

# 2015 Promising Young Writers Program Eighth-Grade Students

Deadline to complete entry form and upload papers: February 13, 2015

This year's theme, "Beyond Boundaries" is especially appropriate for young writers. Writing about texts that challenge and repurpose what others have thought/said/written is a fundamental skill of English Language Arts. It also encourages students to see writing as rebellious and powerful, pushing boundaries even as it responds to traditions.

Teachers, we invite you to incorporate the Promising Young Writers' theme and writing prompt into your curriculum. In fact, we hope that "Beyond Boundaries" is an idea that you may want all of your students to explore through their writing and reading. If so, you may be interested in building from the literature and teaching ideas presented at the ALAN (Assembly on Literature for Adolescents of the National Council of Teachers of English) workshop, "Is the Sky the Limit? Using Teen Literature to Forge Connections in a World With Disappearing Boundaries" held at the 2014 NCTE convention in Washington, D.C..

Also, if your state has adopted the Common Core State Standards, it may be helpful to note that nominees for the Promising Young Writers program may choose to write their thematic piece in any genre—including the narratives, arguments, and informative/explanatory texts that the Common Core requires for eighth-grade writers.

## Eligibility

Eighth-grade students in the current academic school year are eligible to be nominated by their schools in the United States, the District of Columbia, Canada, Virgin Islands, and American Schools Abroad. Home-schooled students may submit through a cooperating school.

## Selection of Nominees

All nominees must demonstrate evidence of effective writing. Each school selects its own nominee or nominees: one or more eighth graders agreed upon by a school committee or department. It is recommended that nominees be selected by several teachers.

Students each submit two pieces of writing; one is theme-based and the other, an example of the student's best writing.

## Number of Nominees

The number of nominees allowed from each school is determined by the school's average eighth-grade daily enrollment. Use the following guide:

### Average Daily Enrollment

Under 100	1 nominee
100–199	2 nominees
200–299	3 nominees
300–399	4 nominees
400–499	5 nominees
500 or more	6 nominees

NOTE: Teachers may nominate an equal (additional) number of entrants who are English Language Learners (ELL). Teachers should briefly describe each entrant's current level of language acquisition.

## Procedures for Entering

**Entries will be accepted online from November 28, 2014 – February 13, 2015, Noon CST.**

Select one teacher to represent your school and enter student submissions. This teacher should complete one entry form per student and upload that student's papers as ONE FILE that is a maximum of 10 double-spaced pages. Please note that entrants must have a parent or guardian's permission to enter.

**Teachers go to [www.ncte.org/awards/student/pyw](http://www.ncte.org/awards/student/pyw) to enter student submissions.**

## Entries:

Two written submissions (best and themed) by each student is required. Both writings should go through a process of drafting and revision, and each composition should be in a different genre (poetry, narrative, argument, expository).

- 1. Best writing** — one sample that the student considers his or her best work, regardless of the number of revisions. The best writing must not exceed six (6) typed, double-spaced pages. Research papers, term papers, and novels will not be accepted.
- 2. Themed writing** — Theme must not exceed four (4) typed, double-spaced pages. The topic, developed by the Promising Young Writers Advisory Committee, is a common topic on which all students must write.

## 2015 Theme: "Beyond Boundaries"

Reading and writing connect people across the globe, collapsing the boundaries that separate us from others who are different. Choose a book, poem, story, news article, film, website, or something else you've read that breaks boundaries, either in its content (for example, a story about something controversial or a documentary about a global issue) or its form (for example, a story that uses multiple genres or voices). Write about why you chose this text and why/how it crosses boundaries in important ways. You may write in your preferred genre (such as drama, poetry, short story, narrative, an op ed piece, science fiction, memoir, news article, etc.). For example, you might write the story of how a novel pushed boundaries in your own life, or create a movie trailer for a book that challenged boundaries in our society. If you find it helpful to state the audience for your writing at the beginning of your piece, you are welcome to do so. Remember that your writing for this themed piece should be no longer than four pages and that it should be in a different genre than your Best Writing entry.

## Directions for Both Best and Themed Writing

- a. Use legible type (no smaller than 11 or 12 point).
- b. Double-space (except for poetry).
- c. Margins are to be 1" on all sides (except for poetry).
- d. Page number should be in the upper right-hand corner.
- e. The student's name and "Best" or "Theme" must appear in the upper left-hand corner of each page.
- f. School name must *not* appear on the paper or within the body of writing.
- g. Maximum length for the theme is four (4) pages. Maximum length for the best writing is six (6) pages. An excerpt from a larger piece is acceptable with a paragraph explaining the piece from which the excerpt was taken.

The Promising Young Writers Program represents NCTE's commitment to early and continuing work in the development of writing. The school-based writing program was established in 1985 to stimulate and recognize students' writing talents and to emphasize the importance of writing skills among eighth-grade students.

## Judging

Teams of teachers at the national level will judge the writing and select the top entries. Best and themed writings are judged holistically on content, purpose, audience, tone, word choice, organization, development, and style.

## Awards

Results are announced in May 2015. Students selected for superior performance are awarded a letter and certificate from NCTE which is provided to the nominating teacher to present to the student. Additionally, their names are posted on NCTE's website along with their school's name, city, and state.

Program information may be found at [www.ncte.org/awards/student/pyw](http://www.ncte.org/awards/student/pyw).

Email questions to: [pyw@ncte.org](mailto:pyw@ncte.org)

**NCTE** National Council of  
Teachers of English

1111 W. Kenyon Road, Urbana, IL 61801-1096

[www.ncte.org](http://www.ncte.org)