AACS 43rd Annual AACS Creative Writing Contest
2026–2027 Topics

Elementary

- Poetry—Write a poem from the point of view of an everyday inanimate object in your backpack or bedroom (e.g., a dusty sneaker, a math textbook, or a ruler).
- Short Story—Write a story that begins "My first trip on a hot air balloon did not go as planned . . . "

Junior High

- Poetry—Write a poem that is a weather report that actually describes a mood or a specific memory (e.g., "A heavy fog of frustration," or "A sudden rain shower of laughter").
- Short Story—Write a story where your main character discovers a secret trapdoor underneath his/her school locker, bedroom floor, or the floor of a local business. He/she steps inside and realizes the real world connects to an entirely different, hidden civilization. Additional prompts: What specific item or detail makes the character realize something is wrong? What does this hidden world look, smell, and sound like? What choice must he/she make before stepping back into normal life?

Rules

1. Entries shall meet the specific length requirements listed below:

Elementary Level (Grades 4–6)		Junior High Level (Grades 7–8)	
Poetry:	maximum 200 words	Poetry:	maximum 300 words
Short Story:	maximum 750 words	Short Story:	maximum 1000 words

2. A student may enter only one category—either short story or poetry.
3. **Teachers**
   a. Our goal with this contest is to award excellence. Writing may begin with free writing. But excellent writing on any level requires writing and re-writing. Use this as a teaching opportunity. Tell your students the topic at least one week in advance. Brainstorm with your class. Follow your curriculum's procedure for pre-writing, writing, peer editing, teacher review, and re-writing.
   b. Review the judging forms for judging criteria.
   c. Student entries are not required to be spiritual in nature or application. Content should be wholesome and within the boundaries of appropriate Christian thought and behavior (Phil. 4:8). Vulgarity, sexual innuendoes, crass humor, dark subject matter, distasteful, and biblically objectionable content are not appropriate.
   d. Absolutely no plagiarism or AI-generated work is acceptable.
   e. Within the guidelines above in 3.a., the entry must be the student's own work.
4. **Preparing the Entry**
   a. Typed entries are preferred, but handwritten entries will be accepted. The student should type or write a clean copy to submit for judging. If the hand-written entry has been scanned for digital submission, ensure that the scanned copy is clear enough for judges to read easily.
   b. **Entries to state and national competition must be free of written comments and corrections.**
   c. The following information must be listed at the top of the first page of the student's entry: Student's name and grade; school name, city, and state; category entered; title; **word count;** and **statement of originality.** STATEMENT OF ORIGINALITY: I certify that this project is my own original and authentic work and that I received no help in completing this project other than general instruction and supervision. (Type or sign name after statement.) **Failure to include statement of originality will result in disqualification.**
   d. A "fancy" cover page or title page is not allowed.
   e. Submit entries and judging forms as digital files. Label files in the following format:
      i. Entry: ST_School_LastName_FirstInitial_Category
      Sample: AL_Calvary_Smith_J_ElemPoetry Sample: TN_Grace_Jones_D_JHStory
      ii. Judging Form: ST_School_LastName_FirstInitial_Category_Judge
      Sample: AL_Calvary_Smith_J_ElemPoetry_Judge
5. Review the judging forms for judging criteria. The schools should have received copies of each judging form. If not, please contact your state office, or download the digital judging forms from the Competition tab on the AACS website. Before submitting the entry, on the judging form fill in the level, name, school, city, state, grade, **title,** and **number of words.** The student will be penalized if the judging form is incomplete.
6. **Submitting the Entry:** Original student entries **and judging forms** must be submitted **as email attachments** to the state association by **December 4, 2026.** (This date may vary by state. Please contact your state office for exact deadline for your state.) Each association will select one winner in each category on each level. These four winners will be emailed to AACS for the national judging; these entries should be received by the National Office by **January 21, 2027**. National winners will be announced in April 2027.

Awards—AACS provides the awards, medals for state winners and plaques for national winners.