

“Real-World” Writing

We write for different reasons and for different audiences. Sometimes we write just for ourselves; sometimes we write for our friends or family. Much of what you write in this class is for a very small audience: your teachers. While we are an important audience to write for, we also want you to write for a larger audience.

Each year there are thousands upon thousands of opportunities to win large amounts of cash, exciting Hawaii vacations, even lunch with an astronaut—just by writing something. Yes, good writing can pay. As with most things in life, though, we often don’t win such high-stakes prizes. So why even bother? Mostly, it’s just plain fun to try. And that’s what we’d like you to do this semester, This is a ten-point English project.

Requirements

Choose a writing contest from one that we have suggested (PTSA Reflections, for example) or one that you have found yourself. (**Note: If you find a contest other than the ones listed here, you MUST print out the contest info and show it to us no later than Nov. 1.**) The writing contest must require you to write *at least* 300 words (no poems). (More than 300 words is a good idea. . . .)

Read all of the directions carefully. Fill out the submission/application form that the contest requires. Be sure to fill this out correctly. Follow the directions for the writing contest. As you work on this writing, you should show your drafts to others in class to get feedback. Submissions that are error-free have a better chance of winning than those that are filled with errors.

Turn in to us by **Thursday, November 15***:

1. two copies of your actual writing (one in MLA format for us to read/keep/return to you and one copy properly formatted for the contest for which you are submitting)
2. any required submission/application form with required parent signature(s)
3. printed proof of submission (this could be a screen shot, a copy of the sent e-mail – whatever shows well that you correctly followed the contest directions and submitted the writing on time); if you are sending the essay via regular USPS mail, turn in the writing to us in a stamped envelope with correct postage for us to send the writing (if it is **not** one of the contests we posted in class)
4. submit to turnitin.com the writing you (**failure to submit your writing will lower your grade by two points**)
5. a copy of the essay contest guidelines (unless the essay is one that is listed below); note that essay contests we don’t post on our Twitter feed or in class must be pre-approved by us

*You can turn in work earlier than Nov. 15. In fact, if your writing contest has a deadline prior to Nov. 15, you **must** turn in your writing to us with proof of submission no later than the deadline for that contest.

Scoring Guide

√+ – Work meets/exceeds all assignment requirements; writing shows insight, strong voice, care, passion about topic; follows all directions; topic and submission are timely; work is of a substantial length and shows a good deal of time and effort
√ – Work meets all or nearly all requirements; writing shows some insight, but may lack in care and/or passion; follows most directions; may not be timely
√- – Work may not meet requirements; writing shows lack of care and commitment; follows some directions

Approved Essay Contests

Organization: Library of Congress

Topic: Letters about Literature

Deadline: info posted in Sept.; can submit entries beginning Nov. 1

Info: <http://www.read.gov/letters/>

Top Prize: \$1000

Organization: Light Bringer Project and Sci-Fest L.A. (The Tomorrow Prize)

Topic: science fiction story

Deadline: Jan. 28, 2019 (but you'd need to meet our deadline in November)

Info: <http://www.lightbringerproject.org/science-fiction-contests>

Top Prize: \$250

Organization: Bill of Rights Institute / We the Students Essay Contest

Topic: What are the essential qualities of a citizen in your community in 21st century America?

Deadline: The contest deadline is in February, but you need to have this completed in time to meet our November deadline.

Info: <http://www.billofrightsinstitute.org/engage/students-programs->

[events/scholarship/](#)

Top Prize: **\$5,000 (and there are other prizes as well)**

Organization: John F. Kennedy Library Foundation

Topic: Write an original and creative essay of 1,000 words or less that demonstrates an understanding of political courage as described by John F. Kennedy in *Profiles in Courage*. Students should use at least five varied sources such as newspaper articles, books, and/or personal interviews, including one non-internet source, to address the following topic: Describe and analyze an act of political courage by a United States elected official that took place during or after 1956. Include an analysis of the obstacles, risks, and consequences associated with the act. The essay may concern an issue at the local, state, national, or international level.

Deadline: Jan. 18, 2019 (though, obviously, you'd need to submit this earlier than that)

Info: <https://www.jfklibrary.org/Education/Profile-in-Courage-Essay-Contest.aspx>

Top prize: \$10,000

Organization: Journalism Education Association

Topic: What is the role and importance of the Fourth Estate in American society?

Deadline: February 22, 2019 (though you will need to turn this in by the November deadline); writing can be submitted starting in early November

Info: <http://jea.org/home/awards-honors/high-school-essay-contest/>

Top prize: **\$1000 (though there is a \$5 entry fee for this contest) – be sure to provide proof that you paid and submitted your entry**

Organization: PTA (Reflections Contest)

Topic: “Heroes Around Me” (you need to do the literature category)

Deadline: Oct. 10, 2018

Info: <https://capta.org/resource/participant-forms/> (print the third page and fill out completely; be sure to get parent signature)

Top prize: ?

Organization: California Association of Teachers of English

Topic: Voices in Literacy: In Pursuit of Human Rights

Deadline: Oct. 29, 2018 (as we need time to judge and find our top six essays)

Info: <https://cateweb.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/CATECreativeWritingContest2018-19.pdf>

Top prize: Statewide winners in each category will be published in *California English*.

Organization: Scientist for a Day (NASA)

Topic: In the past, NASA has sent spacecraft like Voyager, Galileo, and Cassini to explore these three ocean worlds of the outer solar system. If we could return to one of them, which one would you like to explore further, and what do you hope we might find there? Students choose one of these moons and write an essay about why they think we should return there to explore further. What questions do they hope will be answered by returning to their favorite moon?

Deadline: Feb. 28, 2019

Info: <https://solarsystem.nasa.gov/scientist-for-a-day/home/>

Top Prize: All students who write essays will receive a certificate of participation. U.S. winners and their classes will be invited to participate in a teleconference with NASA scientists and/or engineers. U.S. and international winning essays will be posted on the contest website.