

SAM FRANCIS AS POET

As a senior at Baylor School, a coeducational day and boarding college prep school founded in 1893 in Chattanooga, Tennessee, Sam Francis demonstrated his literary talent at seventeen years of age by winning first place in a poetry contest. Reprinted below is the full text of the award-winning poem:

APOSTROPHE TO A GARDENER

Your garden has grown. In its youth
Its colors were rose and tulip, like unto
The early bursting of the sun in early spring,
The early twilight of late October,
When frosty sunlight silverplates the hills
And makes the clouds like shining stock-cars racing.
Rainbows that spat into a blindman's eye
Were in your garden, but it has grown old.
So now its dry stalks haunt the dust,
Specters of the tulip and the rose, and toads
And grasshoppers chortle in their brown dead mold.
Burnt sticks, where flowers grew, now cringe
Beneath the winter sun.
Sand and grit, where the black loam breathed,
Now dance in shapeless jig
To a raving wind.

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Your egos were too much for it. They could
Not stand to see much green and spangled youth,
And so they scorched it down beneath
The frozen glare of torches, red, all red, against
The summer night of stars, bubbling open,
Red with hate and twisting ignorance,
Yet they lit fires that kept you warm
That summer night (cold in summer, cold in night),

Yet they set a passion in your self
That tore your heart and mind apart, and yet,
They kept you warm that night (cold in summer).

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Cold in night, cold with all the loneliness
Of a thousand crimson Eyes.

– *Sam Francis*
Age 17
Baylor School Grade 12
First Place, Poetry