

Central Catholic High School

Character Matters Writing Contest

CONTEST DETAILS:

- Any student in grades 5-8 at a Portland-area Catholic school is welcome to participate and submit writing to be considered. Writing will be judged in two separate grade-level categories: grades 5-6 and grades 7-8.
- Students will choose one of these four character virtues as a focus for their writing:
 - Faith:** We listen to our hearts and embrace hope and optimism
 - Responsibility:** We follow through on our commitments
 - Honesty:** We abide by truth
 - Courage:** We act for the greater good despite our fears
- Students will further choose a writing type (essay, short story, or poem) and use the matching prompt below to guide their writing:

Essay

Research has shown that literature helps us gain empathy, or the ability to embody another person's experiences. Think of a fictional book you have read, one that contains an imagined story. Then, in a well-organized essay, show how that book helped you empathize with one of the four focus character virtues: faith, responsibility, honesty, or courage. How did reading your specific book change, challenge, or confirm what you already thought about that particular character virtue?

Your essay should include specific evidence from the book you read, including perhaps one character's actions to show how your own thinking about faith, responsibility, honesty, or courage was influenced. Please also consider including direct language from the original story in "quotes" to further show evidence of your ideas. Ask your teacher for help on including such quotes if you don't know how! Feel free to use first-person "I" in your essay, but we discourage you from using second-person "you" - mostly because it can feel like an awkward interaction with your reader. We'll be looking for thoughtful connections between yourself, the book, and your chosen character virtue, as well as logical organization, unique word choice, and correct grammar and spelling. Essays should be **no more than 800 words and include a meaningful title.**

Short Story

Write your own short story where you create a character and situation to show faith, responsibility, honesty, or courage. How could you use dialogue, narration, conflict, and resolution to help the reader better understand your chosen character virtue? We'll be looking for creative connections between the character virtue and your imagined story, clear imagery (help us picture your character and setting), unique word choice, and correct grammar and spelling. Short stories should be **no more than 800 words and include a meaningful title.**

Poem

Write a poem that reveals faith, responsibility, honesty, or courage. You could use metaphors or personification to represent the character virtue, for example, or define faith, responsibility, honesty, or courage with clever phrasing and/or rhyming lines (although rhyming is NOT a requirement). We'll be looking for creative integration of the character virtue, thoughtful structure and organization, unique word choice, and correct grammar and spelling (unless, of course, it is used for a specific effect). Poems should be **no more than 300 words and include a meaningful title.**

REGISTRATION AND SUBMISSION:

- Submissions will be accepted from February 3 through March 13, 2020.
- Students should register and submit work via the official Google Form: <https://forms.gle/ZSgsdP8yvEyzNHR69>
- *If needed, teachers may make copies of the blank Google Form for students to fill out on paper.* If this is the case, please mail or drop off paper copies of the form, along with a printed copy of the writing submission, to Central Catholic High School • c/o Character Matters Writing Contest • 2401 SE Stark Street • Portland, Oregon 97214.
- Students may enter more than one writing category, but they will need to fill out a separate registration for each entry. Students may only win in one category.
- Prior to submission, students need to work with their classroom teachers to edit and revise their work. Students will also verify on their registration that they have gone through the provided checklist with their teacher or another trusted adult.
- Students should include a meaningful title with each of their pieces of writing.
- Students should not include their names in the title nor within the body of the writing in order to keep the judging as fair as possible.
- There is NO FEE to enter this contest!

PRIZES:

- Every student who submits an entry will receive a participation certificate and CC sticker.
- Each grade level (5-6 & 7-8) and writing category (essay, short story, poem) will additionally be awarded three levels of prizes:
 - **Gold** represents the most exceptional writing in each category; winners will receive a special award certificate, Central Catholic swag, and a \$50 Powell's Books gift card.
 - **Cardinal** represents excellent writing in each category; winners will receive a special award certificate, Central Catholic swag, and a \$20 Powell's Books gift card.
 - **Honorable Mention** represents one or more notable traits of writing in each category; winners will receive a special award certificate and Central Catholic swag.
- Entries will be judged blindly by a combination of Central Catholic English teachers and AP or honors-level students (please do not put your name in the title of your entry nor within the body of your writing to help facilitate fairness with the judging process).
- Gold, Cardinal, and Honorable Mention-level winners will be notified on or before Friday, April 17.
- Gold and Cardinal-level winners will be honored at their schools by Central Catholic representatives (and possibly even our Rammy mascot!).
- All Gold, Cardinal, and Honorable Mention-level entries will be gathered into a printed chapbook that will be distributed to the winners' respective classrooms before the end of May.

Questions? E-mail writingcontest@centralcatholichigh.org

