

MonDak 250 Written Word Contest Winners

1st Place Adult Entry:

More Than a Town - By Kristin Norgaard

A Community
A Family
A Home

Near the Yellowstone and Missouri
Where Lewis and Clark once explored
On the border of Montana & North Dakota
Where prickly pear and thistle grow

A Community
A Family
A Home

A valley of promise
Manifest Destiny
An invitation to build

A Community
A Family
A Home

Starting from ground, up
The beginning of a frontier town
Named Sidney
Incorporated in 1911

A Community
A Family
A Home

Creating jobs, opportunities
And infrastructure
Farming, ranching,
And business

A Community
A Family
A Home

Agriculture
Fields of wheat and barley
Traditions passed along
Preserving land

A Community
A Family
A Home

Ranching
Pastures of cows and horses
Lifestyles of bygone cowboys
Honoring culture

A Community
A Family
A Home

Business
Booms and busts
Yielding oil rich lands
Blending people together

A Community
A Family
A Home

Centuries old values
New world ideals
Conserving identity
But overall...

A Community
A Family
A Home

1st Place Youth Entry:

The MonDak to Me – By Evie Karren (Fairview High School, 12th Grade)

MonDak is more than just a combined name
No place on earth is exactly the same
To me, the MonDak is rolling plains
A community running deep in our veins
To me, the MonDak is badlands
Family, friends, and helping hands
To me, the MonDak is golden fields of wheat
Rows of corn and sugar beats
To me, the MonDak was built by homesteaders
Combines and tractors and drills and headers
To me, the MonDak is oil
A community built from hard work and toil
To me, the MonDak is wealthy
Not in gold but in history
To me, the MonDak is in the individual
Beautiful, bold, unique, original
To me, the MonDak is freedom
The ability to go anywhere because of where we came from
To me, the MonDak is the confluence
Two rivers meet, equal in influence
To me, the MonDak is my muse
The very Inspiration for my art I use
To me, the MonDak is my memory
My every hope, dream, and reverie
To me, the MonDak is my home
A place of belonging for all who roam
The MonDak is my past
And I am MonDak's future

2nd Place Adult Entry:

My Home, My Heritage in the MonDak Area – By Vickie Dore

My grandparents settled in the MonDak Area,
before towns had the names they bore.
One town was nearly named after my Grandfather,
and another was named after my great Uncle George Dore.

My ancestors saw endless skies,
rolling hills, valleys, rivers, & streams.
The virgin land was ideal for farming & ranching
& a place to make their homes, & living out their Dreams.

The belief in God was “A Given” with Agriculture.
Oh how the Fall air smelled so sweet,
before the sugar beet crops were replaced
with Soybeans, peas, & more corn & wheat.

Schools in the MonDak area named their mascots:
Eagles, Warrior, Coyotes, Cowboys & Indians.
Along with various other notable characters.
Word hard, pray & play for winning.

The beautiful landscape is now dotted
with sights of production of natural gas & oil.
The largest asset in the area
utilizing what God Blessed us above and below the soil.
Oh, my Home in the MonDak area

is God’s creation & the best place on Earth,
Where I love the Lord, my neighbor & the land
& where I am blessed & fortunate to live since birth.

2nd Place Youth Entry:

What Does the MonDak Area History Mean To You? – By Kirsten Kraft (Kraft Homeschool, 12th Grade)

To fully understand what MonDak area history means, one must first understand the basics: its origin, meaning, and significance. So first, ask yourself: What is the MonDak area? What has it brought? And why is it so special?

The MonDak area is part of the Bakken formation, a 200,000-square-mile underground rock formation known for its immense oil reserves. It holds significant shares of the oil in the Bakken, and it also holds many of the United States' oil reserves. The Mondak area, specifically in eastern Montana, was the main spark of the oil boom in the 2000s. This area is also known for its agricultural and ranching availability and production. It holds much of the Lewis and Clark trail as they passed through the area, including directly through current-day Sidney, Montana.

The MonDak area has great economic significance. Oil was found in the region in 1951, and since then, it has been a leading source of oil. Due to the reserves, the Mondak area was able to produce thousands of barrels of oil, and is still producing large amounts to this day. In addition to providing oil and jobs, the area is significant for its agricultural capabilities. People started moving to the MonDak area long before oil was found. In the 19th and 20th centuries, many families moved there for farming, homesteading, and ranching. While in the mid 1900s to early 2000s, people started moving there for oil. The MonDak area is known for open land ideal for cattle grazing. It is also given the title “Breadbasket of the World,” signifying the prominence of wheat and other crops capable of being farmed.

So what does this history mean to me? For me, when I look around, and I think of the history of this area I call home, I feel more than just a sense of pride. The impact of the history lies in the people who live here, not just the area itself. For me, the MonDak area history represents the core values of the people. It represents strength, strength of character, strength of family, and strength of community. It is a place of dedication, resilience, and will. The people who make up the MonDak area worked for what they have; they worked for our way of life. It wasn't always easy, but they persevered, and that is what makes this area so special. It was made by people who knew what they wanted and what it would take to get there, and they worked for it. They made their living from farming and ranching, and they provided for their families by working long hours in the oil fields to give a better life. To me, the MonDak shows the heart of America, the place where you can live the American Dream.

3rd Place Adult Entry:

What MonDak Means To Me – By Mayra Lopez

There's a moment just before the sun rises when the sky turns the most breathtaking shade of pink. The air is cold and clean and crisp. It feels just like taking the first bite out of a honey crisp apple. It feels like God is smiling and telling you everything's gonna be ok.

I'm not a big city person. I don't like the noise, the rush, the gossip, the nonsense. Give me an iced coffee and a dirt road headed nowhere. Give me an ice cold river and a fishing pole in my hands. Give me a campfire coffee, just minutes after waking up in my tent with only the sound of the creek as my alarm clock.

I'll never get over the sunrises. There's nothing quite like them. Nothing.

That's the life MonDak makes possible. That's the life the people before us dreamed of and built with their love for this land, their hard work, and their determination.

They chose Wide Open over Crowded. Calm over Hurried. Community or Chaos.

Every pink sky, every empty road, every cold river. This place gets into your bones and never let's go.

MonDak history isn't just what happened here. It's what this place does to your soul and why people keep choosing it generation after generation.

3rd Place Youth Entry:

The Bird of History – By Willow Conlin (East Fairview, 5th Grade)

One bird can fly, but the History Bird
Can fly higher
Millions of History on its back;
It doesn't always linger
It drops history here and there
For us to discover
Lines of people work together
To help us to uncover...History

Millions of years ago, dinosaurs ruled their turf;
After that, badlands formed over rock and ice and earth
Thirteen colonies created with people big and small;
With one leader, the king, ruling over them and all
Lewis and Clark, the great explorers,
Exploring with new haste
While Sacagawea, well, she needed some space

The American revolution, done for freedom;
All events taken and put into museums
So that kids everywhere can learn and know
Experiences that help us glow and grow
Our generation can make History,
Solving some of humankind's biggest mysteries.
What happens before, no one knows
But the flower blooms and becomes history

Just like a bird flying to and fro;
History can go where it wants to go
So look in the big sky, you might spot
The history bird as a small white dot
Whoever you are, you just might see
The history bird flying high and free

4th Place Adult Entry:

The Prairie Wind – By Natalie Browne Conlin

The land I grew up on
Is a history the wind whispers
But mostly howls (in case we forget)
The trees dancing, swaying

He planted cottonwood saplings
Then bowing to the fierce winds
Unknown names given to them
By my great-grandfather

Both were young once
His house in its youth hauled across
The ice of the great Yellowstone River
In the frigid deep of winter

My grandpa ran the train tracks to school
From Dore to East Fairview
Both ways and (fortunately)
There were no hills

My great-grandmother held a baby
That was my mother in 1951
My mother, a teen, cared for their horses-
Then her grandma, dying of cancer

This family history I learned at age nine
My own father fixing up the run-down house
Orange shag carpet, drafty windows
The shell of it mostly sound

I rode the bus to the same country school
That my grandpa had attended
(I never did have to run there)
Bumping, swaying on a gravel road

Just east of that old white house
Our own summer wedding was held,
Children born in my green bedroom
Life cradled and love swelled

Later came tears,
At my own mother's memorial
Family gathered on the front porch
As wind watched with bated breath

My children remember riding with their grandpa
In his clanky red beet truck
Drawing pictures, full of candy
Smiling ladies at the beet dump

Badland hikes with arrowheads found
Swimming in the river, floating along
Flashlights in the tunnel, laughter carries
These are the memories they will cherish

Just inside those country school doors
Rests a poem written by my great-great-
grandfather
I show my children his century-old writing
As we hold hands down the blue-gold hall

I walk these dusty fields- generational history
Combing the windblown hair of my children
Those same cottonwoods towering, massive
And oh, how the prairie wind whispers it all

4th Place Youth Entry:

What Does the MonDak Area History Mean to You? – By Keira Kraft (Kraft Homeschool, 10th Grade)

The history of the MonDak area is a very complicated thing. Even though I have lived here my whole life, it still takes me a while to try to put it into words. The MonDak area is a place that is vast not only in size but also in history, making it impossible to capture even a glimpse of it in a small essay such as this one.

For those of us who do live here, though, the MonDak area is so much more. When I think of the MonDak area, I think of family, beauty, faith, and a great deal of strength. Those are the largest things that I think can show us a glimpse of the MonDak area's history.

Most people, when they think of a land's beauty, they think of Yellowstone and Glacier, which are beautiful, but they miss out on the beauty of the real land where people live and work every day. Every morning, if you look to the East, you will see the most beautiful and surreal sunrise coming over the MDU smokestacks. It's like God placed a little thing to bring us joy, knowing sometimes days here will be hard. In winter, you can see so much snow falling that it looks like it was taken right out of a movie. The real beauty of this area has remained the same throughout the history of the MonDak area, and I believe it always will.

As for strength, I believe that the strength of this area is the most impactful. When the oil boom came, the area was very popular. When it ended, though, this area lost much of its profits and people. Yet, this area still survived. One of the largest jobs that was here in this area was the Sugar Beet Factory. The company that owned the sugar beets left this area and destroyed many people's careers. Farmers had to, and still have to, find new crops for their fields, and new equipment, all while not getting paid from the sugar beets. This area has been through a lot, yet despite this, we never give up.

The MonDak area's history means a lot to me. This area's history has taught me how to be strong in hardships, because it's all going to work out. It has taught me how to look for beauty in the smaller things, while others focus on the popular things. It has taught me that faith, family, and freedom are the most important things in my life. Without the history of this area, I wouldn't be who I am today, and I don't think anyone else would be either.