

WRITING

Open



COMPOSITIONS

You are to write two original compositions on Christian themes, using different genres from the categories of short story, general essay, first-person story, or in-depth news story. The word count is to be 1,000 to 1,500 words for each original composition, excluding the title page or any footnotes or bibliography.

Effective Christian writing is Biblically accurate, persuasive, and suitable for publication. Avoid using stock phrases or Christian jargon so that your compositions will be understandable and interesting to Christians and non-Christians. You may not use school research or term papers, stories or biographies based on Biblical accounts, or writings previously submitted to TFC.

GENRE DESCRIPTIONS

• *Short story*

Mainstream fiction; may be based on real people or incidents but is basically fiction that reflects typical life experiences. Not acceptable are allegory, science fiction, historical fiction, and fantasy.

• *General essay (editorial or personal opinion)*

Composition that defines an area of concern, presents a specific view, and moves readers to think or act in response to the message; written to be as articulate and persuasive for secular readers as for Christian readers; not an extended tract or written with the intent to evangelize; characterized by concise, compact style; not preachy or predictable; grounded in facts and research rather than on emotion; written from personal point of view (I, we, you).

• *First-person story (true-life drama)*

A true story from the writer's own experience; typically incorporates anecdotes, conversations between people involved, and significant details of the setting surrounding the events that make the story interesting to a reader; may also be another person's experience written in the "as told to" form.

• *In-depth news story*

Well-researched report of an event that is timely, significant, and of current interest to readers; characterized by accurate and thorough reporting of the facts (who, what, where, when, how) and objective, fair treatment of the whys that make the story newsworthy; writing style shows economy and clarity of expression. Past examples include youth missions trips and the death of a missionary.

WRITING INSTRUCTIONS

• *Manuscript*

Prepare your manuscript using 12-point font and double-spaced. Print on 8½" x 11" white paper.

• *Quoted research*

Quoted material is that which is copied directly from the work of another writer in order to make or support a point. Any use of quoted material should comprise no more than 10 percent of the composition. Copy all quotations and give credit to their sources (e.g., footnoting). Quoted material does not refer to conversation or direct discourse (i.e., fiction, biography, news stories) written by you. However, any direct discourse copied from another writer must be included in the quoted word count.

• *Title page*

On a plain-text title page list the following: your name, title of entry, genre of entry, total word count, and quoted word count (if any).

• *Bibliography*

If you use any outside resources, list them at the end of your composition. Note the following sample entries for listing references in the bibliography:

Book

Pickering, Ernest. *Charismatic Confusion*. Schaumburg, Ill: Regular Baptist Press, 2006.

Magazine

Peck, Michael. "Put the Past behind You." *The Baptist Bulletin* (June 2007): 18, 30.

Web site

Talmadge, Eric. "A Running Path to Enlightenment." June 2007. www.chicagotribune.com/news/custom/religion.

IMPROMPTU WRITING

You must be present at the state competition and write an impromptu nonfiction essay on a topic chosen by the judges. All contestants will be given the same topic and you will have one hour to write. You may use your Bible. Paper and a dictionary will be provided.

You may bring a laptop computer to write your impromptu essay. You are responsible for printing your document or making sure it can be printed at the competition. Contact your state TFC director for details about printing your document. Using a laptop will not give

you an advantage in scoring. The grammar and spelling features may not be utilized. The auto-correct feature must be turned off. Your impromptu essay must be an original writing. Your final score will be determined in three equal parts, consisting of your two previously submitted genres and your impromptu writing.

READING

To help you prepare for writing in TFC, you are to read 100 pages from two or more sources on the subject of the writing process and prepare a one-page summary of your reading. Possible references include resources listed in the Writing Publications addendum. You are also to read 20 short stories or articles (10 for each of your chosen genres). Include with the summary a bibliography of the titles and authors of the sources you read and the list of the short stories or articles you read.

WRITING MINISTRY

To use your writing as a Christian influence, put one article or story in print, using either a TFC composition or another composition you write. It may appear in such places as a school newspaper, a church newsletter, a community publication, your youth group newsletter, your church's Web site, or an insert in your church bulletin. Prepare a writing ministry statement that specifies your composition title and the name and date of the publication in which it appeared, and submit the statement to the state judges as described under **Submissions**.

CRITERIA FOR NONFICTION

Your nonfiction writing will be judged in the following areas:

- **Sense of audience**—writing is clearly intended to reach specific readers (i.e., age, life experience); writer's approach shows awareness of readers' interests, needs, and reading level; supplies valuable information for readers
- **Central idea**—unifying idea that is original, timely, clearly stated or implied, and effectively developed
- **Structure of article**—logical, unified, and coherent throughout; well paced in moving reader along
- **Beginning/lead**—provides framework; attracts reader's interest; sets tone and direction of the article; stimulates reader to care
- **Middle/development**—develops topic and central idea in a logical, orderly way (e.g., past to present, problem to solution, general to specific); uses appropriate examples, illustrations, anecdotes, comments to support and develop the central idea
- **Conclusion**—convincing; appropriate to central idea; ties the whole article together; motivates reader (e.g., to self-evaluation, increased faith in God, positive action)
- **Sentences and paragraphs; transitions**—appropriate variety (i.e., length, structure) of sentences; transitions

move the reader smoothly from point to point within paragraphs or between paragraphs

- **Style and diction; voice and tone**—precise and effective word choice; appropriate to theme and purpose; avoidance of wordiness, triteness, clichés
- **Mechanics and presentation**—proper grammar, usage, punctuation, spelling, and manuscript presentation; fulfills the definition and purpose of the genre chosen (Plagiarism, close paraphrasing, or substantial borrowing of contents or ideas and representing them as your own work will result in disqualification.)
- **Theological soundness**—Biblical worldview conveyed without preachiness; correct use of Bible terms, concepts; avoidance of Christian jargon or clichés; useful spiritual insight conveyed

CRITERIA FOR FICTION

Your fiction writing will be judged in the following areas:

- **Sense of audience**—writing is clearly intended to reach specific readers (i.e., age, life experience); writer's approach shows awareness of readers' interests, needs, and reading level; supplies valuable insights for readers
- **Theme/plot**—unifying theme that is timely, original, clearly stated or implied, and effectively developed; plot deals with a realistic human condition, problem, or situation; presents a believable conflict; shows the central character maturing; dramatic without seeming sensational or contrived
- **Point of view and setting**—point of view is appropriate, consistent, and effective in portraying characters and telling their story; setting (time, place, mood) appropriate to plot and characters; contributes to credibility of the story
- **Beginning**—sets the story in motion in an interesting, believable way; sets the stage for everything that comes after
- **Middle/development**—effective selection and arrangement of conversations, thoughts, and incidents to heighten interest and expectation; middle elements are of adequate importance to the whole of the story; sense of connectedness of these elements to each other and to the beginning and conclusion
- **Conclusion**—appropriate and convincing; consistent with theme and tone; not too abrupt; not overdone or preachy; effectively brings resolution, sense of completion to the story
- **Characters/characterizations**—credible, true-to-life personalities and motivations; selection of details reveals what characters believe and value—how they think; sufficient development of characters
- **Dialogue and narrative style**—dialogue appropriate to age and personality of each character; narrative style reflects the story's theme, purpose, and narrator's point of view; precise, economical word choices; avoidance of wordiness, clichés, triteness

- **Mechanics and presentation**—proper grammar, usage, punctuation, spelling, and manuscript presentation; fulfills the definition and purpose of the short story genre (Plagiarism, close paraphrasing, or substantial borrowing of contents or ideas and representing them as your own work will result in disqualification.)
- **Theological soundness**—Biblical worldview conveyed without preachiness; correct use of Bible terms, concepts; avoidance of Christian jargon or clichés; useful spiritual insight conveyed

RESOURCES FOR WRITING

Form, Grammar, and Mechanics

The Elements of Style (any recent edition) by William Strunk Jr. and E. B. White

Reputable high school or college English textbooks

Writing Process

A Complete Guide to Writing for Publication edited by Susan Titus Osborn (American Christian Writers Press)

Handbook of Magazine Article Writing (Writer's Digest Books)

How to Write What You Love by Dennis E. Hensley (Harold Shaw Publishers)

An Introduction to Christian Writing by Ethel Herr (American Christian Writers Press)

On Writing Well by William Zinsser (Harper/Collins)

Sally Stuart's Guide to Getting Published by Sally Stuart (see chapters 8 and 11) (Harold Shaw Publishers)

The Complete Guide to Writing and Selling the Christian Novel by Penelope J. Stokes (concepts apply to short stories too) (Writer's Digest Books)

Writing to Inspire by William Gentz, Lee Roddy, and others (Writer's Digest Books)

Writing Short Stories for Young People by George Edward Stanley (Writer's Digest Books)

The Christian Communicator, a monthly magazine for Christian writers (ACWriters.com)

DEDUCTIONS

- **Attire**—You are to wear business dress as described in the TFC guidelines: a dress shirt and slacks for men and a dress or skirt ensemble for women. Attire should be modest. A three-point deduction will be made for attire that does not follow these guidelines.
- **Required materials**—You are to provide your two writings with bibliography (if any), reading summary with bibliography, list of articles read, and writing ministry statement. A three-point deduction will be made for having only some of the materials; a five-point deduction for having none of the materials.

SUBMISSIONS

Submit your two writings with bibliography (if any), reading summary with bibliography, list of articles read, and writing ministry statement by the deadline specified by the state TFC director.