

CULTURAL ARTS and HERITAGE
Creative Writing Contest – Entries Due to STATE Chairperson by March 1
COVERSHEET • AUTHOR RELEASE FORM

GENERAL GUIDELINES:

- Members may submit ONE entry in EACH category
- **Category descriptions are on the next page**
- Entries should not contain words of profanity
- The KEHA Executive Board reserves the right to not print any entry due to content
- Entries should be **typed**, *however*, legible handwritten entries will be accepted if there is no way the entry can be typed; Entries submitted in **electronic format**, preferably in **Microsoft Word**, are encouraged
- Entries are not returned; please save a copy of your entry and this page for your records
- Winners will be announced at the State Meeting and winning entries will be posted on the Cultural Arts webpage by July 1
- **1st Place Winners in each category will receive a \$25 gift card at the State Meeting**

**THIS Creative Writing Contest Cover Sheet and Author Release Form
must accompany EACH entry. Entries are due with this sheet by March 1.**

Indicate category of your entry:

_____ **Poetry** (limited to 30 lines)

☒ **Memoir** (limited to 2 pages)

_____ **Short Story** (limited to 3000 words)

Please submit to:

Cindy Moore

2707 Sunnyside Road

Eminence, KY 40019

cjrn1@bellsouth.net

Title of Entry: Hatchet Man

Author's name: Retha Nell Hunt

Address: PO Box 354

City: Belfry State: KY Zip Code: 41514

County: Pike AREA: Northeast

Phone: (304) 785-5741 Email Address: rethanhunt@yahoo.com

The Kentucky Extension Homemakers Association has my permission to print my creative writing entry, to include my entry in a booklet of all or selected entries, or to read aloud or perform my entry at a public event, such as the KEHA annual meeting.

Signature: Retha Hunt Date: 2-24-26

Hatchet Man

By: Retha Nell Hunt

On the first day of school, he walked into my high school math classroom like a combat ready warrior. Victor (Not his real name) was dressed in black with metal chains. His eyes were scanning the room as he trudged heavily past and unceremoniously dropped into the seat farthest from my desk. His backpack hit the floor with a loud thud and the atmosphere of the room shifted measurably.

"Here we go," I thought as I watched him settle into his seat. Fellow teachers had told me that he was a troublemaker, lazy and a lost cause. I was wary but not afraid. I had seen his kind before. I was a veteran of these wars with a track record of victories. I was prepped for battle and ready for the most important phase: reconnaissance.

Over the first week, I went about teaching as usual. I learned names and started to get to know them. Victor continued in battle mode every day and refused to speak or participate. I would speak and receive a glare. He ignored his work, focusing on a worn notebook. I didn't push engagement or chastise him. I watched Victor as I walked past helping others.

Victor reminded me of a porcupine in a defensive pose, quills out, hostility radiating from him. As I passed, I looked to see what he was doing in the notebook he guarded so fiercely. He was drawing a particular symbol repeatedly. It was a stylized human carrying an ax. I suspected it was a logo. Victor had gotten used to me passing and had stopped glaring. He kept drawing and ignored me, having decided I wasn't a threat. It was time to make a move. As I passed Victor's desk, I asked him, "What is that drawing?" His gruff reply: "You wouldn't get it." I kept walking and left him to his art.

The next day, I repeated my question "What are you drawing?" and added, "It looks cool." After a minute of him staring me down to see if I was serious, Victor said, "It's Hatchet Man." Then he went back to drawing. He didn't know it, but I had just won our first battle. I parried this win into several more over the next few classes. Each day, I'd ask a question about what he was drawing and gain more small pieces

of intel. Hatchet Man was the logo for a hardcore rap band, Insane Clown Posse. They had a diehard fan base called Juggalos and Victor was a proud member.

As the weeks went by, I made it a point to talk to Victor every day for a few minutes about ICP and what it meant to him. I found out it was a group that swore by loyalty and acceptance. They were a created family for listeners without a safe family in real life. Victor felt accepted and wanted by that band and its followers. One day as he was leaving class, Victor stopped by my desk for the first time and asked me "Do you want to listen to my favorite song by ICP?" I told him that I did. He offered an earbud and we listened together. Victor watched my face closely searching for judgement or disapproval. The song was enough to make my ears bleed and my brain hurt from the screeching but none of that made its way to my expression. I bobbed my head to the beat and smiled at him. Afterward, he gave me a big smile that was genuine. He chatted about why the song was important to him.

From that day forward, the war was over. As I built trust with Victor, I learned more about him. He came from a very difficult situation and had no one in his life who encouraged him or pushed him to do his best. I figured out that Victor was extremely intelligent and had an artistic ability that was amazing. We chatted about his future and he revealed his interest in the military. I encouraged him to follow that dream. Victor did not become a model student but he became a better one, passed my class and graduated on time.

After graduation, Victor enlisted in the Marines and he promised to come back and see me in uniform after basic training. To this day, that knock on my classroom door remains one of my proudest moments as a teacher. I opened the door to see a smiling man in his dress uniform and was immediately wrapped in a bear hug. Then he introduced me to his recruiting officer and told him "This is Mrs. Hunt, she is the one I told you about that believed in me."

Everyone deserves a chance. Everyone has potential. We all just need that one person to tell us that we can succeed. Be that one.