



1490 LAFAYETTE ST., SUITE 101
DENVER, COLORADO 80218
TEL: 303-894-7951 FAX: 303-864-9361
WWW.COLORADOHUMANITIES.ORG

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CONTACT: Hae Won Kwon, Program Assistant, 303.894.7951 x19,
hwkwon@coloradohumanities.org

COLORADO STUDENTS HONORED AT LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

Washington D.C.-- Two students from the 2nd Grade at Polaris at Ebert Elementary School (DPS) in Denver were honored with other international winners and finalists of the 2008 River of Words (ROW) Environmental Poetry and Art Contest at a ceremony at the Library of Congress in Washington, DC on Monday May 12, 2008. Category 1 National Finalist Isabel Levine-Clark read her poem "Wordy" and Category 1 Grand Prize National Winner Jack Baker read his poem "Sewer".

Wordy by Isabel Levine-Clark

Talkative beauty
Words shine in the morning light,
Verbs and similes

Isabel Levine-Clark
River of Words National Finalist, Category I
2nd grade, Polaris at Ebert Elementary
Doris Garrett, Teacher

Sewer by Jack Baker

Rats roaming down here.
Water flowing like music from the oboe.
Dangerous gasses float in the air
Down here underground.

Jack Baker
River of Words National Winner, Category I
2nd grade, Polaris at Ebert Elementary
Karin Johnson, Teacher



Photo of Jack Baker, Isabel Levine-Clark, and teacher Karin Johnson at the Library of Congress May 12, 2008. Photo courtesy of William Baker.

ROW co-founder Robert Hass, former US Poet Laureate (1995-97) and recent winner of the Pulitzer Prize and National Book Award for Poetry, emceed the event. Hass talked about creating the ROW competition, now the largest of its kind, with co-founder Pamela Michaels. He said they didn't want the young writers and artists to feel pressured to write about nature in a romantic way. Of Jack Baker's poem, Hass said, "You don't have to worry about kids romanticizing nature. Before meeting Jack, what was so striking was that directness of kids writing about water. Jack went straight to the sewer, and we

can imagine him hearing the water from the melting snow on the Rockies running under the street. Then that wonderful metaphor of the oboe. Not many adult artists would put music of an oboe and dangerous gases together. They say one of the abilities of an artist is to contain contradiction. Jack is such an articulate and open kid. And then he brings the reader ‘down here’--such an artist’s instinct.”

When asked about the inspiration for the poem, Jack said,” I looked at the road, and the sewer cover and my sister inspired me because she plays the oboe.” Isabel Levine-Clark offers this advice to other writers: “To write a good poem, you need to be able to listen to nature and appreciate it.”

Colorado Humanities and its program department, Colorado Center for the Book, administer the program and judging at the state level. For more information about the program, visit www.coloradohumanities.org, where teachers can also locate resources that help integrate the contest with Colorado Language Arts standards. For a free copy of Colorado Center for the Book’s anthology of Colorado winners and national finalists, or for more information, please email info@coloradohumanities.org or visit <http://www.coloradohumanities.org>.

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