WRITING CONTESTS

AWARDS, CONTESTS, AND GRANTS

2026-2028 GFWC CLUB MANUAL

"INSTRUCTIONS FOR LIVING A LIFE. PAY ATTENTION. BE ASTONISHED. TELL ABOUT IT." — MARY OLIVER

Inspire creativity through the power of the written word. Encourage club members and students to write stories or poems through self-expression to share their thoughts and allow their voices to be heard. Contest entries in short stories and poetry are open to club members and students in grades K-12. Engage and empower your communities to participate in the GFWC-sponsored writing contest to ignite new and budding talents for writers of all ages and boost the confidence of existing writers.

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2026-2028 WRITING CONTESTS

LeeAnn Conlon, Chairman
GFWC Great Lakes Region
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Marco Island, FL 34145
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Award entries submitted to leeannconlon20@gmail.com

GFWC MEMBER CONTESTS

Entries are limited to one per member per category – short story or poetry.

- **Short stories** are limited to 2,000 words. Word count must be included at the end of the story.
- **Poetry entries** can be any style with a minimum length of eight lines and a maximum of 50 lines.
- **Writing submitted must be the original work of the author, not generated by any Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools.**

AUTHORS MUST:

- Be a dues-paying member of an active per capita club.
- Be amateurs, with earnings from writing not to exceed $500 annually.
- Submit original works that have not been published prior to the competition.

ENTRIES MUST:

- Be written during the contest year (January 1-December 31).
- Be typed, double-spaced, and one-inch minimum margins on the top, bottom, and both sides.
- Include the Author's Name on the top right-hand corner of each page and page numbers in the bottom right corner.
- Attach the Creative Arts Waiver Member Writing Contest form.

SUBMISSION:

- **Submitted digitally**, using PDF format (preferred) or Microsoft WORD only.
- Must include a completed, signed Creative Arts Waiver Member Writing Contest Form in digital format (PDF) for each submission. The Creative Arts Waiver can be found at the end of this segment of the Club Manual and in the Digital Library on the Member Portal.

STUDENT WRITING CONTESTS

CONTEST CATEGORIES

Category 1: Grades K, 1, and 2

Category 2: Grades 3, 4, and 5

Category 3: Grades 6, 7, and 8

Category 4: Grades 9, 10, 11, and 12

- Entries are limited to one short story and/or one poem per student per grade category.
- **Short stories** are limited to 2,000 words. Word count must be included at the end of the story.
- **Poetry entries** can be any style with a minimum length of eight lines and a maximum of 50 lines.
- The "Six Traits of Writing" will be used in the judging of the Student Writing Contest entries in categories 1, 2, 3, and 4.
- **Writing submitted must be the original work of the author, not generated by any Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools.**

AUTHORS MUST:

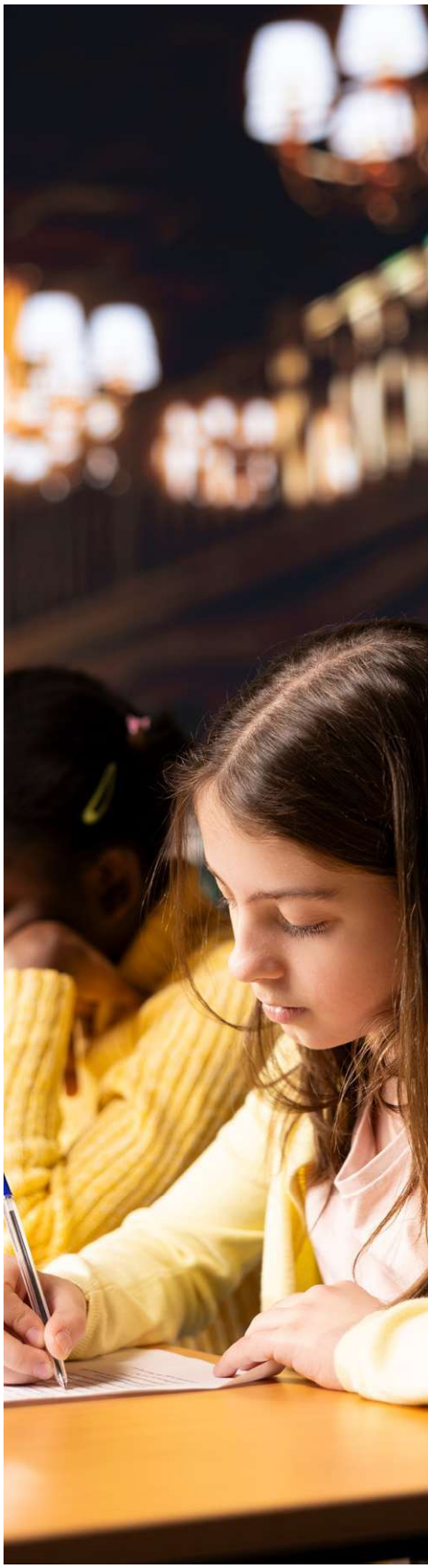
- Be amateurs, with earnings from writing not to exceed $500 annually.
- Submit original works that have not been published prior to the competition.

ENTRIES MUST:

- Be written during the contest year (January 1-December 31).
- Be typed, double-spaced, and one-inch minimum margins on the top, bottom, and both sides.
- Include the Author's Name on the top right-hand corner of each page and page numbers in the bottom right corner
- Attach the Creative Arts Waiver Student Writing Contest form.

SUBMISSION:

- **Submitted digitally**, using PDF format (preferred) or Microsoft WORD only.
- Must include a completed, signed Creative Arts Waiver Student Writing Contest form in digital format (PDF) for each submission. The Creative Arts Waiver can be found at the end of this segment of the Club Manual and in the Digital Library on the Member Portal.



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STATE AND DC LEVEL

Clubs/Members must send entries to their respective State/District of Columbia Federation Writing Contests Chairmen for **state-level judging by the state submission deadline**.

State/DC Federation Writing Contests Chairmen will:

- Determine state entry deadlines for club entries, keeping in mind the national deadline (April 1) when arranging for state-level judging.
- Select judges who will evaluate entries and select a first-place winning entry in each category.
- Submit one winning state entry per writing contest (including Creative Arts Waiver Member/Student Writing Contest form), per category, to the national GFWC Writing Contest Chairman digitally no later than April 1 each year, including a cover letter with a complete list of state writing contest winners.

NATIONAL LEVEL

By midnight on April 1, a digital cover letter with a complete list of state writing contest winners and all winning state entries must be **submitted digitally to the GFWC Writing Contest Chairman at leeannconlon20@gmail.com and Programs@GFWC.org.** A Creative Arts Waiver Member/Student Writing Contest form with the author's contact information must be digitally submitted with each entry.

Winners will be recognized at the GFWC Annual Convention with certificates and monetary awards.

GFWC Member Short Story Winner: $50

GFWC Member Poetry Winner: $50

Student Short Story Winner:

Category 1 (Grades K, 1, and 2): $25

Category 2 (Grades 3, 4, and 5): $25

Category 3 (Grades 6, 7, and 8): $25

Category 4 (Grades 9, 10, 11, and 12): $50

Student Poetry Winner:

Category 1 (Grades K, 1, and 2): $25

Category 2 (Grades 3, 4, and 5): $25

Category 3 (Grades 6, 7, and 8): $25

Category 4 (Grades 9, 10, 11, and 12): $50

Winners will be published on the Digital Library on the Member Portal after the GFWC Annual Convention in the Awards & Certificates folder in two documents:

- **GFWC Awards & Contest Winners**: Lists the name of the winner, category, and name of the poem or short story.
- **GFWC Poetry and Writing Contest Winners**: Publishes the full winning poetry and short stories.

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HELPFUL RESOURCES

6+1 Trait Writing Rubrics (Grades K-2) educationnorthwest.org/sites/default/files/resources/traits-rubrics-k-2.pdf

6+1 Trait Writing Rubrics (Grades 3-12) www.readingrockets.org/sites/default/files/2023-06/traits-rubrics-3-12.pdf

How to Write a Short Story That Captivates Your Reader jerryjenkins.com/how-to-write-short-stories/

How to Write a Poem writers.com/how-to-write-a-poem-step-by-step

CLARIFICATIONS AND FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

- Manuscripts will not be returned. Authors should keep a copy.
- By submitting a short story or poem to GFWC, the author is providing GFWC with a royalty-free perpetual license to use, reproduce, post, display, create derivative works, sell, license the work in any media known at the time of entry, or later invented, without limitation, for commercial or non-commercial purposes.
- A completed, signed **GFWC Creative Arts Waiver Member/Student Writing Contest** form must be submitted with each entry. This form can be found at the end of this segment of the Club Manual and in the Digital Library on the Member Portal.
- **When do I (a member) submit my contest entry?**
    - Clubs/Members must send entries to their respective State/DC Federation Writing Contests Chairmen for state-level judging by the state submission deadline. Please contact your State/DC Writing Contest Chairman or leadership for your individual deadline.

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CREATIVE ARTS WAIVER
MEMBER WRITING CONTEST
2026–2028 GFWC ADMINISTRATION

With my signature I declare that:

☐ I have created the submitted work, entitled_____ and I own the full copyright. The work has not been published before.

☐ With my written work, including pictures, tables, or additional media, I do not violate or infringe on the copyright of any other person or entity. My writing was not generated by any Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools.

☐ I grant the General Federation of Women's Clubs a royalty-free perpetual license to use, reproduce, post, display, create derivative works, sell, license, or sublicense the work in any media now known or later invented, without limitation, for commercial or non-commercial purposes.

This agreement shall become effective and binding on the date of formal acceptance of the work for publication by the General Federation of Women's Clubs.

The work submitted is for the following contest (please check only one):

☐ Member Short Story ☐ Member Poetry

Full Name		
Mailing Address		
City	State	Zip Code
Phone	Email	
Name of Club		
State/DC Federation		

_____ _____

Signature Date

Writing Contest submissions are accepted digitally ONLY. Each entry must include a completed, signed Creative Arts Waiver Member Writing Contest form. Clubs/Members must send entries to their respective State/District of Columbia Federation for state-level judging by the state submission deadline. Please contact your State/DC leadership for your individual deadline.

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CREATIVE ARTS WAIVER
STUDENT WRITING CONTEST
2026–2028 GFWC ADMINISTRATION

With my signature I declare that:

☐ I have created the submitted work, entitled_____ and I own the full copyright. The work has not been published before.

☐ With my written work, including pictures, tables, or additional media, I do not violate or infringe on the copyright of any other person or entity. My writing was not generated by any Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools.

☐ I grant the General Federation of Women's Clubs a royalty-free perpetual license to use, reproduce, post, display, create derivative works, sell, license, or sublicense the work in any media now known or later invented, without limitation, for commercial or non-commercial purposes.

This agreement shall become effective and binding on the date of formal acceptance of the work for publication by the General Federation of Women's Clubs.

The writing submitted is for the following contest (please check only one):

☐ **STUDENT SHORT STORY** ☐ **STUDENT POETRY**

Student Grade Classification (please check only one):

☐ **CATEGORY 1: GRADES K-2** ☐ **CATEGORY 3: GRADES 6-8**

☐ **CATEGORY 2: GRADES 3-5** ☐ **CATEGORY 4: GRADES 9-12**

Full Name		
Mailing Address		
City	State	Zip Code
Phone	Email	
Name of Club		
State/DC Federation		

_____ _____

Signature Date

_____ _____

Parent/Guardian Signature (if student is under 18 years of age) Date

Writing Contest submissions are accepted digitally ONLY. Each entry must include a completed, signed GFWC Creative Arts Waiver Student Writing Contest form. Clubs/Members must send entries to their respective State/District of Columbia Federation for state-level judging by the state submission deadline. Please contact your State/DC leadership for your individual deadline.

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