

2015 MCC Creative Writing Contest

Poetry Category

Second Place: *“The Bottom Half,”* by Amber Dimond

On the bottom half of the upper level
sits a little girl, playing with string
She makes shape after shape
as people routinely come
and tell her they're superior designs
That's why she's on the upper level
She looks around-
people with clay, people with paint, people with paper
All superior designs
She looks up and sees the top half of the upper level
strewn with the best designs
She looks down to the lower level and sees a boy
sleeping
He breathes in and out and in and out
Certainly dreaming of inferior things
He knows there is an upper level,
but never looks up
That's probably why he can sleep.
She looks at her new design and wonders-

Is this one superior enough for the bottom half of the upper level?

Maybe it's slightly inferior and should be on the top half of the lower level

She waits for someone to come tell her

JUDGE'S COMMENTS

This poem has echoes in it of Plato's "Allegory of the Cave" from *The Republic*, with its exploration of how our perspectives are limited. Here, the images are of people put in different categories. I appreciate the writer taking the perspective of a child who is almost there but not quite. The passivity in the last line is powerful: "She waits for someone to come tell her." Overall, I'd like more "showing." Are the people in the other categories also children?

*Catherine Frerichs is retired after many years of teaching writing, literature, and other humanities courses at Glen Oaks Community College, Albion College, and, most recently, Grand Valley State University. She is the author of *Desires of the Heart: A Daughter Remembers Her Missionary Parents* (Cold River Studio, 2010), in which she uses her parents' letters, journals, and other research to write about her parents' 40 years of working in Papua New Guinea and the costs to their children. Currently, she is working on a book that explores her relationship with her three Sudanese children whom she foster-parented for seven years and who have remained her children.*