

IATE NEWSLETTER

Monthly Newsletter of the Illinois Association of Teachers of English

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Deadline: 31 January 2024

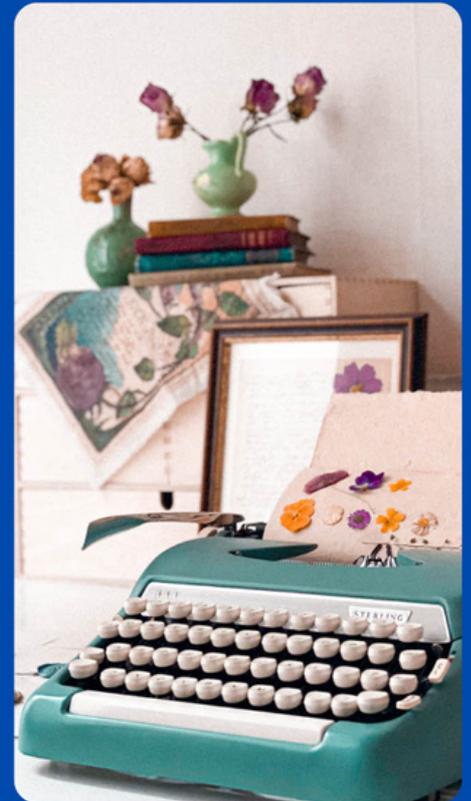
ILLINOIS ASSOCIATION OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH

Student Writing & Art
Contest

Grades 6-12

*poetry
creative prose
non-fiction essays
literary analysis
memoir
art
photography*

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learn more.



IATE MINORITY SCHOLARSHIP DEADLINE: MARCH 1, 2024



Visit [here](#) to nominate a deserving graduate.

Writing and Art Contest

BY DELORES ROBINSON

[PORTIONS REPRINTED FROM DEC. 2022]

Give your students a chance to share their writing with others by entering their best work in the IATE's annual student writing contest. Members of IATE may submit up to 10 poems (line limit of 44), up to 5 prose selections (word limit of 1,000), and up to 10 visual pieces (color photo of physical artwork such as paintings, ceramics, or textiles in a high-quality .jpg. or .png format). How a teacher chooses the work to submit may vary by school or classroom. Jared Friebel gets his students involved in the process. Other teachers share that they, alone, make the choice of which pieces to submit while others have used their school's parent-teacher conference and open house as a time to display student poems around the room (anonymously) and to ask visiting parents and others to vote on their favorites. The most important part of the process, however, is that final step: sending students' work to the judges for inclusion in the contest.

Volunteer judges generously give their time and effort to read and rank all submissions.

Poetry Judges Assess Submissions On:

Originality: Work that breaks from convention, blurs the boundaries between genres, and challenges notions of how a particular concept or emotion can be expressed.

Technical Skill: Work that uses technique to advance an original perspective or a personal vision or voice, and shows skills being utilized to create something unique, powerful, and innovative.

Emergence of a Personal Voice or Vision: Work with an authentic and unique point of view and style.

(Criteria adapted from the National Endowment for the Humanities, the National Council for Teaching English, and Scholastic)

Prose Judges Assess Submissions On:

Prose submissions are most often creative narrative fiction, but submissions also include creative non-fiction; personal essay; and argument, definition, or literary analysis essays.

Purpose and Theme: A controlling central idea that remains consistent and meaningful throughout the piece

Audience: An awareness of the reader and subsequent choice of appropriate tone and language to best communicate to that reader. Students may approach a subject from whatever mood makes the most sense (serious, reflective, humorous, touching, and so on)

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Writing and Art Contest, Continued

Organization: Logical and balanced development, a selection of abundant supporting details that propel the purpose and theme (no matter the genre), strong supporting structure

Level of Thought: Insightful understanding of the human condition, meaningful exploration of ideas and emotions

Expression: Original and compelling description that provides the piece emotional resonance

Style & Clarity: Along with sentence-level accuracy and few (if any) spelling and grammar errors, the submissions should document any sources using the most recent MLA criteria

(Adapted from the IVCC Criteria for Clear Writing)

Recognition of Student Work

After the judges finish their work, they send the results to the editors of the Illinois English Bulletin who make plans to publish the results in a future edition of the journal devoted to the student participants, their teachers, and the students' writing. The selections awarded first-place recognition will be published in the journal while the names of the runners-up and those receiving honorable mention will be published, as well.

There are exciting plans underway this year to further acknowledge the students and their hard work by publishing press releases in schools' local newspapers and sending congratulatory letters to school administrators. We hope IATE District Leaders, working with the contest organizers, can schedule visits to schools to hand the certificate packets to teachers. That visit would be a great time for a publicity photo, and schools may arrange further recognition at their annual spring awards events. We'd love to hear from you: how do you recognize your students' writing and share it with a larger audience than just within the classroom? Send your suggestions for further contest enhancements to Delores_Robinson@ivcc.edu, and together we can continue to build participation and find even more ways to celebrate our students' writing.

For now, be sure to collect and submit your students' poems and prose pieces no later than the end of January 2024. Further details are on the IATE website at iateonline.org.

DID YOU KNOW?

The Poetry and Prose Contest has been renamed the Writing and Art Contest in order to acknowledge the additional portion of our contest, visual mediums.

A Sampling of Winners from Poetry and Prose Winners from 2021 and 2022

the death of my legacy

apology of socrates, a documentation of the death of socrates at the hands of the masses.

'bring forth your digressions and let them be known to the republic." so

charges were brought forth- corrupting the youth and disbelief in the gods of athens. the punishment? death.

eons of thought and the pursuit of wisdom

forgotten in an instant.

good god, what if we are made to be forgotten?

hemlock tea and heat streaking the faces of those who once craved

martyrdom

i wonder if i too will be forgotten,

just like those who came before me, socrates, plato, aristotle, alexander the great,

kissed ever so sweetly by death, and soon

left behind.

my mortality will be to blame, i assume. reduced to

nothing more than a whisper. my voice aches and i can no longer shout, i am only an echo on the world's stage.

please don't forget me in the

quiet of this breaking world.

retrace the words of those who came before you, hands touching love letters carved into

stone, until their breath is engraved into your fingertips. we were designed to be forgotten. it is inevitable.

unless we etch our names onto the very stars we pray on, we can not be remembered. tales of

valor and strength oversaturate our tongues until they are gone, as quickly as they were spoken.

when i die i will be forgotten by the masses of athens.

rust cutting into my neck, poison forced down my throat,

yelling into the chaos. not for release but for remembrance. you may say i am merely a

zealot, formed from fanatical dreams, but i swear to you.

apologies will be the last thing you hear from my dying lips. i suppose you must let me be forgotten.

Mikayla Varghese

Grade 12 (2021)

Adlai E. Stevenson High School, Lincolnshire

Jennifer Arias, teacher

chewing gum (inspired by hannah wilke)

sticky gummy adhesive
pale washed pink
sweet perfumed bite
all washed out in rose ink

just like what hannah said
chew it taste it spit it
pop a new piece in
shell case-- empty with no pit

powerful american women
succumbed and subjected
to slimy gooey rubber
and you call this respect?

the fragility of femininity
absorbed in a pastel-hued painting
let us out let us out
we can't take anymore of this chaining

Grace Park

Grade 12 (2022)

Carbondale Community High School, Carbondale
Betsy Geiselman, teacher



S.O.S. Starification Object Series, 1974, Performalist Self-portrait with Les Wollam © DACS, London / WGA, New York

GLIMPSES OF YOU

The only footprints are mine
slicing through a field of undisturbed snow,
carving their presence around the thicket of trees
comprised of barren elm wood and pine,
their peaks swaying in a unifying stream;
a current magnified by the howling wind.

Do you whisper through the fleeting wind,
like you once whispered during bedtime tales?
With your eyes changing expressions,
sometimes wide, sometimes curved into crescents,
your long, graying hair tickling my cheek,
lulling me to sleep?

Or are you unreachable,
and no matter the altitude, will the winds continue
to slip through my fingers?

My exhalations grow deeper and course,
the wind embracing my face like an invisible canopy
while snowflakes descend from the skies,
showering my lashes in multitudes.

You're sending me kisses,
like you used to after handing me the lunch box,
briefly brushing your fingers through my disheveled hair,
as I pulled away quicker the older I got,
in pursuit of the school bus.

Billows of smoke escape my nostrils;
a small contribution to the churning sky,
spawning hues of gray across the horizon.

Blankets of white drape over the bushes and towering trees,
icicles pirouetting down their bare branches,
forming a crystalized sea.

My eyes water
and I halt for a moment;
my fingers trembling as the frosty air gnaws at my hand.

I hear you whisper as though you were beside me
and suddenly, the dry, biting air
carries the distant fragrance
of sweet pine and cinnamon.

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But deep within me I know,
the crystallized spectacle before me
will cease to exist in coming days,
melting away into the damp, musty atmosphere
of the ground beneath.

Shiloah Gomatam

Grade 11 (2022)

Adlai E. Stevenson High School, Lincolnshire

Martha Keller, teacher

Untitled [Boys Don't Dance]

Tossing my mom's yellow polka-dotted sweater over my head, I descended my hips into a spontaneous boogie. The oversized garment encapsulated my miniscule two-year-old frame in a loose cocoon of eccentric fabric, but in my mind it was the perfectly fitted suit, accompanying me to my epic performance. As Ricky Martin's "Livin la Vida Loca" filled the living room air, my natural response consisted of flailing arms, sassy eyebrows raises, and awkwardly-angled-squats that seemingly marked the hallmark of my childhood. Overly-flamboyant glances at grandma, back-and-forth shimmies with mom, energetic circle-runs with dad; from the very beginning, dancing to music felt like home.

Searching through my bedroom dresser, I find the closed box of Expo markers in the bottom drawer. I slowly tear the thin cardboard away, trying to make as little noise as possible to avoid waking my sleeping parents and sister. 12 AM. The house is silent, and the lights are turned off except for the subtle flicker of the yellow lamp standing next to me. Still, my ears are ringing. It's loud. I can hear my heartbeat. Thick and fast paced. Is this wrong?

Dance had always been about connection. If in the kitchen with my mom, dad, and sister alongside sizzling potato latkes in preparation for Hanukkah dinners, or at family birthdays while learning Russian kicks with my cousin to Boney M's "Ra-Ra Rasputin," translating sound into visceral movement helped me feel like part of something that was greater than myself. There's a reason I remember those small, vivid moments from when I was six, eight, and ten, the bright sentiment folded into my memory's crevices. How can I forget? Though physical movement is ephemeral, emotions are indelible.

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Inside the box there are four colored markers: black, royal blue, scarlet, and forest green. I like the second. Though it's traditionally a masculine shade, I find it more androgynous: the perfect intersection between masculinity's confident assertiveness and femininity's instinctive sensitivity. Staring at blue, I am calm. It helps me connect with myself. Pulling the marker from the box, I uncap it; the chemical perfume immediately fills my nose. Ironic, how something so toxic can be so calming.

"But boys don't dance." Indelible.

Dance was about connection up until it became divisive. I learned this phrase at my school's annual show-and-tell as my furrowed eyebrows and tilted head juxtaposed my second-grade classmate's confident stare following his statement. I knew what he said was untrue because I had seen men dance on TV: Valentin Chmerkovsky and Derek Hough on ABC's Dancing with the Stars, for example. Their flawless execution of choreography after choreography left what I thought to be the entirety of America on its feet, clapping and cheering, vicariously experiencing the cathartic performances I didn't yet know the words to describe. Val and Derek inspired me to pursue Latin Ballroom when I saw how powerful and moving their performances were, but as I proudly showed my dance shoes to my peers, I learned that my romanticized perceptions were wrong: "boys don't dance." It was society's greater mindset that I was made aware of that day, which had somehow condemned the essence of the family kitchen dance parties I grew up with.

*Will taught me. Will liked football and baseball. The other boys did too.
The other boys didn't dance.*

The surrounding air at night is more still, quiet, unaffected by the thoughts or judgements of other people. I don't have to worry about what others think. I am alone, and in complete control of myself. That's why late nights are my favorite.

It's okay.

Still, I can't help but feel that this is wrong.

No, Misha.

A light tapping on my chest, a "tsk tsk tsk" from ghost eyes over my shoulder.

(Continued page 9)

Shut up.

Blue marker in my right hand, I begin to color them in. A little voice tells me it doesn't go there. But I know, I feel, it does. The voice is wrong.

Shut up.

One stroke
two stroke
three.

Four stroke
Five stroke
Six.

Seven
Eight.

Repeat.

It feels right, alive.

Blue nails on my fingers.
No one can judge.

"Tsk tsk tsk"

Not at night.

Will exposed me to the limbo of being different, of questioning the validity of my interests and personality as they compared to those of my surrounding peers. As I grew older, I kept my love for dance hidden from my American classmates, and I invested myself in my Russian community where Latin ballroom was culturally treated with more respect. Still, something didn't click. On weekends or after practices, other boys found an outlet in playing soccer and video games while I painted and self-learned how to crochet. I tried doing more traditionally-male activities with my peers, but I found a deeper sense of individuality in activities like painting or crocheting than I did in scoring touchdowns or home runs. I would make little yarn animals that I gifted to Babushka and Dedushka; they always smiled and made it seem like my crochet skills were eons better than the lopsided stitches they actually produced. Babushka made these beautiful crochet macrame tapestries, and I wanted to be a master of yarn just like her. Though my family never outright pushed me towards a certain expectation, I felt like I wasn't meeting it. Ghost eyes over my shoulder telling me I was wrong.

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I pop my earbuds into my ears with the satisfaction of fitting a final puzzle piece into place. Rouge by Yseult. I let the sound flow through my ears into my head and to my fingers and toes until my thoughts fade. I am numb.

Whispers are silenced by
Blue expo-marker nails and movement to song.
My head is clear.
There are no rules on how to dance late at night,
so I follow the blueprint drawn from the beginning:
rising and falling pitches, rhythmic syncopations.
My chest rising, falling
I breathe

I wasn't wrong; what was unnatural to me didn't fit, and that was, is, ok.

Late at night, I am indelible.

Michael Zaslavskiy

Grade 12 (2021)

Adlai E. Stevenson High School, Lincolnshire

Jennifer Arias, teacher

THE BIRDS OUTSIDE THE ROOM WITH THE LIGHT AND SHOES

It is rainy and it is cloudy. My room is lit by the open window and a light on the wall above my computer. My bag is in the chair and my shoes have just begun to rest against the chair legs. There are many decorations in the room and they are fresh to my eyes after many hours. My eyes droop and my brain is melting down through my body. It was working all day. I don't miss school but I feel lonelier standing in my room with the light and my shoes. Don't be silly, I think. But I asked the shoes because they are my only company and they think that I am right, it is lonelier. My bed is tall and soft and I sit on the edge. There is the window and there are the telephone power wires and there are the many birds. They are all sitting together on top of the telephone wires.

Is it lonely up there? I ask.

No no, they say, we have each other, we are far from lonely up here. There are no birds in my room. It is just me and the light and my shoes and it is lonelier.

(Continued page 11)

Later, I know that my blinds are closed because there is no moonlight coming in through my window. There is just darkness and things I cannot see. The birds might be on the telephone wires, but I wouldn't know. My ceiling is blue with green stars, it is a projector. If you stand in front of it, it will make you blue with green stars too. My bag is on the chair and my shoes are resting against the chair legs. Sweet music is playing and it is trying to fill the void. My brain is listening to the music but I am looking into the void. I ask my shoes, is the loneliness the void? My shoes do not say anything in return, they just stare. So for the next hour I stare and stare and stare. I stare into the void and it wants to hug me. But I cannot hug the void because the void will make me cry on my shoes while the light watches me. The music is gone, and there are no birds.

Olivia Tewell

Grade 9 (2022)

Morton High School, Morton

Lauralee Moss, teacher

Scholarship for Minority Teacher Education

IATE annually issues a call for applications for its minority scholarship awards to chairs of recognized language arts teacher-education programs in Illinois colleges and universities. Applications, which must include a sample of student writing, a student essay, a recommendation from a professor, and a cover sheet, will be accepted beginning in May of the current year.

Applications must be sent to Shannon Radcliffe, Scholarship Chair of IATE, and will be accepted no later than March 1st of the current year.

Shannon Radcliffe
Lincoln Community High School
1000 Railer Way
Lincoln, Illinois 62656
sradcliffe@lcshrailers.org

Goals:

The Illinois Association of Teachers of English is committed to recruiting minority* language arts teachers, for both humanitarian and practical purposes. To meet that commitment, IATE reserves \$1000 each year for one scholarship as designated by the Minority Scholarship Committee, a subcommittee of the Minority Affairs Committee.

Procedure:

The Minority Scholarship Committee will send out a call for applications to the chairs of public, recognized language arts teacher-education programs in Illinois colleges and universities in the winter.

After applications are received, the Minority Scholarship Committee will judge the applications, issue an invitation to the winner to attend the fall conference when the award will be given, and assist the winner in making arrangements to attend the conference. When at all possible, the winner will be escorted by an IATE member.

In addition to the cash award, winners will also receive a complimentary one-year membership in IATE, free registration for the conference, luncheon and banquet tickets, lodging, and mileage (if an escort cannot be secured).

Criteria:

- The candidate must be a member of a minority group.
- The candidate must be duly enrolled in a four-year or upper division, public, recognized teacher-education program in an Illinois college or university.
- The candidate must have declared a major in English, English Education, or Elementary Education with a specialty in language arts (Junior or Senior status), and plan to teach in Illinois. (Continued page 13)

Scholarship for Minority Teacher Education, Cont.

- The candidate must have demonstrated potential for academic success.
- The candidate cannot be an individual already on full scholarship, and some degree of need for the scholarship must exist.
- The faculty member who recommends a student for one of the awards must submit these items in one envelope:
- A sample of the candidate's writing done for a class in the past year (instructor comments included).
- A candidate essay on this topic: "What piece of literature by a person of color would you especially like to teach? Explain why you chose this particular piece and how you would go about teaching it."
- A sealed recommendation which addresses items 1-5 above in some detail, or the completion of the Minority Scholarship Nomination form.
- A cover sheet with the full name, home address and phone number of both the candidate and the recommender.

*As in other IATE matters, "minority" here is defined as non-white minority, a person of color.

Meet Our 2023 Minority Scholarship Winner



This year, the winner of the Minority Scholarship is Emma Walke. Emma was a student teacher this semester working with IATE member and district leader Jennifer Connolly. Jennifer nominated Emma and had nothing but wonderful things to say about Emma's diligence and work with students.

Emma pictured here with a student.

Jennifer explained that Emma "will encourage others to read the research, embrace change, and accept all students in the classroom, affirming the people they truly are," and described her student teacher as "analytical, responsive, smart, and creative."

Emma will receive \$500 to be used on anything needed to prepare for the first year in the classroom. IATE congratulates Emma and sends wishes for a great first year at La Salle-Peru High School.