



STUDENT ESSAY CONTEST ANNOUNCEMENT

Your Voice at Planet Word

In Planet Word's Schwarzman Family Library, books placed on the interactive Story Table come to life with custom animations. Many of the books feature audio narration from someone with a deep knowledge of and personal connection to the book. Could that narrator be you?

Planet Word is working to expand our collection of books and is seeking youth input and representation through our second youth essay contest!

Planet Word would like to hear from the young people of the DMV (D.C., Maryland, and Virginia): Which new book should we add to the Library and why? The books advocated for by the two winning essays will be added to the Library's Story Table interactive, and winning essay writers will be invited to record the audio interview that forms the basis of the interactive experience. Winners' choices and voices will be a permanent part of the exhibit at Planet Word, one of Washington, D.C.'s most exciting museums!

Essayists should answer these questions:

- ▶ **What often overlooked book has had an impact on your life?**
- ▶ **Why is that book important to you, and why should more people read it?**

Planet Word will accept essays between March 12 and April 21, 2025. Winners will be announced and notified by early June 2025.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND CONTEST RULES

- ▶ Planet Word is accepting essays from young people in the DMV in two age-group categories: students in grades 5–8 and 9–12. Several finalists and one winner will be chosen from each age group.
- ▶ Successful essays will reflect the boundless power of words and reading in the lives of young people, reveal heartfelt representation of the impact of their chosen book, and demonstrate high levels of writing skill.
- ▶ Essayists are strongly encouraged to review the list of [books](#) and [poems](#) already featured in Planet Word's Library as the winning essays *must* advocate for a book/author not already featured. Essayists are additionally encouraged to focus on books that are often overlooked and not commonly taught in schools. The books must be professionally published in English.
- ▶ Essays must be **500 words or less in length**, be original student work, and pass a plagiarism test. Students must verify that they have not used ChatGPT or another AI-powered chatbot in writing their essays.
- ▶ Contact Senior Manager of Curatorial Affairs Jen Giambrone with essay contest questions (jennifer.giambrone@planetwordmuseum.org).

WINNERS AND PRIZES

- ▶ We will be raffling off **three \$100 gift cards to Bookshop.org** to teachers whose students participate in the contest. The teacher will be entered one time for each student who includes the teacher's name and email address with their essay submission.
- ▶ An internal Planet Word team will select finalist essays from each grade-based category (grades 5–8 and 9–12). A special guest judge will select one winner from each age group.
- ▶ Finalists' essays will be featured on Planet Word's website. Finalists may be invited to present at a public program at Planet Word.
- ▶ Each of the two winning books will be **added to the Story Table interactive** in Planet Word's Schwarzman Family Library. The winners will be invited to participate in the recording process for the audiovisual presentation associated with their book and become a permanent part of the Library exhibit.
- ▶ Each winner will receive a **\$250 gift card to Bookshop.org** to build their personal libraries.
- ▶ Winners may be invited to participate in a public program at Planet Word.

"I am so honored to be able to share a story that meant so much to me. I had such a great time at the recording studio, and I felt the book was beginning to come to life! The recording session was a memory I'll never forget. I enjoyed being able to voice my opinion and offer creative views."

— NINA, MIDDLE SCHOOL ESSAY CONTEST WINNER, 2022

HOW TO PARTICIPATE

- ▶ Participants must submit their essay through the form on Planet Word's website (planetwordmuseum.org/story-table-essay-contest).
- ▶ Participants must upload the original content of their essay in a .doc or .docx file via the submission form.
- ▶ Participants must upload the contest consent form signed by themselves and their parent or legal guardian (if under the age of 18) as a .pdf file.

ABOUT PLANET WORD

[Planet Word](https://planetwordmuseum.org) is the world's first voice-activated museum and the world's first interactive museum of words and language. Planet Word's mission is to renew and inspire a love of words, language, and reading out of the belief that a strong democracy is founded on a literate society. Free admission to the museum offers galleries devoted to early childhood language acquisition, the diversity of the world's languages, etymology, songwriting, oratory, poetry, humor-writing, copywriting, and storytelling. Planet Word's experiences entrance visitors of all ages, interests, and backgrounds.

Planet Word

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