

2026 History Essay Contest



DETAILS

There are ten divisions:

- 4th grade school students
- 5th grade school students
- 6th grade school students
- 7th/8th grade school students
- High school students
- 4th grade homeschoolers
- 5th grade homeschoolers
- 6th grade homeschoolers
- 7th/8th grade homeschoolers
- High school homeschoolers

AWARDS

For Catholic school students:

- 4th grade: \$100 to student and \$400 gift certificate for the school student attends
- 5th/6th grade: \$100 to student and \$400 gift certificate for the school student attends
- 7th/8th grade: \$150 to student and \$400 gift certificate for the school student attends
- High school: \$200 to student and \$400 gift certificate for the school student attends

For Catholic homeschool students:

- 4th grade: \$100 to student and choice of CTP book for student's family
- 5th/6th grade: \$100 to student and choice of CTP book for student's family
- 7th/8th grade: \$150 to student and choice of CTP book for student's family
- High school: \$200 to student and choice of CTP book for student's family

For all winners:

Winning essays will be published on the CTP website and social media.

WRITING GUIDELINES

- For the 4th grade divisions, essays should be at least 300 words, but no more than 750 words.
- For the 5th/6th grade divisions, essays should be at least 450 words, but no more than 1,000 words.
- For the 7th/8th grade divisions, essays should be at least 600 words, but no more than 1,500 words.
- For the high school divisions, essays should be at least 800 words, but no more than 2,000 words.
- Essays should be typed, double spaced, 11 pt in Times New Roman font.

FURTHER:

- Your writing should be in your own words. If you quote another author (either from a book or the internet), you must cite that author in a footnote or an endnote. Essays that are suspected of plagiarism will be disqualified.
- Essays must include a bibliography or simple list of sources used.
- Wikipedia may not be used as the primary reference material. Wikipedia is useful for an initial familiarization with a topic, but it is not considered a reliable source in academic circles. A Wikipedia article can be useful in providing reference to books and articles which can be used for further research.

ESSAY TOPICS

4th Grade:

Choose one of the following topics:

- 1) Write an essay about your state's history, including information about the Catholic Church's history in your state.
- 2) Choose an important person in your state's history and write that person's biography.
- 3) Choose an important historical site in your state. It can be natural or man-made. Describe it and write about why it is important to your state.

5th Grade:

Choose a Catholic historical character (born before 1950) from North America (Canada, U.S., Mexico). Write about his or her life and work and why he or she was important to the Church and their country. Students may choose a person who was born outside of North America, but who did their important work in North America.

6th Grade:

Choose a country other than your home country, that you would like to visit. Research that country's history and write about two places of historical interest that you would like to visit if you traveled there and why. Your essay should not be an encyclopedic report on the country, but rather focus on the two historical places of interest and why they are of interest to you.

7th & 8th Grade:

Choose one of the following topics:

- 1) Choose a non-North American historical character (from Europe, Asia, Africa, Australia, or South America) who made their most important historical contribution between

300 A.D. and 1900 A.D. Relate how that person influenced the time and place in which they lived.

- 2) Discuss how religious motivations influenced explorations and settlements in the Americas. Focus on specific explorers or missions, such as the Franciscan efforts in La Florida.

High School:

Choose one of the following topics:

- 1) Choose an important historical event (this could be a war, a single battle in a war, a plague, the coronation of a king, the passage of a law or decree, an ecumenical council, a revolution, an invention, a birth or death, a marriage, etc., but the event must be a historically important event). Describe the event, the key players, its outcome and how it changed history.
- 2) Discuss an artifact, whether physical or cultural. Examples include but are not limited to a document, a painting, a musical composition, a play, a building, etc. Spend some time exploring its place in the culture that created it, what it can tell us about the people and events of its time, and why it matters today.
- 3) Select a speech or address from a historical figure. Examples include but are not limited to the Gettysburg Address, Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech, Queen Elizabeth I's Speech to the Troops at Tilbury, etc. Research it and describe its place in history, its importance in its own time, what transpired before and after the address, and what themes remain relevant today.

[Click here](#) to read 2025 winning essays.

DEADLINE

- All essays must be received by 11:59 pm EST on March 31st, 2026.
- Winners will be announced on May 15th, 2026.

SUBMIT YOUR ESSAY

Essays can be submitted electronically:

Visit our essay contest page at catholictextbookproject.com/essay-contest and send us a PDF through the online submission form. Please follow all directions on the form.

Additional Guideline:

Teachers may only submit 5 essays for 4th-6th grade. They may only submit 10 total for 7th and 8th and 10 total for 9th-12th grade. While we want to have every student continue to participate and enjoy the opportunity to write and learn more about history, we are asking the teachers to select the best essays for submission. We will continue to send a letter thanking every member of the class for participating. For further questions please email contest@catholictextbookproject.com.