

Through Their Eyes: A Holocaust Arts and Writing Contest



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Sponsored by:

The Champaign-Urbana Jewish Federation (CUJF) Holocaust Education Center

Call for Entries

You are invited to participate in our 2026 **Through Their Eyes: A Holocaust Arts and Writing Contest**. The CUJF Holocaust Education Center's contest focuses on honoring Jewish and non-Jewish Holocaust survivors, victims, resisters, rescuers, and liberators.

Who is Eligible?

5th-12th grade students in public, private, and homeschooled in Bond, Champaign, Christian, Clark, Coles, Cumberland, Douglas, Edgar, Effingham, Fayette, Ford, Livingston, Logan, McClean, Macon, Moultrie, Montgomery, Piatt, Shelby, and Vermilion counties (schools located within Regional Office of Education Areas 3, 9, 11, 17, 39, and 54).

Contest Topics/Focus of Art or Writing

- Holocaust survivors and victims (Jewish and non-Jewish)
- Holocaust resisters (Jewish and non-Jewish and individual or group from any nation)
- Holocaust rescuers (Jewish and non-Jewish, and individual or group on the list of Righteous Among Nations [Yad Vashem])
- Liberators of camps (Jewish and non-Jewish and individual or group – documentation that they were present at the liberation of a camp is required)

Grade Level Divisions

- 5th and 6th grade
- 7th and 8th grade
- 9th and 10th grade
- 11th and 12th grade

Competition Categories

- ❖ **Prose** - (not an essay or a short story but a description or statement or written like a speech):
 - Only the work of a single individual may be entered
 - Reflective, informative, descriptive, or persuasive
 - May contain specific details that require citation or be general in nature
 - Maximum 350 words
 - May not be a work of fiction.
- ❖ **Poetry** - (clearly written in a poetic form - not prose):
 - Only the work of a single individual may be entered

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- May contain specific details that require citation or be general in nature
- Maximum 2 pages

❖ Paintings/Drawings:

- Only the work of a single individual may be entered
- No larger than 24 x 36 inches
- Must be able to be safely and easily moved and displayed

❖ Other visual art (such as sculpture, textile, pottery, mixed-media, etc.):

- Only the work of a single individual may be entered
- No size specifications but must be able to be safely and easily moved and displayed.

❖ Film:

- May be submitted by an individual or a group of students
- 5 minute maximum length (including titles and credits)
- In an easy to access digital format
- Submission of script required.

❖ Music:

- May be submitted by an individual or a group of students
- 5 minute maximum length (not including title and credits)
- May be instrumental, vocal, or instrumental and vocals
- Both lyrics and/or music must be original and lyrics, if used, must be submitted

Contest Rules

- **All entries** must be the original work of the students submitting them
- **Only film and music entries** may be submitted by a group of students - all other must be the work of a single student
- **All entries** must be submitted online by the deadline (March 16, 2026) and include: the project submitted as directed, documentation/source information, completed submission form, a Creator's Statement; and any other specific requirements for the category of competition.
- **At least one reputable source is required for all entries.** These sources may include internet sites, books, articles, interviews, etc. Please provide basic source information (the title and author of books; magazine titles, date, article name, and author; interview information; website name and active link; etc.). Formal citation format is not required but appreciated. **Please note that a complete, active internet link must be provided for any entry that includes statistics. Any artwork based on an image (photo of person, site, etc,) must include a copy of the original image.** Multiple sources are recommended for more complex entries.
- **All written entries must be** in 12 point font size, double-spaced, and in an easy to read font and submitted as a Google doc.

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- **All entries** must be appropriate and respectful and should honor the person/people who are featured in the entry.
- **All entries** must focus on a specific, real individual or group of people or on a general individual or collective group of people.
- **Entries may** represent a collective or general experience and **may** express the creator's thoughts and feelings.
- **Poetry entries** may be of **any type** (haiku, sonnet, free verse, rhymed, etc.). If students are unsure if a written piece is poetry or prose, they are encouraged to work with a teacher or contact the contest director to discuss their entry before submitting it.
- **Prose entries** should be an **eloquent statement**, similar to a written speech, but not a formal essay
- **Any entry that focuses on** a Nazi, other perpetrator, collaborator, or a topic that is not one of the four stated above **will be automatically disqualified**.
- **Students** may only submit **one entry per category**, but they **may submit entries in multiple categories**. **No part of an entry may be submitted twice.**
- **Song lyrics may only be submitted** as a part of an entry in the music category.
- **Movie scripts may only be submitted** as a part of an entry in the film category.
- **By submitting works to the contest**, entrants knowingly give permission for their names, entries, and photos to be shared via the media, displayed, and used in promotional materials related to the contest and the Holocaust Education Center of CUJF.
- **By submitting works to the contest**, entrants acknowledge that all entries must be their own original work. If they are not, they will be disqualified.

Questions:

Contact Rebecca Lawson, contest coordinator, at contest@cujf.org or the Holocaust Education Center general email at hec@cujf.org

Contest Awards

- All participants will receive a certificate of participation or of their winning placement in their division (1st - 3rd place) unless they are disqualified.
- 5 Best-in-Show awards (honoring the best submissions of poetry, prose, film, music, and visual art of all types from all age divisions) may be recognized.
- Plans are to tentatively hold an awards ceremony and display of submissions at the Cohen Center for Jewish Life on Sunday, May 30, 2026.
- The Holocaust Education Center may choose not to select/award "places" or "Best in Show" in a category/division or may combine categories/divisions due to a low number of submissions, etc.

Submission Procedures

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- **All entries** are due on **March 16, 2026**.
- **All entries** will be submitted via Google Forms unless otherwise noted or modified.
 - A link to the Google Form and other submission directions will be available on the CUJF site when submissions are opened (a sample sheet of information required is included below).
- **All art entries** must be submitted via photos. These must include high quality images showing multiple perspectives and details of the work. **No art entries will be mailed physically or delivered for judging purposes**; however, winning and possibly other exceptional entries will be displayed at the awards ceremony and the Through Their Eyes exhibit if possible. Arrangements for delivery and return of entries selected for display will be made on an individual basis.
- **All writing entries** must be submitted as a Google Doc. The number of pages and font size are important.
- **Films** must be submitted in a commonly-accessible format or via a link. If there are submission issues, entrants will be notified.
- **Music videos** must be submitted in a commonly-accessible format or via a link. If there are submission issues, entrants will be notified.
- The **name of the creator** MAY NOT appear on the entry (films and music videos are excluded from this as we will adjust what we view to avoid seeing the name of the entrant).
- The **title** of the entry MUST appear somewhere on/in the entry or photos of the entry (a removable label is acceptable). Films should open with the title.
- **Any entry** that is not submitted per the instructions may be disqualified.
- **While students may be assigned to create projects that could be entered in the contest, we request that teachers submit only the work of students who wish to compete in the contest - not the work of every student who created something for a class assignment.**
- **Teachers are asked** to follow their district's rules regarding parental permission and privacy. For younger students who are having their work submitted by their teacher, parent emails and contact information are essential.
- **Students may submit entries on their own** (with parental permission if under 18) if their school does not choose to participate or they have no school sponsor. Parents/guardians may assist students in submitting.

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Through Their Eyes: A Holocaust Arts and Writing Contest Cover Sheet

Title of Work:

Name of Entrant:

Grade Level - Check one:

- ☐ 5th - 6th
- ☐ 7th - 8th
- ☐ 9th - 10th
- ☐ 11th - 12th

Category - Check one:

- ☐ Prose
- ☐ Poetry
- ☐ Paintings/Drawings
- ☐ Other visual art (such as sculpture, textile, pottery, mixed-media, etc.)
- ☐ Film
- ☐ Music

Entrant's grade in school:

Entrant's email address:

Name of school attending (or write "homeschooled"):

Name of sponsoring teacher/mentor or parent (if homeschooled):

Email of sponsoring teacher/mentor or parent (if homeschooled):

Parent/Guardian name:

Parent/guardian's email address:

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Entrant's and/or parent/guardian's phone number:

Entrant's and/or parent/guardian's complete mailing address (including town and zip code):

Resource(s): Active links preferred. See contest information for specific instructions

Important Acknowledgements: Please check each box below!

- ☐ I knowingly give permission for my name, entry, and photos of me and my entry to be shared via the media, displayed, and used in promotional materials related to the contest and the Holocaust Education Center of CUJF.
- ☐ I acknowledge that my entry is my own original work. If it is found to not be my original work, it will be disqualified.

Creator's statement: Please explain who your submission focuses on and some details about this person/people, why you chose this person or group, and any other details you wish to share. Entrants may wish to explain how and why they created their piece the way they did in addition to describing and explaining their piece and its elements. Use of language, depth and quality of description, quality of explanation and motivation, etc. are key components to a successful Creator's Statement. Maximum 250 words. (This is a critical component and should be carefully written as it is a part of the judging of the entries).