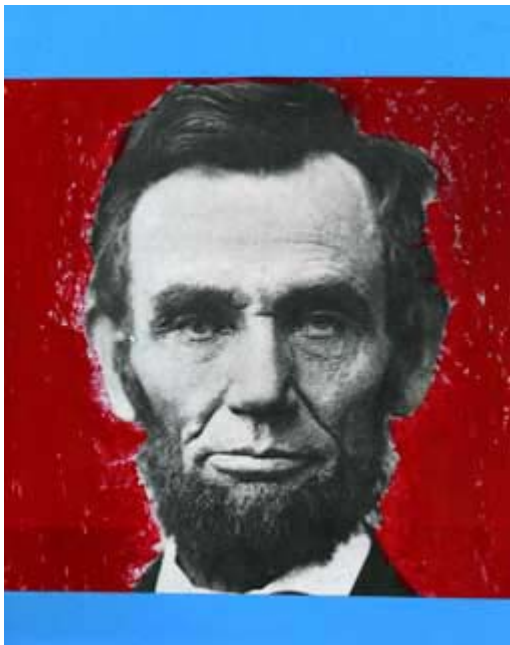
Oh, Lincoln he went to Indiana
His mother she died of a cow
From Kentucky straight to Indiana
Just to find a new place to plow

Oh, Lincoln he moved to Illinois
With father and stepmother too
As a man he went into employ
As his fame as a person it grew

Oh, Lincoln was called to Washington
For now he was president
The war started and neared its completion
But his life was completely spent

Oh, Lincoln he lay on his deathbed
He was shot by John Wilkes Booth
Nine hours later he was pronounced dead
And the people faced the brutal truth

LINCOLN IS DEAD



**What is the Nature of a
Man Named Lincoln**

By Bruce McNutt

3rd Place Adult Non-Resident

What is the nature
Of a man who will not give up
Will not stand by quietly
As his country is torn apart

What lies in the heart
Of the man who believes that all men are equal
Not favored by the creator
By the color of their skin

What is the price of doing what is right
Standing for noble causes
Unwilling to bend
The future consequences
Too terrible to comprehend

What goes through the mind of a man
Ruled by principles and a larger purpose
When the heart of the country is split asunder
Boys, young men cut in two
A torrent of blood flowing in the streams

What is the outcome of a nation divided
Families and friends, their loyalties at odds
Fighting to the death for four long years
No winners to be counted at the end

What are the traits of the man
Who remains firm in his resolve
Despite chaos and mayhem surrounding him
Believing that he is right
A house divided cannot stand

What is the nature of a man who gets it right
When even he is not sure that he sees the light
What is the nature of a man named Lincoln

Moonbeam Magic

By Herb Berman

3rd Place Adult Resident

Moonlight
pulsing in the cold blue night
hides more than it tells.

On skeletal winter nights
I stare into moonbeam shadows
and long for moonbeam magic
glistening still at the deep dim edge
of an almost-remembered childhood,
its lost wonder and awe.

Moonlight won't reveal its secrets,
dance in its own bleak shadow

or bend beyond the corners of its fickle radiance.
It won't reveal
what it knows of itself.

The moon is full tonight.
Does it mirror
what I never dare to know?

Deep Into Outer Space

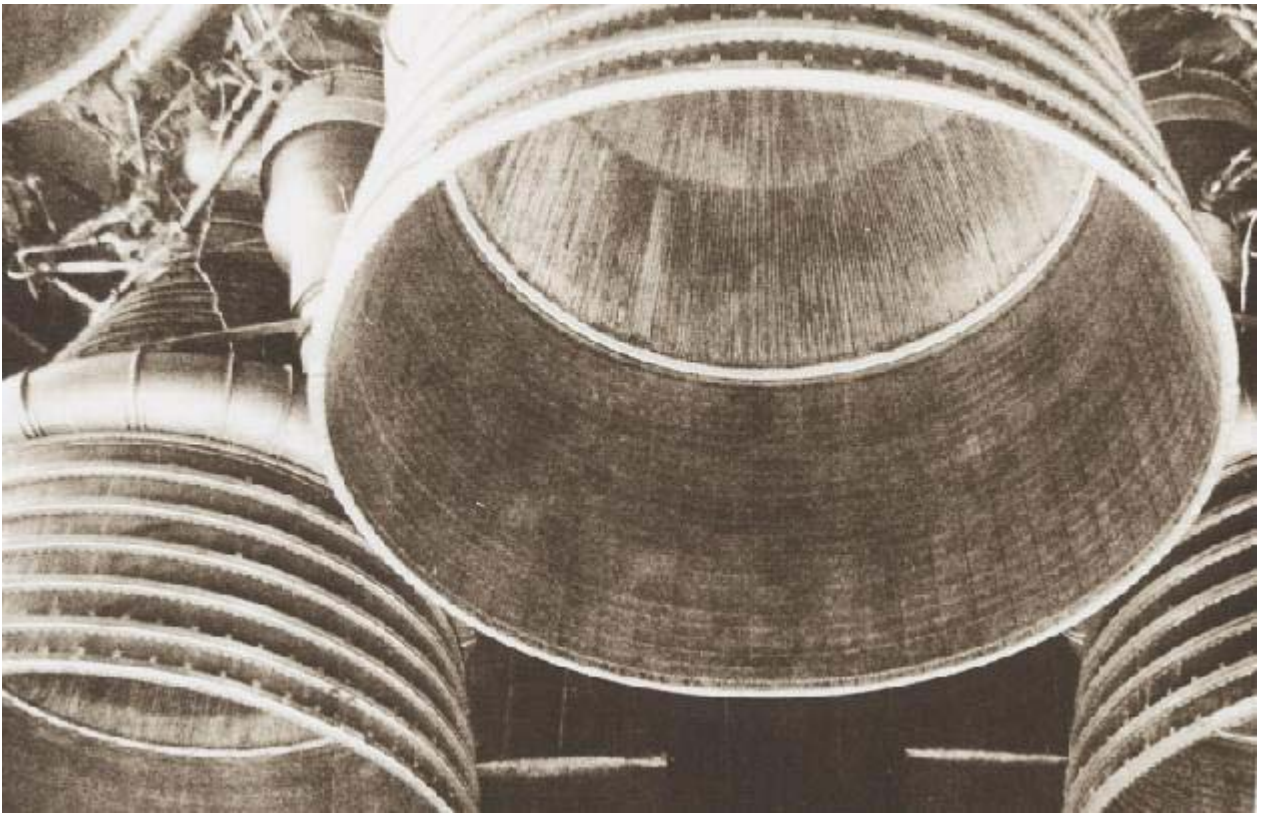
By Kate Bernstein

3rd Place Astronomy - Student

All nine planets in outer space
Like a big parade in a never ending place
They're all different colors and all different shapes
They dance and spin in such grace

The sun is sizzling on the other side
It is so big it can't event hide
If you get too close, zap, you're gone
It is orange sherbert swimming by tide

Dark, light, dusty and small
The moon is Earth's gray, little ball
The moon is like a big marshmallow
Not that far away, you might hear its call



Saturn V Rockets by Mark Fisher, Photographer

**one senryu
three haiku
and one tanka**

By Charlotte Digregorio

4th Place Adult Non-Resident

reading
yesterday's paper . . .
my horoscope

starry night . . .
a transient outside the depot
reads a city map

runner in training . . .
feet pounding pavement
eyes fixed on the stars

braving the night
in bitter cold
no stars

alone on the road
by moonglow, stars illuminate
forgotten stillness . . .
looking upward i see you

sharing my path

Lincoln Writes to Death

By Arthur Miller

4th Place Adult Resident

April 15, 1861
Night

Friend,
The nation chases me like a slave.
This morning in public I went blind.
What frightens me is the world
and the chance that it will barge
through my blackness, diluting
my peace with light.

Everywhere men draw lines
and women are locked in
history without a voice
to melt gunpowder into summer.
My wife has gone mad
and only speaks during sunrise.
All day I watch the buzzard.

My dreams are full of prowlers
and enormous scissors.
Two letters arrive.
The South expects me to shave
all my hair and paint
my body gray.
The North demands whitewash.

Death, why are you pouring
needles on us?
Isn't it enough to eventually flood
our bodies with the rains
The smell of worms?
Must you infect my children
with your business?

This evening I screamed at a squirrel;
it left me holding an acorn,
so I followed it into hibernation.
No one has seen me
For days and my legislation
Is composed behind trees,
Yet there is relief in darkness.

Inside an oak everyone looks the same.
Black and white share shadows
while skin is merely a lid on the bones.
I envy the harmony of squirrels.
They are baffled by our stretching
land until the soil splits
and we divide our roots.

Death, you are the only thing that lasts
a constant
dependable clock with appendages
which would no more divide
time in two directions
than extend a President
a third eye.

In closing, I emerge
leaving branches and womb
without my insomniac pecking.
I must operate
with no tools of surgery
bleeding the body of America
with a delicate knife.

Out of this World

By Molly Fortnow

4th Place Astronomy - Student

One, two, three, four, five, six, seven,
Look at the stars wink down from heaven,
Eight, nine, ten, too hard to count,
You see the stars in tremendous amounts!

Take me to the nearest star,
Even though it might be far,
At the speed of light we'll whiz through space,
Outrun them all, and win the race.

The stars are enormous in size,
Hotter than lava, an owl as wise,
Although inhabitable, great balls of gas,
From afar, stars are tiny shards of glass.

Stars have lived from trillions of years,
Not one has died, or so it appears.
They still stand twinkling in the sky,
Staring down at us with gleaming eyes.

Look to that deep blue sea of stars,
You can see Mercury, Venus and Mars.
In the solar system are eleven planets,
But only a telescope can see most of them, can it?

So pack your bags and hold on tight,
We're off to see a stunning sight.
Through the sky we'll sail and soar,
Until the night has passed once more.

Searching

By **Bennett S. Preskill**

4th Place Astronomy - Student

The Mars rovers are very unique
They have their own technique
Their names are Opportunity and Spirit
Searching for life as if they were near it



Sam Dotson, Artist

There's No Place Like Space

By **Grace Rhoades**

Honorable Mention - Student

There is no place like space
The milky way shining prettier than ever
Pluto crying oh way out there
Neptune laughing with Uranus on its side
The big red dot making a mess
Martians hiding behind a rock
Venus shielding himself from the Sun
Oh there is no place like space

The Sky

By **Amy Rogin**

Honorable Mention - Student

The skies, the skies where the sun will rise
Way above your eyes,
The beautiful skies.
The murky the milky
The sunny and smoggy
The dark and the light
My beautiful skies.

How I would love to fly o so high and touch the sky

Stars twinkling and twirling, dancing in the night
Sprinkled and mingled a lover's delight.

One here, one there but always one no matter where,
Each more valuable than the next
Although some of them are so far,
I still love them all.

The Sun

By Blaise Macys

Honorable Mention - Student

The sun is a rose petal
The sun is so hot it melts metal.

The sun is a star
A star is like a tiny ant.

The sun plays tag with the stars.



Joy LaCalamita, Artist

Figures in the Sky

By Matthew Isaacs

Honorable Mention - Student

It's dark like a closet in the middle of the night
Cold, dark space is surrounding
There is an opening of light
The beauty is so bright it's blinding

The formation is very pretty
It looks like looming ladders of light
One group looks like a kitty
What a wonderful sight.

The kitten is prowling like a lion
Oh wait no, that's Orion.

Galaxies

By Nathan Isaacs

Honorable Mention - Student

Galaxies are so big
Blue, red, hot, moving, changing
Collide. Makes new stars



Joy LaCalamita, Artist