

# Adult Writing Contest



## Frequently Asked Questions

### What is the theme for 2026?

The theme of this year's contest is **Pathways**. As a literary theme, "**Pathways**" reflects on the journeys, choices, or directions that characters take in life. It may explore personal growth, destiny, or the consequences of decisions. "**Pathways**" can be physical, emotional, or spiritual. The connection to the theme may be obvious or subtle.

### How strongly does my work need to reflect the contest theme?

The type of connection (positive, negative, literal, metaphorical, for example) and degree of connection are up to the author. It isn't necessary to use the specific theme word in your writing, and it doesn't have to be the only idea of the work, but there needs to be a discernible link.

### When does the contest open and close?

The contest opens **May 4, 2026** and closes **May 30, 2026** at **11:59pm**. Late submissions will not be accepted.

### Who is eligible to participate?

You must:

- Be 18 years or older
- Be a resident of Clark County, Nevada

### What types of writing can I submit?

You may submit **ONE** of the following:

- Short Story (2,000 words or fewer)
- Creative Nonfiction (2,000 words or fewer)
- Poetry (45 lines or fewer and may not exceed 3 pages)

### What does "creative nonfiction" mean?

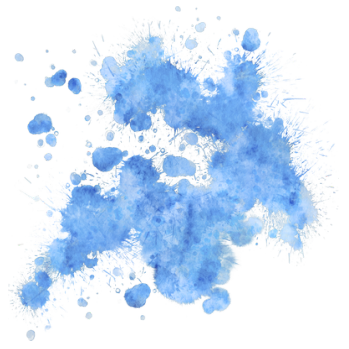
Creative nonfiction refers to true stories that use writing techniques from fiction, such as a narrative structure, character development, vivid scenes and descriptive language, while remaining factually accurate. Types of writing include memoirs, anecdotes, personal essays, biographies, and literary journalism. It does **not** include academic style writing such as research papers and informational or persuasion papers.

### What do I need to do to enter?

All entries must:

- Be original work
- Be previously unpublished (not in print or on any digital platform)
- Be written by a human author (AI generated content does not qualify)
- Clearly connect to the theme

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### How do I submit my entry?

- Entries must be digitally produced
- Submitted through the online entry form
- Uploaded as a **Word** or **PDF file**

**Paper submissions, scans, or photographs will not be accepted.**

### How should I format my short story or creative nonfiction submission?

Fiction and creative nonfiction submissions must be publication ready and include:

- Title and author name centered at the top of page 1
- Title only (not author name) in the upper right corner of subsequent pages (use the header feature to insert)
- Page numbers in the lower right corner (use the footer feature to insert)
- Double-spaced text
- Indented paragraphs (please no extra spacing between paragraphs)
- 12-point font
- Acceptable fonts: Times New Roman, Calibri, Verdana, Arial, Helvetica, or Georgia
- Standard black text only

Please, no separate title page or cover page

**Failure to follow formatting guidelines may result in disqualification .**

### Do poetry submissions have to follow the same formatting guidelines?

**No.** Poetry submissions do not need to follow the fiction/nonfiction formatting requirements. Poems have more creative license in font size, style and formatting.

However poems must:

- Have title and author name centered at the top of page 1
- Be 45 lines or fewer
- Page numbers in the lower right corner **ONLY IF** the poem is longer than one page (use the footer feature)
- Not exceed 3 pages

### Will I receive confirmation that my submission was received?

Yes. The online form will generate a confirmation email. Due to the high volume of entries, **staff** cannot confirm submissions individually.

### How are entries judged?

All entries are reviewed anonymously.

Judges score submissions based on:

- Content
- Originality
- Quality of expression

Writers do not receive feedback. Judges' decisions are final.

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### **What happens if my work is selected?**

As part of the submission process, writers accepted a licensing agreement granting Henderson Libraries the right to publish and distribute the work indefinitely.

Authors retain full copyright of their work.

Top scoring entries from each category are intended for publication in the library's digital zine.

### **What do the winners receive?**

There will be one winner per category (Fiction, Nonfiction, Poetry)

Each winner receives a \$50 gift certificate.

Henderson Libraries will not host a reception at this time. Winners will be asked to participate in a photo opportunity when picking up their prize.

### **Can I edit my submission after submitting it?**

No. Once submitted, entries cannot be revised or replaced.

### **Can I submit part of a larger work?**

Writers are discouraged from submitting excerpts from larger works unless the short story or nonfiction piece is able to stand alone as a complete work.

### **Will honorable mentions be awarded?**

Only one winner per category. Additional recognition may be given at the library's discretion, in the form of publication in the library's digital online magazine.

### **When will winners be notified?**

Winners will be contacted directly before public announcement.

### **What if I still have a question?**

If you have a question that wasn't answered with the above information, you can submit an email inquiry to [adultwritingcontest@hendersonlibraries.com](mailto:adultwritingcontest@hendersonlibraries.com) and we will respond as soon as possible.