



“Celebrate America” Creative Writing Contest

The **American Immigration Council** is proud to sponsor the 14th 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

Gish Jen, Author

Firoozah Dumas, Author

Warren St. John, Author/Journalist

Edward M. Kennedy, Senator (D-MA)

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 three 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 in Washington, DC. 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

CONTACT YOUR CONTEST COORDINATOR

To contact a local Contest Coordinator, visit the Council's Community Education Center webpage at www.celebrateamericawritingcontest.org or email teacher@immcouncil.org.

ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

- Cover page must include student's name, address, grade, age, school and telephone number
- 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

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.

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'S FRIED (EXCERPT)

By Julia Culbert
Saratoga Elementary School
Saratoga, California

"Now see here! Your rice is a bland mixture, all the same, like some countries in the world. My fried rice is mixed, like with each person immigrating here, and it tastes better with a little bit of each, like all the different cultures in America."

"Not true!" squeaked Mabel, "People have different ways! How could it all fit together?"

"America is how. If you add soy sauce to that rice, it will taste a little better. But you need all the vegetables in order to get the best flavor you can," explained Anna. She was now full-out ready to explain it..."



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.

