PATRIOT'S PEN

VFW
VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS.

2020 - 2021 Theme

"What is Patriotism to Me?"

Student Entry Deadline: October 31, 2020

Patriotic Essay Writing Competition Grand Prize: $5,000 Award

What Is Patriot's Pen?

Conducted nationwide, this VFW-sponsored youth essay competition gives students an opportunity to write essays expressing their views on an annual patriotic theme. We invite you to join the more than 138,000 students who participated last year in this contest. The national winners will receive at least $500. The first-place national award is currently $5,000.

The National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) has again approved this contest for its National Advisory List of Contests and Activities.

Big National Prizes

National awards total: $55,000
Prizes include the various amounts listed below:

1st: $5,000	7th: $1,750
2nd: $4,000	8-10th: $1,500
3rd: $3,500	11-12th: $1,250
4th: $2,750	13-23rd: $1,000
5th: $2,500	24-25th: $750
6th: $2,000	26-53rd: $500

The Internal Revenue Service requires that any recipient that receives more than a $599 award should receive a Form 1099 identifying the proceeds as taxable. This may require the winner to provide their social security number.

How Does the Contest Work?

All entries begin at the Post level. The only exception is where schools/classes/youth groups have large numbers of students and wish to conduct their own competition, submitting one winner for each 15 students to the local VFW Post competition. Individual students may submit their entry directly to the Post. This participating Post should be within your local area and within your U.S. state of residence.

The contest consists of four levels. The first level (entry) is sponsored by local VFW Posts. Post winners advance, one for every 15 entries, to the VFW District (regional) level where the one first-place winner is advanced to the VFW Department (state) level. The one first-place winner at the Department level is then advanced into the VFW national competition. The winner from each Department (state) then competes for the national prizes.

Who Can Enter?

Patriot's Pen is open to 6th-, 7th- and 8th-grade students enrolled by the Oct. 31 deadline in public, private or parochial schools in the U.S., its territories or its possessions. Home-schooled students also are eligible. Although U.S. citizenship is not required, students must be lawful U.S. permanent residents or have applied for permanent residence (the application which has not been denied) and intends to become a U.S. citizen at the earliest opportunity allowed by law. Dependents of U.S. military or civilian personnel in overseas schools can participate, too. (Foreign exchange students and former winners that placed in the National contest are excluded from the contest.)

Official Student Entry Form
Patriot's Pen Competition

Entry Form Must Be Completed by All Contestants Please Print or Type Clearly

_____
Name: First, M.I., Last

_____
Address

_____
City, State, Zip

( )_____ _____
Phone Email

_____ _____ _____ _____
Date of Birth (mm/dd/yy) Gender Grade in School Essay Word Count

_____
School Name, City, State

_____
Teacher's Name and Email (if applicable)

_____
Parent/Guardian's Name Phone/Email

I Have Read and Understand the Contest Rules

_____
Signature of Student Participant Date

To Be Completed by the VFW Post

I certify that this student has an authorized entry in our VFW Post Level Patriot's Pen Competition.

_____
Post Commander's/Chairman's Signature Post #

_____
VFW Auxiliary President's/Chairman's Signature

_____
Post Address City, State, Zip

_____
VFW Post Email

No. of students participation _____ No. of winners advanced to District _____

Amt. of Post/Aux. awards $ _____

Amt. of Post/Aux. additional expenses (banquet, pins, etc.) $ _____

To Be Completed by the VFW District

I certify that the student named in the previous section is the duly selected winner of the Patriot's Pen Essay Contest District Competition and is our sole entry into the Department finals.

_____
District Chairman's Signature Dist.#

_____
Address City, State, Zip

( )_____ _____
Phone Email

To Be Completed by the VFW Department Chairman

I certify that the student named in the previous section is the duly selected first-place winner of the Patriot's Pen Essay Department Competition, and is our sole entry into the National Judging.

_____
Department Chairman's Signature

( )_____ _____
Daytime Phone Email

The winner ◯ has been ◯ will be (check one) notified that they are the first place Department winner on _____. Note: National Headquarters will contact your winner after this date to notify them of their national placement.

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How Do I Get Started?

- Ask a teacher or youth group/club adult leader to supervise the Patriot's Pen writing competition.
- Contact a local VFW Post within your local area within your state and indicate your interest in participating.
- Establish a contact person who is a member of that VFW Post or its Auxiliary.
- Make sure that your essay is submitted to the VFW Post before the contest deadline of Oct. 31, 2020. You can submit your essay and entry form electronically (by email) upon the Post's approval. Entries sent to VFW National directly will be returned.

How Am I Judged?

You will be judged on how well you understand, develop and present the theme. A positive approach is recommended to express your viewpoint.

Knowledge of the theme is worth 30 points:

You must show a thorough knowledge of the theme in your work. Demonstrate you have researched the issue extensively.

Theme development is worth 35 points:

Answer all relevant facts about the theme such as the who, what, where, when and why. Relate the theme to your own experiences.

Clarity of ideas is worth 35 points:

Write your essay in an easy-to-understand format. Leave your reader with a clear understanding of your explanation of the theme.

What Is the Theme?

VFW's Commander-in-Chief annually chooses the year's theme. The 2020-21 theme is **What is Patriotism to Me?**

What Are the Rules?

- Essay length: 300-400 typewritten words (+ or - 5 words max).
- You must write your own essay.
- All essays should be typed in English with no color or graphics and cannot be less than 300 words or greater than 400 words in length. (Essays under or over these word amounts will be eliminated.) Every word is counted regardless of length. The essay title (theme) or added footnotes do not contribute to the word count.
  At any time during the contest additional participant personal information (i.e. SSN, photo, etc.) could be requested by the VFW.

  In no way may contestants identify themselves within their essay (including, but not limited to, your name, school, city, state, race or national origin.) Do not put your name on your essay. The entry form is your essay's cover sheet. Secure the Official Student Entry Form with a staple or other fastener on top of your essay. Contestants are allowed to enter only once each year if otherwise eligible (one Post competition). Contestants found in violation of this rule will face elimination from the competition and will be required to return any and all prize money awarded or received.

The essay must be a contestant's original work and a product of the contestant's own thinking. The approach to the Patriot's Pen theme should be positive and clearly focused. Poetry is not acceptable. Quotations may be used sparingly if plainly identified wherever used. A contestant's teacher, counselor or parent may check the essay for punctuation, grammar and/or spelling, but the content must remain the contestant's. Contestants will be judged on the basis of their essay alone and are not required to present the essay orally. All essays become the property of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. The VFW retains non-exclusive rights to use your essay and likeness in the promotion and execution of the organization's programs and activities.

Deadline Information

To qualify, all entries must be submitted to a sponsoring local VFW Post by midnight October 31, 2020.

Note:

If you need help finding a participating VFW Post in your area, follow these instructions:

First, visit **vfw.org/FindaPost** to "Find A VFW Post." Be sure this Post is within the state you reside in.

If you do not have success in finding a Post, or if you have trouble getting in touch with them, you can contact your VFW Department (state) headquarters office to see if they can offer any information or assistance. You can visit **vfw.org/contactus** and look for "Find a State Contact" to get your VFW state office's phone number and email.

If you need assistance, please email us at the VFW National Headquarters at **youthscholarships@vfw.org.**

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VFW

VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS®

For assistance contact:

816.756.3390 ext. 6155
youthscholarships@vfw.org
vfw.org

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LOCAL VFW POST INFORMATION:

CONTACT: _____

_____

PHONE: _____ **BEST TIME TO CALL:** _____

ALTERNATE CONTACT: _____

_____

PHONE: _____ **BEST TIME TO CALL:** _____