

Center *for*
Robert Penn Warren
Studies

High School Essay Contest

The Robert Penn Warren Center at Western Kentucky University is pleased to announce an essay competition for high school students in Kentucky and Tennessee (Grades 9 through 12). The winner of the contest will receive a \$200 prize, second place will receive a \$100 prize, and third place will receive a \$50 prize. All awardees will be recognized on the Robert Penn Warren Center's website and receive an invitation to the annual Robert Penn Warren Studies conference in April 2017. In addition, all awardees will have the option to have their work uploaded to TopScholar, WKU's online, open-access repository of scholarship and creative works.

Topic

Critically analyze "Paradox," a short poem that Warren published in 1975. How do poetic devices such as imagery and metaphor contribute to your understanding of meaning in the poem?

Format

Essays should be 500 to 600 words long, and submitted via email to RPW.Center@wku.edu by **March 20, 2017**. Submissions must be in Word (.doc or .docx) or Adobe Acrobat (.pdf) format.

Contact

If you have any questions, please contact Dr. Nicolette Bruner at nicolette.bruner@wku.edu.

Paradox

Running ahead beside the sea,
You turned and flung a smile, like spray.
It glittered like tossed spray in the sunlight.
Yes, well I remember, to this day,
That glittering ambiguity.

I saw, when your foot fulfilled its stride,
How the sand, compressed, burst to silver light,
But when I had reached that aureoled spot
There was only another in further flight:
And bright hair, wind-strung, to tease the sun's pride.

Yes, far away and long ago,
In another land, on another shore,
That race you won—even as it was lost,
For if I caught you, one moment more,
You had fled my grasp, up and to go

With glowing pace and the smile that mock
Pursuit down whatever shore reflects
Our flickering passage through the years,
As we enact our more complex
Version of Zeno's paradox.¹

—Robert Penn Warren, *Can I See Arcturus from Where I Stand?* (1975)

¹ Note to Students: Here, Warren refers to Zeno's paradox of Achilles and the tortoise, in which, having given the tortoise a head start, Achilles can never catch the tortoise so long as they both travel at fixed speeds.