

2023 READING SCHOOL / READING FOUNDATION McILROY ESSAY COMPETITION

To win the £250 cash prize, take the challenge and write an essay with the title:

“How writing makes life better”

Some ideas to help you start planning and writing:

You have the opportunity to be inspired by the title: *“How writing makes life better”* and apply to it anything you feel is of value which you’ve learned in your study of an academic subject, your pursuit of hobbies, pastimes and sports, or your general knowledge and interest in current affairs.

Have a think: what kind of texts do you like to write? Why do you like to write, and how did you form your writing habits? How do you define ‘writing’: the pleasure of literal calligraphy and notation or the more philosophical nature of creating ideas? Which parts of your life can be positively affected by writing? How has writing made life better for the people around you, or the people you see in the wider public sphere? What role does writing have in 2023: has social media destroyed the art of writing texts longer than a Tweet or a Thread or an Insta post, and are pictures more influential than words? What lessons can be learned from history about the importance of writing? Could writing play a role in solving some of the world’s great crises in 2023? What does ‘writing’ mean in 2023, and how do the different ways in which all members of our community ‘write’ their texts influence their power?

Objectives and criteria:

This competition aims to reward one essay written by a Reading School student which, in the opinion of the judging panels, displays the best combination of:

- **Flair** for expressing complex ideas about a subject in simple terms.
- A logical and well-developed **argument**: it must have a starting idea, develop over a series of topic paragraphs, and reach some kind of clear resolution.
- Evidence of **verve**: a spirit of enthusiasm for the subject and the task, and the process of writing about them.
- **Passion** for sharing a love and understanding of the subject in question.
- **Ingenuity** in coming up with exciting and original ways to tackle matters of current affairs and general knowledge.

Who can enter:

Any student, from any Year group, who has studied at Reading School during the 2021 - 2022 academic session can enter.

How students enter the competition:

Essays must be no fewer than 1,000 and no more than 2,000 words long. They must be word processed and saved as a Microsoft Word document and feature a specific word count. When entrants email their essay to Mrs Lidbetter, they must ensure they have not put their name on the actual Word document.

Entrants must email their essay to Mrs Lidbetter in the School Office at: secretary@reading-school.co.uk. Each entrant will receive back from her a random identification number, and the essay will then be forwarded anonymously to the judging panel. This is the only way essays can be entered for the competition. The deadline is 8.25am on Monday 11th September 2023.

Judging process:

All submissions will be marked anonymously to guarantee impartiality.

A panel of school staff is responsible for the initial judging process. Depending on the number and quality of the submissions, that panel will then submit a short-list of nominated essays to go forward to a final judging group. The final judging panel will then assess the nominated essays to choose the overall winner.

The judges' decisions are final and not negotiable. The judging process will be subjective and based on collective opinions regarding rank order. No 'marks' will be made on, or awarded to, any essay, and all submissions will be retained by the school for further use. Entrants should not expect a specific personalised response to their submission.

Regulations:

Entrants must write their submissions entirely independently. No consultation with, or involvement of, staff at the school is permitted.

All use of research and academic sources and materials must be correctly referenced and credited in a bibliography (*use the Harvard referencing guide available on the LRC Sharepoint page*). Plagiarism of any kind will result in disqualification.

For additional guidance, please contact Mr Baldock at rbaldock@reading-school.co.uk. **No other member of staff will be able to offer advice on how to enter.**

Failure to follow these guidelines could result in your submission not being considered by the judging panels.

Follow this simple procedure:

- Decide ***"How reading makes life better"***
- Word process a response on your own.
- Write no fewer than 1,000 words and no more than 2,000 words; clearly state your total at the end of the essay.
- Make sure any external sources have been correctly referenced and credited in a bibliography.
- ***Do not*** put your name on the Word document, but ***do*** clearly state the word count.
- Email your essay to Mrs Lidbetter (secretary@reading-school.co.uk) before the deadline of 8.25 am on Monday 11th September 2023.
- Collect a unique, random, identification number and wait for the opinion of the judging panels.

REMEMBER: THE PRIZE IS £250 IN CASH.