



Celebrate America

AMERICAN IMMIGRATION COUNCIL

Creative Writing Contest

The **American Immigration Council** is proud to sponsor the 16th annual "Celebrate America" Creative Writing Contest. The contest inspires educators to bring U.S. Immigration history and lessons into their classrooms and gives fifth graders the opportunity to explore America as a nation of immigrants.

Past winners have documented the experience of immigrants who have left their homelands in search of a more promising future in America, spoken of their immigration experiences or reflected on their ancestors or parents.

Fifth grade students enter their work in local contests which are sponsored by chapters of the American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA). Each chapter forwards the local winning entry to the National Competition where entries are reviewed by a distinguished panel including U.S. Senators, award winning authors and noted journalists. Winning entries will then be printed in the Congressional Record.

The grand prize winner (and two guests) will receive an all-expenses-paid trip to the Council's Annual Benefit Dinner where the winner will be recognized and will recite the winning piece. Local and national judges are looking for student writing that is original, thoughtful and speaks to the Council's mission to educate the public about the benefits of immigration in our society.

If you are interested in participating, please contact your local contest coordinator. More information can be found on the Council's website at www.celebrateamericawritingcontest.org.

How It Works

The Creative Writing Contest kicks off in the fall or early winter (depending on the local contest rules) as volunteer attorneys from local AILA chapters visit teachers and classrooms. The attorneys give classroom presentations on immigration to inform students and teachers about the important role immigration plays in our society. The attorneys also explain contest details and get students excited about participating.

In the winter and early spring, teachers submit student entries to local AILA chapters who then select and honor a winner(s) on the local level. In April, local AILA chapters send winning entries to the Council, which we forward to our panel of national celebrity judges. The top national winner is announced in early May.

For a more detailed schedule, check out: www.celebrateamericawritingcontest.org.

Past National Judges Include:

Dave Eggers, Award Winning Author
Gerda Weissman Klein, Presidential Medal of Freedom Recipient
Peter Coan, Author
Warren St. John, Author/Journalist
Daniel Inouye, Senator (D-HI)
Charles E. Schumer, Senator (D-MA)
Mary Williams, Founder of the Lost Boys Foundation
Junot Diaz, Pulitzer Prize Winning Author

The National Grand Prize

The winner and two guests receive an all expenses paid trip to The Council's Annual Benefit Dinner where he/she is honored and reads his/her winning entry aloud. This year's Annual Benefit will take place June 28, 2013 in San Francisco, California. The winner also receives a travel stipend, engraved plaque, his/her winning entry printed in the Congressional Record and a flag flown over the Capitol in his/her honor.

Guidelines

Theme

"Why I Am Glad America is a Nation of Immigrants"

Entrants

5th graders

Format

Any written entry (essay, poem, story, interview, etc.) that reflects the theme. Entry should be submitted to your contest coordinator (some local contests require electronic submissions, so please check with your coordinator).

Word Count

Up to 500 words

Judging Criteria

Theme, presentation, creativity and message

Entry Requirements

- Cover page must include student's name, address, grade, age, school and telephone number and email
- Proof of enrollment in the fifth grade—such as report cards, transcripts or letters from the school principal
- A Release Form must be signed by contestant and parent or guardian

Last Year's Winning Entry

Past winners have documented the experience of immigrants who have left their homelands in search of a more promising future in America, spoken of their immigration experiences or reflected on their ancestors or parents.

America, The Magical Land

Alexander Tymouch, Chicago IL

*There is a magical place in this world,
Where people come to look for freedom and happiness.
They sail for weeks through the swaying ocean,
When they finally arrive at the mesmerizing new land,
They try to keep their own ways at first.
They celebrate the same holidays,
Wear the same clothes,
And eat the same food.
They do everything the same as before,
But eventually. . .
They start to learn from one another
And exchange their cultures.
It's like an experienced cook came and learned to dance,
While a graceful dancer came and learned to sew.
A talented tailor came and learned to bake,
While a baker came and learned to farm.
They thought they were doing it for their own benefit,
But in fact they were making history.
These people learned different cultures
And shared their own cultures too.*

How You Can Get Involved

If you are interested in engaging your classroom in a thoughtful dialogue on immigration, contact your local contest coordinator by visiting www.celebrateamericawritingcontest.org.

Teachers should mark their calendars and set aside time this fall or winter to allow contest coordinators to visit your classrooms. Teachers can also sign up to receive updates on the "Celebrate America" Fifth Grade Creative Writing Contest by www.celebrateamericawritingcontest.org.

The American Immigration Council's Community Education Center will keep teachers updated throughout the year on contest guidelines, deadlines and general contest information. The Community Education Center will also keep teachers up to date on the latest in immigration curriculum as well as other programming.

About The Community Education Center and The American Immigration Council



The **American Immigration Council** is a tax-exempt, not-for-profit educational, charitable organization. The mission of the American Immigration Council is to be a leader in strengthening America by honoring our immigrant history and by shaping how the public thinks and acts toward immigration now and in the future.

The **Community Education Center** strives to promote a better understanding of immigrants and immigration by providing educational resources that inspire thoughtful dialogue, creative teaching and critical thinking. Dedicated to the American values of fairness, social justice and respect for all people, the Center is committed to making immigration an everybody issue. The Center also highlights the positive contributions immigrants have made and continue to make to American society through its programmatic work.

For additional information, lesson plans and classroom resources, please visit our website at www.communityeducationcenter.org.