

1998-99 VHSL CREATIVE WRITING CONTEST

JUDGES' GENERAL COMMENTS

Each and every entry was exciting and enjoyable to read, and I gained a lot of knowledge along the way. I wish I could have recognized more selections from every genre, as there were always more Superior pieces than could receive individual acknowledgement. Deciding the winners was extremely difficult. In judging all of the categories, I looked for original expression in details as well as subject matter. The most common problems were poor proofreading and “telling” rather than “showing” the reader things.

The most successful essays presented a clear theme supported by specific details. They had a strong sense of voice and combined unique ideas with personal reflection. Some of the most prominent problems in the essays were the lack of a cohesive theme and logical transitions. General, overarching statements without supporting evidence also weakened the overall essays.

The winning stories possessed believable, yet unpredictable plot-lines and well-developed characters created by dialogue, description, and strong psychological or emotional cores. In many of the excellent stories, the characters came to an important realization or underwent some sort of change. The biggest shortcomings in the stories had to do with predictability and trying to tie things up (too neatly) for the reader in the end.

The best poems displayed unique, concrete imagery. They also showed a sense of musicality through the sounds and rhythms of language. I would instruct the poets to focus on the line as a single unit and to remember that in poetry “less is more.” by this, I don’t at all mean to suggest writing obscurely. A poem must be clear, but it shouldn’t explain itself. Rather, the specifics of the poem should speak on their own. The best poems seemed to evoke all five of the senses. They captured a coherent idea, moment, or story.

Again, I want to stress that the competition was keen and judging was difficult. I will vividly remember many of the wonderful selections from every genre. I wish I could recognize each of them. It was thrilling to read your work. Keep reading and writing.

1998-99 VHSL CREATIVE WRITING CONTEST RESULTS

GROUP AAA

Folder

- | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. Oakton HS | 5. James Robinson HS |
| 2. George Washington HS | 6. Patrick Henry HS (Ashland) |
| 3. Woodbridge Senior HS | 7. Chantilly HS |
| 4. McLean HS | 8. Hermitage HS |

Essay

- First: "Personal Essay", Laura Berry, McLean HS
- Second: "Clay", Claire Hebenstreit, Oakton HS
- Third: "My Hell", Dustin West, E. C. Glass HS
- Honorable Mention: "From Different Eyes", Sehreen Noor Ali, McLean HS

Short Story

- First: "The Pants", Courtney Davis, Oakton HS
- Second: "Staring Past the Sun", Josh Cloudt, Lloyd C. Bird HS
- Third: "Growing Pains", Emily Ramshaw, McLean HS
- Honorable Mention: "The Silver Orb", Vanessa Barger, Ocean Lakes HS

Poetry

- First: "Summer in December", Eric Messick, George Washington HS
- Second: "The City", David Stonehill, Oakton HS
- Third: "I can almost see you", Chatham Monk, E. C. Glass HS
- Honorable Mention: "Liquid Moon", Shannon Lively, Chantilly HS

1998-99 VHSL CREATIVE WRITING CONTEST RESULTS

GROUP AAA - 22 Entries

S = Superior, E = Excellent, G = Good

School	Sponsor	Booklet Rating	Essay Ratings	Story Ratings	Poem Ratings
Bethel HS	Florence Kuhn	E	G & S	E & G	E & E
Lloyd C. Bird HS	Michelle Clark	E	E & E	S & G	G & G
Chantilly HS	Naomi Dixon	E	E & G	S & E	E & E
Clover Hill HS	Lisa Williams	G	G & G	E & G	S & G
Courtland HS	L.D. Walker, Jr.	G	E & G	G & G	E & G
E. C. Glass HS	Cheryl Scruggs	E	S & G	G & G	G & S
Hampton HS	Maxton Jarrell	E	E & G	G & E	E & G
Hayfield HS	Carmen Lofton	E	E & E	G & G	S & G
Patrick Henry HS (Ashland)	Sallie Bedall	E	E & E	S & G	S & E
Hermitage HS	Linda Mills	E	G & E	E & E	S & E
Lake Braddock HS	Orlean Anderson	E	E & G	S & E	G & E
McLean HS	Catherine Colglazier	E	S & S	S & G	E & E
Nansemond River HS	Sandra Purdy	E	E & E	E & G	E & E
North Stafford HS	Judy Norton	G	G & G	G & E	G & G
Oakton HS	Erica Jacobs	S	S & S	S & E	S & S
Ocean Lakes HS	Don Kroeller, Jr.	E	G & G	S & G	S & E
Potomac Senior HS	Bridget Abler	E	G & E	G & G	E & E
Prince George HS	Cindy Merrix and Nancy Runke	E	E & E	G & G	S & E
James Robinson HS	Lois Page	E	E & E	S & E	E & S
George Washington HS	Bernard Leigg	S	E & S	S & S	S & S
Woodbridge	Cathy Hailey	S	S & S	E & S	E & S
Woodside HS	Heather Gustin	E	S & E	G & E	G & G

1998-99 VHSL CREATIVE WRITING CONTEST

JUDGES' GENERAL COMMENTS

These entries were all a pleasure to read, and I found each one interesting and valuable for its own reasons. It was very hard to choose the winners. In almost every entry, the writing was clear and the grammar admirably correct and consistent.

The best essays combined a well-structured argument with strong supporting evidence. Many students used imaginative and personal details to shore up their arguments – these essays turned out to be some of the most provocative. Others offered extensive and thorough research – although occasionally the supplementary materials overwhelmed the author's opinions, when they were used thoughtfully, these were the most persuasive essays.

Attention to detail helped create the best short stories. When the author focused on detail rather than plot, the characters became more vivid and the action and emotions were more compelling. Several authors had a particularly good ear for dialogue, and when they took advantage of it their stories were very lively. The best stories often dwelled on specific moments, and attempted less dramatic leaps; careful attention to language helped make both these options more possible.

The poems were incredibly varied in style and tone. The most successful ones combined strong detail and attention to language with a consistent overarching metaphor or idea. Carefully chosen language helped create a stronger voice and a more compelling poem; in considering each poem as a whole, consistency of tone made all the difference.

It was a pleasure to see so much hard work and witness the start of so many promising writers. I hope all the students who entered this contest will continue to write and make their voices heard.

1998-99 VHSL CREATIVE WRITING CONTEST RESULTS

GROUP AA

Folder

- | | |
|---------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Graham HS | 5. Abingdon HS |
| 2. Salem HS (Salem) | 6. Broadway HS |
| 3. Blacksburg HS | 7. James Wood HS |
| 4. Harrisonburg HS | 8. William Byrd HS |

Essay

- First: "Dorothy Gillespie: Critical and Popular Success", Runal Gopi K. Mehta, Salem HS
- Second: "Solstice of Memory", Christopher Williamson, Salem HS
- Third: "Male/Female Roles in the Canterbury Tales", Marie Cunningham, James Wood HS
- Honorable Mention: "Outside", Vincent Good, Broadway HS

Short Story

- First: "An Afternoon with G.G.", Stephanie Nicole Slade, Graham HS
- Second: "The Trinket", Danny Thomas, Broadway HS
- Third: "This is Rich", Morgan Renae Meadows, Graham HS
- Honorable Mention: "Pete Sat on a Cake", Candace Gebre, Harrisonburg HS

Poetry

- First: "Den of Lions", Mike Helmuth, Harrisonburg HS
- Second: "Bayou Child", Hillary Ellis, William Byrd HS
- Third: "First Kiss", Rachel Lewis, Abingdon HS
- Honorable Mention: "Paper Men", Vivek Jain, Graham HS

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1998-99 VHSL CREATIVE WRITING CONTEST RESULTS

GROUP AA - 14 Entries

S = Superior, E = Excellent, G = Good

School	Sponsor	Booklet Rating	Essay Ratings	Story Ratings	Poem Ratings
Abingdon HS	Merry Jennings	S	E & G	E & G	G & S
Blacksburg HS	Wendy Jane McTammany	S	G & S	E & G	E & E
Broadway HS	Michelle Ornstein	S	S & G	G & S	G & G
William Byrd HS	Rebekah Woodie	S	E & G	G & E	S & G
Charlottesville HS	Rebecca Faust Lynch	E	G & E	G & E	G & G
Graham HS	Carol Morgan Hart	S	E & E	S & S	S & E
John Handley HS	Catherine Breese Flora	E	E & G	G & E	G & G
Harrisonburg HS	James Nipe	S	G & G	E & E	S & G
Loudoun Valley HS	Priscilla Hill	E	E & E	G & G	E & G
Prince Edward County HS	Rachel Overstreet	E	E & G	G & G	E & E
Salem HS (Salem)	Bryan Emmerson	S	S & S	G & E	G & E
Sherando HS	Trevor Johnson	E	E & G	G & G	G & E
Tazewell HS	Tammy Meade and Susan Whittaker	G	S & E	G & G	G & G
James Wood HS	Gail Lucas	S	G & S	E & G	G & E

1998-99 VHSL CREATIVE WRITING CONTEST

JUDGES' GENERAL COMMENTS

I certainly had a difficult time ranking these stories, essays, and poems. Almost every entry succeeded in one way or another. Many essays were clearly written and well-argued, and many of the stories outlined engaging situations. The poems, for the most part, were very engaging because of their use of specific language, specific images.

The essays I found most successful all evinced a clear narrative line or argument, and offered interesting and new ideas about complex public or personal situations. Well-written essays, in my estimation, allow the reader to know the writer through tone, style, word choice, and ideas.

The stories were very entertaining. The ones I ranked at the top were all about characters who seemed individual and real, and who came to a realization or change as a result of going through the experiences described by the story.

The best poetry used fresh images to convey specific emotions about recognizable human conditions and situations. I looked for strong imagery, consistent form (line breaks, meter, rhyme, when applicable), and a sense of movement or purpose from beginning to end.

The most common problem with all genres was proofreading. Every folder, however, gave me reason to pause and be delighted that I was asked to judge this contest.

1998-99 VHSL CREATIVE WRITING CONTEST RESULTS

GROUP A

Folder

- | | |
|--------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Haysi HS | 5. William Monroe HS |
| 2. Floyd County HS | 6. Pound HS |
| 3. King William HS | 7. Powell Valley HS |
| 4. Saint Paul HS | 8. Essex HS |

Essay

- First: "I Don't Take Charity", Kai Orenic, Floyd County HS
- Second: "Life Lesson", Karl Lipscomb, King William HS
- Third: "Blueberry Picking", Rebecca Previs, King William HS

Short Story

- First: "Epiphany", Lavada B. Sweeney, Haysi HS
- Second: "Enchanted Night", Jim Shifflett, William Monroe HS
- Third: "Thromgarr the Incompetent", Thomas P. O'Donnell, Saint Paul HS

Poetry

- First: "Icing", Lauren Nichles, Pound HS
- Second: "Sparrowsong", Laura Kolb, Floyd County HS
- Third: "Masquerade", Danyelle Mullins, Haysi HS

1998-99 VHSL CREATIVE WRITING CONTEST RESULTS

GROUP A - 23 Entries

S = Superior, E = Excellent, G = Good

School	Sponsor	Booklet Rating	Essay Ratings	Story Ratings	Poem Ratings
Appalachia HS	Frank Gentry and Tamyra Kennedy	G	G & G	G & G	G & G
John Battle HS	Brenda Roop	G	G & G	G & G	G & G
Brentsville District HS	Not Listed	E	G & G	E & E	G & E
John I. Burton HS	Pamela Roberson	E	E & E	E & E	G & G
Clintwood HS	Monnie Skeens	E	E & E	G & E	G & G
Coeburn HS	Karen Peters	G	E & E	G & G	G & G
Essex HS	Nancy Thompson	E	E & E	E & E	E & G
Floyd County HS	Sharon Wood	S	E & S	G & G	S & E
Haysi HS	Robin Charles	S	E & E	E & S	S & E
Hurley HS	Rosemarie Miller	G	G & G	G & G	G & G
King William HS	Vicky Cline	S	S & S	G & G	E & E
Madison County HS	Donald Hitt	E	E & E	G & G	E & E
Middlesex HS	Sharon Boyles	E	E & E	G & E	E & G
William Monroe HS	Katharine Destler	E	E & G	S & E	G & G
New Kent HS	Michele Curle	G	G & G	E & G	G & G
Pound HS	Betty Carter	E	G & G	E & G	S & G
Powell Valley HS	Grace Bradshaw and Joan Short	E	E & E	E & E	E & G
Powhatan HS	Kathy Liesfeld	G	G & G	G & G	G & G
Rappahannock HS	Anastasia Vandeloecht	E	E & E	E & G	G & E
Saint Paul HS	Frances Wall	E	E & E	E & S	G & G
Surry County HS	Mary Farley	E	E & E	E & G	G & E
Twin Springs HS	Carmen Stallard	G	E & G	G & G	G & G
West Point HS	Pat Hoppe	G	G & G	E & E	G & G