

Prose First Place

“A Fearful Encounter” by Zane Parish Charlevoix Middle/High School, 8th Grade

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I am writing this in haste, for a fearful encounter runs laps through my mind. And though I struggle to finger through the terror laden rubble that fills my head, nothing but the memory of my visitors' shining amber eyes comes to show.

Before I met the beast, I was traveling alone on horseback, when I had foolishly been stalled by a glorious view. The mountains, vast in size, shone brightly in the sunlight. However, unbeknownst to me, a large, black beast drew nearer from the bushes.

Towering in size, the beast revealed itself as a bear by rising up on its hind legs and letting out a blood curdling growl. Overwhelmed and powerless, my cowardly horse threw me from its saddle, landing me beneath the bear's scruffy chin; its putrid breath warm upon my face.

The bear raised itself again, posturing to take a blow at my feeble body. Without thinking, I quickly grabbed my gun, and set it upright below the wild beast's chest.

Having fallen on the tip of my rifle, the bear was stunned, but not for long. I took this opportunity to search for my gun. Upon finding it, I was disappointed to see that my rifle had been bent causing trepidation to ripple down my spine.

Hurriedly, I found my way up some sturdy branches and hid within the security of a nearby tree. I must have crawled like a madman, as I can still feel the rough bark tearing against my pants.

Feeling safe up in the tree, I cursed at the bear, mocking its incompetent display under my breath. Maybe its claws were just too blunt. For when it tried to climb the smooth trunk, it slipped. Snarling at its own pitiful failure, the beast glared up at me with those shining amber eyes.

As I wearily waited in the tree, I contemplated my situation. If I had only known, following my departure from St. Louis, that this journey would have me undergo such an enthralling encounter with death, perhaps I would have had more misgivings about the long journey. The sole purpose of this expedition relied on Jefferson's interest in exploring the Louisiana Territory and to locate a trade route to the Pacific Ocean. We set out from St. Louis, a small town located near the eastern outskirts of Missouri, and continued traveling west across the Louisiana Territory which was our final destination. At last, resting at the Pacific Northwest, I took in its expansive shorelines, grateful to have made it that far.

But how things had changed since then, for by this part of the journey, I had found myself sitting in a tree, licking dry lips, half asleep and malnourished. Slowly opening my eyes, I shivered as I looked out at the dark chilling night. Suddenly reminded of the bear, I sat up, and peaked into the blanketing twilight below. I found nothing but my broken gun, shining within the light of the

moon. Glad the bear had departed, I cautiously descended the tree, and arrived at camp in good health.

In the end, I am relieved to have escaped that beast, with its shining amber eyes, for if God is gracious, I will witness the expansion of the United States. I believe this expedition will truly set America towards the future, as we have made several bonds with Native American tribes who seek out trade. And now that I am safe at camp, I can get back to serving my country and exploring this beautiful land.