

Second Place Winner

Aftermath

Jillian Poché

Why are pens
always exploding
in little boys' hands?
Mid-lesson I spot
the blue black ink

staining their perfect skin,
splotches all over
their nicked-up desks
and marble notebooks.
The pen dismantled.

They can never give
details of the explosion.
Rather look up at me
with eyes that could inspire
entire wars

and hold out their palms.
Their silence softening me yet
again. Throw the pen away,
I say. Go wash your hands.
Stop taking things apart.