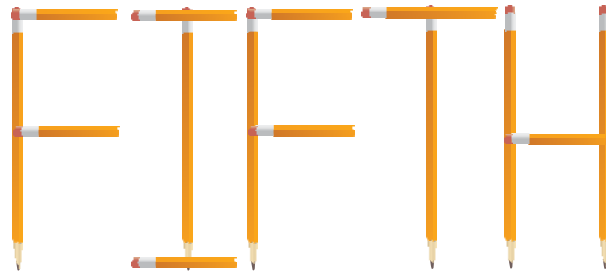




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grade writing contest

Introduction

The Celebrate America Creative Writing Contest challenges fifth graders across the country to reflect on and write about the theme “Why I Am Glad America Is a Nation of Immigrants.” The contest begins at the local level through the efforts of American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA) chapters. Each chapter sends its first-place winning entry to the American Immigration Council for the national contest. The national contest winner and their parents/guardians attend an American Immigration Council event in June, where the winner reads the winning entry.

This booklet has been developed to serve as a guide for the local contest coordinators. Each AILA chapter determines how its local contest will be run. The packet is divided into subject areas, including the timeline and timeline checklist that provide a step-by-step action plan for local and national contests. To ensure fairness for all finalist submissions, please strictly adhere to the Council’s guidelines on written submissions’ length (500 words maximum) and national contest due dates and requirements.

The Celebrate America Creative Writing Contest is made possible due to the generous support of the Murthy NAYAK Foundation.

Sponsoring a Local Contest is Easy!

While the instructions contained in this guide are comprehensive, please don't presume that a contest must be run elaborately. The suggestions found in this booklet are based on the contests of chapters that have several years of experience under their belts.

Consider these quick tips for getting an initial, small, local contest up and running in your chapter:

1. Sponsor the contest in just ONE school in your area. Is there a chapter leader, or any local chapter member, who has a fifth-grade child (or grandchild!) and would be willing to call the child's teacher to suggest this contest? Or, put a notice in your chapter newsletter asking interested members to volunteer to reach out to local schools.
2. Prizes do not need to be elaborate. While some chapters have developed awards that include symphony tickets and museum passes, a chapter running a first contest could issue a \$100 savings bond to the winning student or invite the winner and his/her parents to a chapter dinner in his or her honor.
3. Politicians and the press love local stories about kids winning contests. Call your Representative's or Mayor's office and ask if the elected official would write a congratulatory letter to the winner that you can frame, read, and present to the winner. Call the city desk or style section of your hometown newspaper or local accessible TV station and ask if the media outlet could send a photographer or video camera to the chapter dinner where the winner will read his essay.
4. Use the contest as a project for up-and-coming leaders in your chapter to test their organizational skills. Current chapter executive committee members often have multiple chapter-related responsibilities already. Why not assign coordination of your local contest to a recent AILA member in your area who regularly shows up at meetings and has expressed an interest in becoming more involved? Or why not use the contest as a challenge to involve potential leaders and urge them to help the chapter? Law student members make good coordinators too!

The Celebrate America Creative Writing Contest is made possible due to the generous support of the Murthy NAYAK Foundation.

Local Contest: Detailed Creative Writing Contest Timeline & Checklist

Getting Started

Welcome Creative Writing Contest Coordinators! The "Celebrate America" Fifth Grade Creative Writing Contest is successful thanks to the hard work and dedication of coordinators like you.

Below you will find a general timeline of suggestions and links to forms and materials to help you.

**The items in bold are required documents and timeline for the National Contest.

OCTOBER/ NOVEMBER

- Each chapter selects a Creative Writing Contest Coordinator (CWCC) and contacts The American Immigration Council to verify coordinator participation. The CWCC solicits other chapter members to serve on a Creative Writing Contest Committee, who then help the Contest Coordinator approach local schools for participation, recruit local judges, promote the contest, solicit prizes, and plan the local contest award ceremony.
- Solicit volunteers at chapter meetings or via the chapter newsletter.
- Contest Coordinators, Committee members and American Immigration Council Ambassadors approach local institutions, public service agencies and immigrant advocacy groups to co-sponsor the Creative Writing Contest.
- Look to minority bar associations, ethnic and religious organizations, and immigration advocacy organizations in your community.
- Target local public and private schools. Make initial contact with teachers, principals, and administrators to introduce the contest. Use the Form Letter to Teachers and Board of Education on page 6 for outreach ideas.
- Ask chapter members to approach their children's schools.
- Coordinator's approach local Boards of Education to introduce the Contest.

- Poll chapter members to determine if anyone has a contact at the Board, or knows someone who is a teacher, to assist in identifying the appropriate Board contact.
- Follow up with schools and Boards of Education. Committee members and other chapter volunteers follow up with the schools they previously approached.
- Begin soliciting prizes.
- Approach local businesses, clients of AILA members, etc.

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER

- Distribute Creative Writing Contest flyer to those schools that have agreed to participate.
- Recruit a panel of volunteers to do the initial screening of entries to select the top ten for submission to judges.
- For volunteers look to AILA members, law school students, members of co-sponsoring organizations, or Board of Education staff members.
- Solicit judges for selection of winner. Look to prominent members of your community. Mayor, Members of Congress, or the State Legislature, local USCIS officials, prominent immigrants, local business owners, local news reporters and radio and television personalities, entertainers, and athletes can be judges.
- Start planning the local contest awards ceremony. Choose the date and decide on the format. Look for and reserve an appropriate space.

The Celebrate America Creative Writing Contest is made possible due to the generous support of the Murthy NAYAK Foundation.

- Schedule the local contest awards ceremony in conjunction with an appropriate local event, for example an ethnic festival or a naturalization ceremony. The student can even be honored at a Chapter meeting.
- Recruit AILA Chapter volunteers to make presentations to participating classrooms. Visit www.CelebrateAmericaWritingContest.org for coordinator resources.

JANUARY

- Participating teachers teach unit on immigration and introduce the Creative Writing Contest to students.
- Ask teachers to require students to write an essay, poem, story, etc. as a classroom assignment, rather than making it voluntary (remember that the creative writing piece must be no longer than 500 words).
- AILA members speak to participating classes about immigration.
- Encourage teachers to invite outside guests to hear the presentation (e.g., parents, students, and teachers from other classrooms). This will help spread the message to an even broader audience.

EARLY FEBRUARY

- Finalize panel of initial screeners.
- Early February – Deadline for schools to submit entries to Contest Coordinators. *Remember coordinators are responsible for setting up a local deadline so that the winner may be submitted before the April national deadline.

FEBRUARY/MARCH

- Panel of initial screeners reviews entries and selects top ten entries for submission to judges.

LATE FEBRUARY/EARLY MARCH:

- Top ten entries submitted to judges.
- Judges select first, second and third place winners and return score sheet to Contest Coordinator.

APRIL

- Notify first, second and third place winners.

NATIONAL CONTEST

- ***The winning entry must be submitted to the Immigration Council for the national contest by Monday, May 17th.***
- ***Email one winning entry along with the corresponding required forms to mcruz@immcouncil.org. Required forms include:***
 - ***Release Authorization Form (page 22)***
 - ***Proof of Fifth Grade Enrollment (page 23)***
- Send out invitations to your local contest award ceremony.

MAY/JUNE

- ***Late May: Winner of national contest is announced by the American Immigration Council.***
- Send out Creative Writing Contest Press Release to announce the winner(s) to your community.
- Hold awards ceremony to honor winners of local Creative Writing Contest.
- Invite local media, elected officials, school board members, and other members of the community to attend the awards ceremony.
- Contest Coordinators should take pictures of local contest award ceremony to thank sponsors and/or post on website.
- ***The winner will read his or her creative writing piece during an American Immigration Council event.***

The Celebrate America Creative Writing Contest is made possible due to the generous support of the Murthy NAYAK Foundation.

Contest Selling Points

When speaking with or emailing teachers and school professionals, we recommend using some of the following contest selling points. Get to know your school and pick the one(s) you think would be the most likely to encourage participation.

- The contest is *student-centered* and encourages civic engagement and youth voice.
- Creative writing encourages children to use their imagination and has been shown to develop self-confidence and sense of identity.
- Creative writing develops reading, writing and critical thinking skills.
- Creative writing teaches children about empathy and creates an emotional outlet.
- The contest enables students to use narrative, descriptive, expository and persuasive writing styles, which are all required 5th grade standards.
- The contest allows students to share different perspectives and learn from one another and speak with an immigration expert.
- Celebrate America allows students, teachers, and the greater school community to collaborate and listen to one another.
- Through public readings, writer's workshops, naturalization ceremonies, and other events, the opportunities to learn about immigration in participating communities are endless and the impact is exponential! Where else does a fifth-grade student get to read his or her writing in front of hundreds of people?

The Celebrate America Creative Writing Contest is made possible due to the generous support of the Murthy NAYAK Foundation.

Promotion & Participation: Getting schools and teachers involved

Letter to Board of Education or Teachers

[DATE]

[NAME]

[ADDRESS]

DEAR:

I am writing to follow up on our recent discussion about the Celebrate America Creative Writing Contest, made possible due to the generous support of the Murthy NAYAK Foundation and being sponsored by the American Immigration Council and our local chapter of the American Immigration Lawyers Association.

As discussed, the theme of the contest is "Why I Am Glad America Is a Nation of Immigrants." Chapters of the American Immigration Lawyers Association are sponsoring local contests around the country. The winning entry from each local contest will be submitted to the national contest. Students are encouraged to be creative and can submit their entries in the form of an essay, poem, story, interview or any other written form. The deadline for submitting entries to the contest is [INSERT DATE HERE].

I would be happy to arrange for an immigration attorney to [SPEAK AT SCHOOLS/ TO YOUR CLASS] about immigration.

[FOR SCHOOL BOARD] If you are interested in introducing the Celebrate America Creative Writing Contest to the schools in your district, please contact me at your earliest convenience at [FILL IN YOUR CONTACT INFORMATION] and we can discuss the next steps. Please do not hesitate to call me if you have any questions.

[FOR TEACHERS] If you are interested in participating in the Celebrate America Creative Writing Contest, please complete the attached form and return it to me at your earliest convenience. I will follow up with more materials and details on the contest upon receiving your reply. In the meantime, if you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at [FILL IN YOUR CONTACT INFORMATION].

Sincerely,

[YOUR NAME AND AFFILIATION]

Yes! I Would Like to Participate in the Celebrate America Creative Writing Contest Teacher Form

SCHOOL: _____

SCHOOL ADDRESS: _____

TEACHER: _____

CONTACT PERSON (if not teacher): _____

PHONE NUMBER: _____

EMAIL: _____

NUMBER OF STUDENTS EXPECTED TO PARTICIPATE: _____

ARE YOU INTERESTED IN A GUEST SPEAKER? YES NO

Please return this form to [\[INSERT YOUR NAME, address, telephone, fax, and email\]](#): _____

The Celebrate America Creative Writing Contest is made possible due to the generous support of the Murthy NAYAK Foundation.

Sample Letter to Teachers Participating in Contest

[DATE]

[NAME]

[ADDRESS]

DEAR:

We are very excited that you have agreed to participate in the American Immigration Council's "Celebrate America" Creative Writing Contest, made possible due to the generous support of the Murthy NAYAK Foundation.

As you know, contestants are to write on the theme "Why I Am Glad America Is a Nation of Immigrants." Students are encouraged to be creative in their submissions, and we welcome any written piece—poem, essay, story, interview, etc.—that reflects the theme. The contest is open to fifth graders from the [ENTER SCHOOL/DISTRICT/REGION/CITY/STATE/OTHER] area. Entries will be judged on the basis of theme, presentation, creativity and message.

Entries are limited to 500 words. Each entry must include a cover page with the following information: student's name, grade, age, school, address, telephone number, and proof of enrollment in the fifth grade, such as a transcript, report card, or letter from the school principal. In addition, we would ask that the enclosed Authorization for Release be signed by each contestant and his or her parent or guardian.

The deadline for submissions is [INSERT DATE HERE]. Submissions should be sent to [INSERT INFORMATION]. Winners will be announced on [INSERT DATE]. The winners will receive [INSERT DETAILS ABOUT PRIZES] and will be honored at an awards ceremony on [INSERT DETAILS OF CEREMONY]. The first-place winner of the [ENTER SCHOOL DISTRICT/REGION/ETC. AS LISTED ABOVE] contest will go on to compete at the national level with other students from around the country.

If you need additional information or would like to arrange for a speaker, please contact me at [INSERT CONTACT INFORMATION].

Thank you again for participating in the Celebrate America Creative Writing Contest. Please do not hesitate to call me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

[YOUR NAME AND AFFILIATION]

The Celebrate America Creative Writing Contest is made possible due to the generous support of the Murthy NAYAK Foundation.

Tips for Classroom Visits

There are two ways you can visit a participating classroom. You can teach or co-teach a lesson or you can give a presentation. Please do what makes you feel most comfortable. And remember, though your visit would be valuable for students, classroom visits are not necessary or always possible.

- **Ask the teacher for the entry policies for guests at the school.**
- **Email the lesson plan to the teacher in advance of your visit.**
Teachers might think of ways to plan other immigration-themed lessons to enhance your visit. They can help you to divide students into groups and set up the classroom. Plus, some teachers will want more control than others.
- **Make copies of the flyers to pass out to students.**
Printable versions are available on the contest website at www.CelebrateAmericaWritingContest.org.
- **Consider bringing treats: candy is fine, but so are “cool” academic supplies.**
Small pieces of candy will win you a captive audience but check with the teacher on school policy for eating in classrooms. “Cool” academic supplies might include stickers, colorful post-it notes, highlighters, colorful pens, etc.
- **If you want to take photos or ask the teacher to take photos, you will need parental permission.**
Use the photo release form provided on the American Immigration Council website.

Suggested Outline for Classroom Presentations

- **Introduce yourself.** Explain what you do as an immigration attorney and the type of clients you serve.
- **Describe the immigration process.** Try to emphasize the careful screening of applicants and the lengthy process to counter any myths the students may have heard to the contrary. Explain the visa process.
- **Put a face on immigration facts.** Give examples of some of your clients, how they came to the United States, what they left behind, how they are doing in the U.S. Consider whether one of your clients is willing to come with you to tell his or her story first-hand.
- **Emphasize the important contributions immigrants make** to the country and to the community. Give examples.
- **Ask for any questions.**
- **Thank the class** for their participation in the Creative Writing Contest and their interest in immigration.

The Celebrate America Creative Writing Contest is made possible due to the generous support of the Murthy NAYAK Foundation.

Judging

Sample Letter of Invitation to Panel Judges

[DATE]

[NAME]

[ADDRESS]

DEAR:

Each year, the American Immigration Council sponsors the Celebrate America Creative Writing Contest for fifth graders to write on “Why I Am Glad America Is a Nation of Immigrants.” Chapters of the American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA) sponsor local contests throughout the United States, and the first-place winners of the local contests are entered into the national contest. The [REGION/STATE] AILA Chapter requests that you consider participating in the contest as a judge to aid in the selection of our local winners.

The Celebrate America Creative Writing Contest is part of the American Immigration Council's ongoing efforts to spread a positive message about the benefits of immigration. We believe that this contest plays a significant role in demonstrating the important contributions immigrants make to our community and to America, and that it helps educate the students, their families, and teachers on the history of immigration and how it may relate to them on a more personal level.

Approximately [INSERT NUMBER] schools in the [INSERT REGION/CITY/STATE] area are participating in the contest. The deadline for submissions is [INSERT DATE HERE]. A committee will screen all of the entries, and the top ten will be submitted to a panel of prominent people from [INSERT AREA] to rank and determine the first, second and third place winners. We hope that you will agree to participate in this panel.

Thank you in advance for considering this request. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at [INSERT PHONE NUMBER AND EMAIL ADDRESS].

Sincerely,

[YOUR NAME AND AFFILIATION]

Suggestions for Initial Committee Screening

Essay Anonymity. Before providing the panel of screeners with the creative writing entries, assign each entry a number and delete any reference to the author's name, school or other identifying information. The top ten entries should also be submitted to the panel judges identified by number only.

Initial Screening. This can be done a number of ways, depending on the number of entries received. If there are a large number of entries, divide the entries evenly between the screeners, and ask each screener to choose the top three entries from their group using the suggested criteria indicated below (or other criteria developed by the Creative Writing Contest Committee). A smaller committee can then review the top three entries from each group, using the same criteria, to select the "final" top ten for submission to the panel judges. Alternatively, if a more manageable number of entries is received, each screener can review and rank all of the entries and select the top ten for submission to the panel judges.

Judging Criteria. To determine the top ten entries please use the following criteria:

Content/Theme: How well does the entry explain "Why I Am Glad America Is a Nation of Immigrants?"

Presentation: Are ideas well developed?

Creativity: Is the submission unique in some way?

Powerful Message: Are you moved by the message?

We suggest that each category be given a score from 1 to 5 (5 being the best). Add up the scores from each category so that each entry receives a total score out of 20. The scorecard on the next page may be helpful.

Screening Committee Score Sheet

PLEASE SCORE EACH CATEGORY OUT OF 5;
THEN INSERT THE TOTAL SCORE (OUT OF 20) IN THE FINAL COLUMN

Essay#	Content/Theme	Presentation	Creativity	Powerful Message	TOTAL SCORE

The Celebrate America Creative Writing Contest is made possible due to the generous support of the Murthy NAYAK Foundation.



Sample Letter to Judges with Ranking Instructions

DEAR:

Thank you for agreeing to serve as a judge in the Celebrate America Creative Writing Contest. I am pleased to report that [INSERT NUMBER] entries were submitted to the contest. Enclosed you will find the top ten entries that were screened by a committee of [INSERT GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF COMMITTEE MEMBERS, E.G. 15 ATTORNEYS AND BOARD OF EDUCATION STAFF]. The entries were evaluated on the basis of theme, presentation, creativity, and message. You will see that in addition to poems, there are [INSERT OTHER FORMATS THAT WERE USED, IF APPROPRIATE] among the top ten entries.

We are asking the panel of final judges to rank the top ten creative writing entries from "1" to "10" (10 being the best) using the criteria set forth below. The winning submission will be that which has the highest overall score.

Judging Criteria.

To determine the top ten entries please use the following criteria:

Content/Theme: How well does the entry explain "Why I Am Glad America Is a Nation of Immigrants"?

Presentation: Are ideas well developed? **Creativity:** Is the submission unique in some way? **Powerful**

Message: Are you moved by the message?

The first, second, and third place winners of the contest will be honored at [INSERT DETAILS OF AWARDS CEREMONY]. In addition, the first-place entry will be submitted to the national contest, the winner of which will be honored in June at the American Immigration Council's American Heritage Awards.

Each entry has been assigned a number. We have prepared a ranking sheet for your scores. We ask that you return your rankings to us no later than [INSERT DATE HERE].

We hope that you will be able to join us at the awards ceremony on [INSERT DATE]. Thank you, once again, for your participation in this important project.

Sincerely,

[YOUR NAME AND AFFILIATION]

"Why I Am Glad America Is A Nation of Immigrants"

Judges Scoring Sheet

Entry Number	Score (1-10; 10 being the best)

Comments: (optional)

Judge's Name:

Date:

Please return this no later than [\[INSERT DATE HERE\]](#) to:

[\[INSERT NAME, ADDRESS, EMAIL, AND FAX NUMBER\]](#)

Winners

Sample Letter to Top Three Local Winners

[DATE]

[NAME]
[ADDRESS]

DEAR:

CONGRATULATIONS!!! You are the [FIRST, SECOND, THIRD] place winner in the Celebrate America Creative Writing Contest, made possible due to the generous support of the Murthy NAYAK Foundation. Your [INSERT FORM OF WRITTEN WORK SUBMITTED – POEM, ESSAY, ETC] was selected from [INSERT NUMBER] entries received. You should be very proud of your achievement.

As a winner, you will receive [INSERT PRIZES, if any]. In addition, you will be honored at an [AWARDS CEREMONY/AILA MEETING] on [INSERT DETAILS OF DATE, TIME, AND PLACE OF EVENT]. Your family [FRIENDS, PRINCIPAL, TEACHER AND ENTIRE CLASSROOM] are [ALL] invited to attend the awards ceremony.

FOR FIRST PLACE WINNER INSERT: As the first place winner in the [CITY/STATE/REGION] contest, your [TYPE OF CREATIVE WRITING PIECE] will be submitted to the national contest, together with other entries from around the country. The winner of the national contest will read his or her winning entry at the American Immigration Council's American Heritage Awards in June.

Once again, congratulations. I look forward to meeting you at the ceremony.

Sincerely,
[YOUR NAME AND AFFILIATION]

Awards Ceremony & Prizes

Sample Letter to Solicit Prizes

DEAR:

I am writing to you on behalf of the American Immigration Lawyers Association [ENTER YOUR REGION/STATE AILA CHAPTER and LIST OTHER SPONSORS] to ask for your assistance with the Celebrate America Creative Writing Contest.

Fifth grade students from around the [INSERT CITY/STATE/REGION/SCHOOL DISTRICT] area have been asked to submit creative writing pieces on the theme "Why I Am Glad America Is a Nation of Immigrants." The contest is part of national efforts to spread a positive message about the benefits of immigration.

The top three winners of the [INSERT AREA] contest will be honored at an awards ceremony on [INSERT DETAILS OF CEREMONY]. We would like to invite [INSERT NAME OF ORGANIZATION] to participate in the Celebrate America Creative Writing Contest by asking you to donate [INSERT ITEM YOU ARE REQUESTING]. Your generous contribution will be noted in the program for the awards ceremony.

We hope to make this contest an enriching experience for the students writing about immigration and for the community as a whole. Your contribution will help us achieve this goal.

Thank you for considering our request.

Sincerely,

[YOUR NAME AND AFFILIATION]

Sample Invitation to Awards Ceremony

DEAR:

The [STATE/REGION] Chapter of the American Immigration Lawyers Association would like to invite you to what promises to be a very heartwarming event in our community. On [INSERT DATE], three [INSERT CITY] area students will be honored for their writing entries on the theme "Why I Am Glad America Is a Nation of Immigrants" during a ceremony at [INSERT PLACE OF CEREMONY]. The ceremony will begin at [INSERT TIME] and will last approximately [INSERT ESTIMATED LENGTH OF CEREMONY].

The winning pieces were selected from [ENTER NUMBER] entries submitted by fifth grade students from the [ENTER CITY/STATE] area. The Celebrate America Creative Writing Contest, made possible due to the generous support of the Murthy NAYAK Foundation sponsored by the American Immigration Council, helps spread a positive message about the benefits of immigration to America. All of the entries received contain truly inspirational messages.

The three students to be honored are: [INSERT NAMES OF STUDENTS AND THEIR SCHOOLS]. The winners were selected by a panel of judges from the community: [INSERT NAMES OF JUDGES]. The entry of the first-place winner will be submitted to the American Immigration Council for the national contest.

I hope that you will be able to join us for this event. If you have any questions do not hesitate to contact me at [INSERT PHONE NUMBER AND EMAIL ADDRESS.]

Sincerely,

[YOUR NAME AND AFFILIATION]

The Celebrate America Creative Writing Contest is made possible due to the generous support of the Murthy NAYAK Foundation.

Sample Awards Ceremony Press Release

CONTACT:

[INSERT NAME AND PHONE NUMBER]

ELEMENTARY STUDENTS ARE GLAD AMERICA IS A NATION OF IMMIGRANTS Creative Writing Contest Authors Emphasize the Contributions of Immigrants

[INSERT NAME OF CITY]: Three [INSERT CITY] area students will be honored for their winning entries on "Why I Am Glad America Is a Nation of Immigrants" during a ceremony at [INSERT PLACE, DATE, AND TIME OF AWARDS CEREMONY].

The winning entries were selected from [ENTER NUMBER] entries submitted by fifth grade students from the [ENTER CITY/REGION/STATE] area. The Celebrate America Creative Writing Contest is made possible due to the generous support of the Murthy NAYAK Foundation sponsored by the [INSERT STATE/REGION] AILA Chapter and [INSERT NAMES OF OTHER CO-SPONSORS], to help spread a positive message about the benefits of immigration to America. [INSERT QUOTE FROM CONTEST COORDINATOR: e.g. "We were overwhelmed by the profound insight, humor and optimism of the entries. These children can teach many Americans some very important lessons," said Joe Smith, coordinator of the Creative Writing Contest.]

The three students to be honored are: [INSERT NAMES OF STUDENTS AND THEIR SCHOOLS]. The winners were selected by a panel of judges from the community: [INSERT NAMES OF JUDGES]. The winners will receive [INSERT PRIZES]. In addition, the first place entry, written by [INSERT STUDENT'S NAME] will be entered into the National Creative Writing Contest, sponsored by the American Immigration Council. The national winner will read his or her winning entry at the American Immigration Council's American Heritage Awards in June.

The Celebrate America Creative Writing Contest is made possible due to the generous support of the Murthy NAYAK Foundation.

Sample Thank You Letter to Prize Contributors

DEAR:

On behalf of the American Immigration Lawyers Association's [YOUR STATE/REGION] Chapter [and LIST OTHER SPONSORS], I would like to thank [INSERT NAME OF DONATING ORGANIZATION] for its generous donation of [INSERT PRIZE] to the Celebrate America Creative Writing Contest.

Approximately [INSERT NUMBER OF CONTESTANTS] students participated in the contest, and thanks to the generosity of [INSERT NAME OF DONATING ORGANIZATION] and other local sponsors, we were able to award prizes to the authors of the winning entries/to the best submission from each school [MODIFY AS APPROPRIATE].

Your contribution has certainly helped make learning about immigration an enjoyable experience for the students. I have enclosed copies of the top three creative writing entries for your and your staff's reading pleasure. You will also find a copy of your listing in our awards ceremony program.

Thank you again for your support.

Sincerely,
[YOUR NAME AND AFFILIATION]

Local Contest Timeline Checklist

TIMEFRAME	ACTION	COMPLETED
October/ November	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verify participation with the American Immigration Council • Select Creative Writing Contest Coordinator (CWCC) • Form Creative Writing Contest Committee • Approach potential contest co-sponsors 	----- ----- ----- -----
October/ November	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approach Board of Education • Follow up with Board of Education (get commitment & contact) 	----- -----
October/ November	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Target local schools • Follow up with schools (get commitments) • Begin prize solicitation 	----- ----- -----
November/December	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distribute contest material to participating schools • Recruit volunteers for panel to do initial screening of entries • Solicit judges • Start planning awards ceremony • Recruit volunteers to make presentations to participating classes 	----- ----- ----- ----- -----
January	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteers make presentations in classrooms 	-----
Before February	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finalize panel of initial screeners 	-----
February-March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Panel screens entries and selects top 10 	-----
March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit top 10 entries to judges 	-----
April	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit winning entry to American Immigration Council's National Contest & announce local winners 	-----
April/May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finalize details for local awards ceremony 	-----
May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Contest winner is announced 	N/A
May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local awards ceremony takes place 	-----
June	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National winner honored at Council's ceremony 	N/A

The Celebrate America Creative Writing Contest is made possible due to the generous support of the Murthy NAYAK Foundation.



National Contest: Timeline, Forms & Checklist

MAY

- Local contests' winning entry must be submitted to the Immigration Council for the national contest by the May 17th deadline.
- Email one winning entry along with the corresponding required forms to mcruz@immcouncil.org.
- Required forms include:
 - » Release Authorization Form (page 22)
 - » Proof of Fifth Grade Enrollment (page 23)

MAY/JUNE

- Late May: Winner of national contest is announced by the American Immigration Council.
- The winner will read his or her creative writing piece during an American Immigration Council event.

American Immigration Council Celebrate America Creative Writing Contest Authorization for Release

Student Name: _____

Home Address: _____

Telephone: _____

Email: _____

Thank you for submitting an entry to the Celebrate America Creative Writing Contest sponsored by the American Immigration Council.

Your entry may be published in the American Immigration Council's (Council) American Heritage Awards program book, in the American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA) Annual Conference program, and in any publication of the AILA Chapter sponsoring your local contest. In addition, your creative writing entry and photograph may be published in appropriate newspapers, journals, or other print media. Your name, address and telephone number may be released to such publications in the event that they wish to contact you in connection with your entry. It is understood that the use of these materials by the Council, AILA, or any other institution will not be for personal gain.

By signing this release, you are agreeing to transfer copyright and other rights for your creative writing entry to the American Immigration Council, and to release the Council, AILA, and other participating organizations from any claims relating to the above-stated uses. By signing this release, you agree to complete any tax reporting forms should prize money be received.

By signing this release, you are agreeing that the above-named student's entry is 500 words or less, and that if it is longer, it will not be eligible for national judging.

Author Signature

Date

Parent or Guardian (Print Name)

Parent or Guardian Signature

Date

Please return this form to: [\[INSERT CONTACT INFORMATION\]](#)

The Celebrate America Creative Writing Contest is made possible due to the generous support of the Murthy NAYAK Foundation.



American Immigration Council Celebrate America Creative Writing Contest Proof of 5th Grade Enrollment Form

Each winning entry must be emailed to creativewritingcontest@immcouncil.org with the corresponding required forms (proof of enrollment form and release authorization form)

Name of Creative Writing Contest Coordinator:

Name of student participating in the national level contest:

Name of school:

Name of school principal:

Proof of enrollment being submitted:

Submit proof of enrollment with this form (i.e., a transcript, report card, or letter from the school principal)

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