



## FAQS for Instructors

### **Is this essay prize competition new?**

It was launched in the winter of 2015. The objective is to encourage and recognize excellent research-based essay writing by our English 1 students. Students whose essays are nominated will receive a congratulatory letter. Prizewinners will be invited to participate in a ceremony that honors their achievement, and will have their essays archived on the department website for future students to read.

### **How many essays may I submit?**

Bearing in mind that this contest is designed to reward excellence in student writing, it would be best to limit your entries to the most exceptional essays.

### **Must I submit an essay?**

No. There is no obligation to submit an essay. And given the blind submission process, no one will know who submitted and who did not. Submitted essays should be competitive, not just your students' personal best or even the best in any given class. Look for the ones that you would consider worth special recognition.

### **Can the essay be a literary analysis?**

While a work of literature may be one source that a student may use, and the essay may pursue a topic inspired by the literature, the argument of the essay should focus on a complex, substantive issue or problem represented in or inspired by that literary source. That is, an analysis of Tomás Rivera's metaphors in *The Harvest* would not be sufficient, but the use of *The Harvest* -- including an analysis of select metaphors and other sources -- in an argumentative essay about consumer responsibility for the working conditions of migrant workers would be.

### **Are there guidelines or limitations regarding essay subject matter?**

No.

### **Can I include supplemental material?**

No. This is a blind competition, so we will not know the student's name, academic history, or personal circumstances as we read the essays. Nor will we know which instructor submitted the essay. If you feel that a copy of the prompt is necessary, you may submit that.

### **Are first-person essays eligible if they meet the other criteria?**

There is always the exceptional work that proves the exception to the rule, but since the prize is for argumentative essays that incorporate research, an essay that employs first person exclusively would likely not fare well. That said, the use of personal experience could be a powerful component of an essay as one element of support for an argumentative thesis, or a catalyst for introducing and establishing context for the subject matter.

## **I have an English 1 section with two impressive essays; may I submit both?**

Of course! Essays that in your estimation are exceptional and equally capable of winning are always welcome.

## **In a given semester, how big is the pool of potential English 1 entrants?**

The number of open English 1 sections varies by semester.

## **Typically, how many nominated essays are up for consideration in a given year?**

The contest is still too new for a typical participation rate to emerge, but so far, the response from faculty has been gratifying. Please keep your submissions coming, and if you haven't nominated a student essay yet, consider doing it this year!

## **Who judges the contest?**

A panel of three to four members of the English Department and one SMC Librarian

## **Am I expected to inform all my students of this essay contest in advance, or just notify students whose work I recommend for submission?**

That's up to you. Some instructors may decide that announcing the Essay Prize Contest to their classes in advance will generate excitement and provide added motivation to excel. Others might regard an announcement as a potential distraction, or may find it creates unwanted pressure to nominate student work, and therefore they decide to notify the potential nominees only. Use your best judgment. Any student whose work you *do* decide to submit must be notified in advance. All student prize candidates are required to fill out the Submission Form, sign it, and return it to you for their work to be considered.

## **Where can students with nominated essays go for more information?**

An FAQ information sheet for students is available on the English Department home page in the left-hand navigation pane.

## **What if I have a question that isn't answered here?**

On the English Department home page, under "Resources," click open the link to the English Prize Essay Contest. Read the information that is posted there, and explore the related links to forms and FAQs. If you still have questions, please contact Diane Arieff at [arieff\\_diane@smc.edu](mailto:arieff_diane@smc.edu)