The 2024 Short Story & Poetry Contest is open to ages 6 and up. All contest entries submitted through our online Short Story Portal will be published in DTDL’s Short Story Dispenser at the end of the contest. Poetry submissions will be considered for publication on the library’s outdoor walkways. Gift card prizes will be awarded to contest entries receiving the highest scores from our judges.

Contest Opens: January 2, 2024     Submission Deadline: 5 p.m. March 15, 2024
Participant Age Brackets:   Youth: Ages 6-12,   Teen: Ages 13-17,   Adult: Ages 18+

To submit your story or poem:
1. Scan the QR code or visit dtdl.org/shortstory.
2. Click 'login' to make a new account or to log in from last year.
3. Click the blue ‘submit’ button and choose the Short Story or Poem category.
4. Type or paste your work into the submission box. Include a title and author’s age. Adults can put "adult" for age. Entries without identifying information will be disqualified.
5. Agree to the conditions of submission and click submit.

To submit a typed, hard copy of your work, please bring it to the Adult or Youth desk with the entry form below

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Short Story & Poetry Contest
2024 Entry Form

Name ____________________________________________________________

Age (if under 18) _______________ Phone ____________________________

Email Address ________________________________________________________

Title of Work _________________________________________________________

This is a:   ☐ Poem or ☐ Short Story

By submitting your work to the Short Story and Poetry Contest, you agree to the contest guidelines. Works may be reproduced for public distribution, displayed at the library, and posted online. DTDL may use each winner’s name and photograph for publicity purposes.

Parent/Participant Signature ________________________________________

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Delta Township District Library’s
Short Story & Poetry
Contest Guidelines

1) Open to all residents of the Greater Lansing area, ages 6 and up.

2) Entries should be submitted in English.

3) Maximum length is 8,000 characters (including spaces) (about 1,100-2,000 words).

4) One entry per person and entries must be typed and not handwritten.

5) The work must be fictional, or deal with historical or biographical topics in a literary manner.

6) Any entry that, in the library’s sole and absolute discretion (i) is obscene, profane, lewd, or defamatory; (ii) includes anti-social content; (iii) does not meet the requirements outlined in the Official Rules; or (iv) is otherwise objectionable; may not be considered and may be disqualified.

7) The author declares that they are the sole author of any text they submit, and that this same text is an original creation. The author declares that they control the copyright of the submitted text, meaning that they have never transferred these rights to a third person/entity. All characters must be original. Copyrighted names are not allowed.

8) The author grants a non-exclusive right to the project organizer to reproduce, correct, and publish their stories via Short Story Dispensers, website and in print.

9) The copyright of the work shall remain with the author. The author agrees and acknowledges that in this specific case, publication, and distribution of their work shall not result in the payment of royalties from Short Edition.

10) If a selected winner cannot be contacted, is ineligible, or fails to claim a prize in a timely manner, the prize may be forfeited.

11) The coordinators of the Delta Township District Library project have sole discretion in selecting works for distribution via the Short Story Dispenser, website, and print. They may also reject or remove works from the dispenser without giving any prior notice or justification to the author.

12) The author can also ask for their work to be removed by notifying the project coordinators in writing.

13) The information contained in these official rules is for reference only and is subject to change. DTDL reserves the right to revise, amend, or repeal these basic contest rules at any time.

What’s a Poem? What’s a Story?

There are many different kinds of poetry. There is free verse poetry, which means poems that do not have strict patterns of rhyme or meter. Then there is formal verse, or poems that do have clear patterns of rhyme and meter.

Formal verse itself consists of many forms, such as haiku, sonnet, villanelle, and sestina, just to name a few.

How can you identify something as a poem as opposed to a fictional story? In simple terms, we identify poetry as being in verse, the opposite of prose. Prose and poetry are both kinds of writing, but prose is told in regular wording and sentences while poets make careful choices about word meaning, sound, line endings, and rhyme and meter, in order to create certain emotions in the reader.

A short story is a tale, sometimes based on something true but mostly fictional, that is usually only a few pages in length and, in the case of flash fiction (or short-short stories), a page or less. How a story is put together consists of the following elements: introduction, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution (ending).
Delta Township District Library’s
Short Story & Poetry Contest
Adult Writing Guide

Review Sessions

"You can always edit a bad page. You can’t edit a blank page.” - Jodi Picoult

Adults can request a review session if you would like to get some feedback from one of our volunteer editors. You must submit a typed draft of your work to the library in order to sign up for a review session. You can submit your draft in person at the Adult desk or by emailing a copy to info@dtdl.org. Review sessions will be scheduled at a minimum of 48 hours after we receive your draft. An Adult Services staff member will reach out to confirm your session date and time. The last day to submit a draft for review is March 8, 2024. More information is available at dtdl.org/shortstory.

Prizes

The winners of the contest will be determined by a panel of judges made up of volunteer community members and library staff. Winners will be notified by phone or email.

1st place prize: $200 Visa gift card
2nd place prize: $100 Visa gift card
3rd place prize: $50 Visa gift card

Inspiration

Poetry and Short Story collections to inspire your writing. Search for these titles and authors at dtdl.org:

**Short Story Collections**
- The Beast You Are by Paul Tremblay
- Bliss Montage by Ling Ma
- Cursed Bunny by Bora Chung
- Dearborn by Ghassan Zeineddine
- Manywhere by Morgan Thomas
- Night of the Living Rez by Morgan Talty
- Odysseys and Oddities by Delta Writers Round Table
- Old Babes in the Wood by Margaret Atwood
- Rainbow Rainbow by Lydia Conklin
- Roman Stories by Jhumpa Lahiri
- White Cat Black Dog by Kelly Link
- You Have a Friend in 10A by Maggie Shipstead

**Poetry Collections**
- A Fire in the Hills by Afaa M. Weaver
- Alive at the End of the World by Saeed Jones
- The Animal in the Room by Meghan Kemp-Gee
- Dog Songs by Mary Oliver
- Home by Whitney Hanson
- I Am Code: An Artificial Intelligence Speaks by code-davinci-002
- In Search of Small Gods by Jim Harrison
- Information Desk by Robyn Schiff
- Postcolonial Love Poem by Natalie Diaz
- Trace Evidence by Charif Shanahan
- Time is a Mother by Ocean Vuong
- The World Keeps Ending, and the World Goes On by Franny Choi

"If there’s a story that you want to read, but it hasn’t been written yet, then you must write it." - Toni Morrison
Scoring Rubrics

**Short Story:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characterization</th>
<th>Setting</th>
<th>Plot</th>
<th>Writing Style</th>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Mechanics and Spelling</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Creates believable, memorable characters with the uniqueness, complexity, and individuality of real people.</td>
<td>• Historical and geographic details sufficiently and accurately developed to give the story realistic or appropriate atmosphere and setting</td>
<td>• Has a clear, convincing and compelling storyline with a recognizable arc of conflict, crisis and resolution.</td>
<td>• Writing is expressive, including figurative language and detailed descriptions that engage the reader.</td>
<td>• Contains a central or dominating theme.</td>
<td>• There are little or no errors in mechanics, usage, grammar, and spelling.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Characters evoke a strong response from the reader.</td>
<td>• Reader can visualize places being described. Descriptions enhance understanding of place and events.</td>
<td>• Resolution is innovative, credible and authentic.</td>
<td>• Word choice is vivid and exact throughout. Evoke a strong response from reader.</td>
<td>• Theme is expressed through the characters and their actions.</td>
<td>• Punctuation is used when necessary or appropriate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Main character responds to and influences events.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Dialogue contributes to rich, vivid, unique characterization.</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Poetry:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Creative Expression and Technique</th>
<th>Grammar, Usage, Mechanics and Spelling</th>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Originality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Writing is expressive, including figurative language and detailed descriptions that engage the reader.</td>
<td>• There are little or no errors in mechanics, usage, grammar, and spelling.</td>
<td>• The structure is intentional and elements flow seamlessly together to enhance meaning.</td>
<td>• Writing is based on an original idea.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Rhyme pattern, if present, is clear and not predictable.</td>
<td>• Punctuation is used when necessary or appropriate.</td>
<td>• Demonstrates awareness of audience’s needs.</td>
<td>• Includes certain elements of originality like a distinct voice or an innovative approach.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Demonstrates understanding of and uses a variety of poetic devices.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Line lengths and breaks are thoughtfully considered and contribute meaning to the work.</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Word choice is vivid and exact throughout.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Evoke a strong response from reader.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“Start writing, no matter what. The water does not flow until the faucet is turned on.” - Louis L’Amour