

Rules

The Suzanne Cutler Creative Writing Contest is an annual creative writing contest offered to teenagers who live in Bernards Township, NJ.

The SCCWC was made possible by the generous donations from the Friends of the Bernards Township Library in addition to donations made by friends and family in memory of Suzanne “Suzy” Cutler, who loved literature and teaching.

The 2026 Suzanne Cutler Writing Contest will be held from June 8th to August 3rd. All participants and their families are invited to attend a celebration, where prizes will be awarded, in late August.

Rules:

- Participants must live in Bernards Township, attend school in Bernards Township, or have an active Bernards Township Library non-resident card to participate.
- All participants must be between the ages of 12-18 by August 31st of that competition year to qualify.
- There are two distinct age brackets of competition: 12-14 and 15-18. Participants are only able to participate within their age bracket and must disclose their age on the entry form.
- There are two distinct entry categories: short story and poetry.
- Participants may only submit one entry per category, but can participate in both categories. If multiple entries are submitted for each category, only the first submission will be judged.
 - For example, a thirteen-year-old can submit both a poem and a short story in our 12-14 age bracket. If they were to submit two poems, only the first poem would be judged.

- o Each entered piece must be submitted **separately** with a unique entry form.
- Short stories should be no less than 500 words and no greater than 1500 words.
- Poetry should be no more than 300 words.
- Entries may only be completed online, using the web forum. Works submitted through other means will not be judged.
- Participants will need to review our submission guidelines before entering their final piece in the contest. Submissions that do not follow guidelines will be disqualified.
- All pieces must be original work from the participant. Works that are found to plagiarize published pieces or were created by those other than the participant themselves, including those generated by artificial intelligence, will be disqualified.
- Submitted pieces must be rated no higher than “PG-13” or, in other words, have content that is on par with materials currently found in the Teen collection. Any submissions that, if they were a published work, would be found in the Adult Fiction section will not be judged.
- Participants must give permission for Bernards Township Library to publish their work in the library, on the library’s website, and in a printed anthology that can be found in the teen non-fiction collection. The entries will not be anonymous and will have the participant’s first and last name.
 - o Authors of pieces that did not win first or second place reserve the right to have their work published anonymously within the printed booklet if they make arrangements with the Teen Librarian prior to the end of the contest.
 - o Bernards Township Library does not hold the license to your work in perpetuity; after August 31st of the competition year, participants may publish their completed pieces in other literary magazines, websites, or in other published works without asking our permission.

- All entries are anonymous when given to the judges to critique. Works are judged on: content, originality, and quality of expression. The judges' decisions are final.

Prizes:

- First place in each category, in each age bracket, receives a \$100 Amazon Gift Card and a copy of the finished book.
- Second place in each category, in each age bracket, receives a \$50 Amazon Gift Card and a copy of the finished book.
- Honorable mentions, if any are awarded, will be given a certificate of acknowledgement.
- Winners and honorable mentions will be notified in August by phone and/or email prior to the awards ceremony.

All participants can receive an unformatted, PDF copy of the anthology for free. Please contact the Teen Librarian for more information.

Submission Guidelines

Suzanne Cutler Creative Writing Contest Submission Guidelines

- Files must be submitted as a .doc or .docx file to be approved.
 - This is the default file format for Microsoft Word, and many other word processors (like Google Docs) allow you to export as that file extension. The library computers all have Word installed and participants are welcome to use them.
- The file name should include your first name, last name, and category of entry. “FirstName_LastName_Category” is optimal, but any file name that includes all three will be accepted.
- Files must be smaller than 15mb.
- **Do not include your name anywhere on the document itself.**
- Include a header on each page that includes the title of your piece and the page number. An example is shown on the top of this document.
- Please submit your work in a standard font, colored black, so that it can be easily read on any device. Standard fonts are those that come pre-installed on your device or are default fonts on Microsoft Word or Google Docs.
 - Fonts and text spacing may be changed for the final printing anthology.
- Poetry submissions must be no greater than 300 words. Short story submissions must be at least 500 words and no greater than 1500 words.
- All works submitted must be “rated” no greater than PG-13 — submissions that are found to be too adult will not be judged or included in the anthology.

Be aware submissions will be copied and pasted into the final anthology booklet, which is smaller than the average piece of paper. We cannot guarantee that the printed version will perfectly resemble your final submitted piece. Please keep that in mind if you are playing with space on the page in your work.

