

Essay Contest Requirements and Judging Criteria



The Rules

All students enrolled in grades 6-12 in public, private, and home schools within the United States are encouraged to submit.

All entries must be original work reviewed, approved, and sponsored by a teacher or mentor. MTI will contact the sponsor with any questions about a specific entry. Homeschooled students must contact a mentor to sponsor their entry. The teacher/mentor must complete and attach the required [required cover sheet](#). A digital signature will be approved.

Submit the essay and cover letter as **one** PDF file by filling out this [Google Form](#).

General Rules

- All essays must be the original work of the student.
- Essays must be double spaced and can be typed or legibly handwritten.
- Essays and the required cover sheet must be submitted in PDF format.
- Any quotations or copyrighted material used in the essay must be identified properly. Failure to identify non-original material will result in disqualification.
- All participants must cite sources they used to research their topic throughout their essay. Please use parenthetical citations within the text. We can not accept citations in footnote form.
- Essays must include a bibliography. Accepted formats include [APA](#), [MLA](#), or [Turabian](#).

Grades 6-9 Rules & Essay Details

- Essays for students in 6th, 7th, 8th, or 9th grade must be between 400 and 500 words. Title, citations, and bibliography are not included in the word count.
- Essays for students in these grades must use a minimum of two selected sources.

Grades 10-12 Rules & Essay Details

- Essays for students in 10th, 11th, or 12th grade must be between 700 and 1,000 words. Title, citations, and bibliography are not included in the word count.
- Essays for students in these grades must use a minimum of five selected sources.

Judging Criteria

Total points possible: 15

1. **Content** - Understanding of the topic: To what extent did the writer demonstrate a clear understanding of the essay prompt and respond with details about his/her ideas?
2. **Material Organization & Sources** - Effectiveness in presenting a point-of-view, logical interpretation of the subject - clear thesis, and supporting ideas, and factual information
3. **Vocabulary, grammar and spelling** - Uses vocabulary related to the transportation industry, use of grammar and spelling

Content - Understanding of the topic: To what extent did the writer demonstrate a clear understanding of the essay prompt and respond with details about his/her ideas?

- *Excellent (5 points)*
In-depth understanding: demonstrates thorough understanding of key concepts related to the question, and the proposed solution(s) are identified and fully defined; uses appropriate, engaging content throughout; examines ideas in-depth while maintaining focus
- *Above average (4 points)*
Exhibits adequate understanding of key concepts related to the question, and the proposed solution(s) are adequately identified and defined; mostly uses appropriate, engaging language and maintains focus.
- *Average (3 points)*
Demonstrates some understanding of key concepts; solutions are partially identified and defined; statement that viewpoints exist but little use of supporting details and/or loses focus
- *Below average (2 points)*
Some concepts are identified but not defined; lack of reference to any viewpoints
- *Poor (1 point)*
Complete lack of reference to the question and the story; irrelevant information; unsupported statements, incomplete details

Material Organization & Sources - Effectiveness in presenting a point-of-view, logical interpretation of the subject - clear thesis, supporting ideas, and factual information

- *Excellent (5 points)*
Demonstrates strong understanding of assignment expectations; Point-of-view fully presented and thoroughly supported by a variety of facts and details
- *Above average (4 points)*
Consistently fulfills assignment expectations; Point-of-view presented and supported with some facts
- *Average (3 points)*

Exhibits some understanding of assignment expectations; Point-of-view expressed but limited use of factual information

- *Below average (2 points)*
Shows little/no understanding of assignment expectations and/or facts are inaccurate
- *Poor (1 point)*
Point of view not present and/or completely irrelevant to assignment

Vocabulary, grammar and spelling - Uses vocabulary related to the transportation industry, use of grammar and spelling

- *Excellent (5 points)*
Language is clear and effective, excellent grammar and spelling
Varied sentence structure, essay cohesive and adheres to appropriate language conventions and tone
- *Above average (4 points)*
Language is mostly clear and effective, good grammar & spelling;
sentence structure somewhat varied; essay is cohesive and adheres to appropriate language conventions and tone
- *Average (3 points)*
Ideas are clear, but language could be more specific and effective; Sentence structure lacks variety, but essay is cohesive and appropriate
- *Below average (2 points)*
Much of the language is unclear and hard to follow; Many errors in grammar and spelling
- *Poor (1 point)*
Irrelevant and/or erroneous information, main ideas unclear, illegible, grammar and spelling errors consistent throughout essay