

**First Place – Poetry**  
Teresa Wood  
*First Harvest*

**FIRST HARVEST**

Scared and unprepared we left home enmasse,  
Cherokee children of the green mountains  
and the silver-blue waters.  
Crowded together along the path,  
butted up and overlapping,  
yet each one raised to believe  
that we journey alone;  
wandering so far from home  
until we no longer saw  
the hawks circle, the eagles soar.  
Each day we walked,  
fewer in number than the days before;  
dragging our feet to the beat of the thunder,  
the distant but familiar drummer.  
We ate the bitter possum grapes  
meant for bird and fox  
because that winter  
brought more hunger than chill,  
yet the cold was severe  
And look, look here,  
look at what they reserved for us –  
a barren land  
of stones and sand-like soil  
thirsty, dry, and dusty in our hands;  
ancient red earth longing, like us,  
for the healing rains.  
In searching for white oak and cypress,  
in listening for a hickory wind,  
we became shadow walkers  
arriving at our final stop  
lost and worn but ready  
to be reborn like the three sisters –  
the bean, the squash, the corn.  
Determined to survive this replanting,  
this turning over of the ground  
in preparation for new growth  
and eventual harvest,  
we were embraced by the warmth  
of the very same sun  
that guided our journey away,  
and led us to this new land, to this new home.