

VFW - Patriot's Pen - Illinois - District 12 - Post 1104

 Veterans of Foreign Wars  10/31/26 CST

STEP 1 OF 1

General

Student Information



First Name

Required

M.I.

Required

Last Name

Required

Date of Birth (mm/dd/yyyy)

Required

Phone Number (xxx) xxx-xxxx

Required

Email

Required

Current Address

Address

Required

City

Required

State

Required

Zip Code

Required

Education

What grade are you currently in?

Required

I am in the 6th grade

I am in the 7th grade

I am in the 8th grade

Current School

School Name

Required

School City

Required

School State

Required

School Contact

Teacher's Name (If applicable)

Teacher's Email (If applicable)

Parent/Guardian Contact Information

Please input their contact information below.



Parent/Guardian Name	Required
Parent/Guardian's Daytime Phone (xxx) xxx-xxxx	Required
Parent/Guardian Email	Required
Date	Required

Contest Rules and Judging Criteria

Please read them carefully.



CONTEST RULES and JUDGING CRITERIA

PATRIOT'S PEN CONTEST RULES

- You must write your own essay.
- All essays should be typed in English with no color or graphics. 300 - 400 words in length (+ or - 5 words max). Every word is counted regardless of length.
- Do not include your name, address, school name, or any other personal identifiers in the body of your essay.
- Avoid references to your race, sex, religion, national origin, or other specific personal characteristics that could reveal your identity.
- General references to nationality or patriotic identity (such as being an American or referencing American values) are permitted if they are relevant to the essay theme.
- Personal identifiers tied to your individual background or experience should be avoided.
- Do not put your name on your essay.

Note:

- The essay must be contestant's original work and a product of the contestant's own thinking.
- Inappropriate use of ChatGPT or other AI tools is not allowed.
- The approach to the Patriot's Pen theme should be positive and clearly focused.
- Poetry is not acceptable.
- Quotations may be used sparingly if plainly identified wherever used.
- A contestant's teacher, counselor or parent may check the essay for punctuation, grammar and/or spelling, but the content must remain the contestant's.
- Contestants will be judged on the basis of their essay alone and are not required to present the essay orally.
- All essays become the property of the Veteran's of Foreign Wars. The VFW retains non-exclusive rights to the use of your essay and likeness in the promotion and execution of the organization's programs and activities.
- At any time during the contest additional participant personal information (i.e. SSN, photo, etc.) could be requested by the VFW.

HOW YOUR ESSAY WILL BE JUDGED

1. **Knowledge of the theme is worth 30 points.** You must show a thorough knowledge of the theme in your work. Demonstrate you have researched the issue extensively.
2. **Theme development is worth 35 points.** Answer all relevant facts about the theme, such as the who, what, where, when and why. Relate the theme to your own experiences.
3. **Clarity of ideas is worth 35 points.** Write your essay in an easy-to-understand format. Leave your reader with a clear understanding of your explanation of the theme. Worth 35 points.

Essay

VFW's Commander-in-Chief annually chooses the year's theme.



This year's theme is: "What a Veteran Taught me about America"

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Type your essay

Required

B I   H₁ H₂

Word count: 0 words

*** The word count displayed here will serve as the definitive reference to word limits

All essays should be typed in English with no color or graphics. 300 - 400 words in length (+ or - 5 word max). Every word is counted regardless of length. The essay title (theme) or added footnotes do not contribute to the word count.

**Drafting your essay on another platform may have variances in the word count. To avoid differences in word count, please utilize the word counter in the text box above as your official word count.*

How many words are in your essay according to the word counter in the text box?

Required

I have not included my name, address, school name, or any other personal identifiers in the body of my essay.

Required

☐ Yes

You must not identify yourself in anyway (including, but not limited to, your name, school, city, state, race or national origin.)

You must not put your name on the essay

I did not put my name on the essay.

Required

☐ Yes

Below is the OPTION to upload a headshot photo, but it is **NOT** required in order to submit the application.

Photo

Include a high resolution, forward-facing color headshot of the applicant, 300KB or larger.



Headshot

Click here to upload the required file

Certification

Please read the following carefully



You must answer "Yes" if the statement is true.

All statements must be true for you to be eligible to submit this form.

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Required

☐ Yes

I have not included my name, address, school name, or any other personal identifiers in the body of my essay. I've avoided references to my race, sex, religion, national origin, or other specific personal characteristics that could reveal my identity.

Required

☐ Yes

My essay does not include my name or any information that can identify me (including my name, school, city, state, race or national origin).

Required

☐ Yes

The essay is my own original work and a product of my own thinking. The use of ChatGPT or other AI tools were not used in any way.

Required

☐ Yes

Contestants are only allowed to enter once per year. I have not submitted any other entries at other Posts.

Required

☐ Yes

I am a 6th, 7th or 8th grade student enrolled by the Oct. 31st deadline in a public, private or parochial school in the U.S., it's territories or its possessions; or homeschooled; or a dependent of U.S. military or civilian personnel in an overseas school.

Required

☐ Yes

I am a U.S. citizen or a lawful U.S. permanent resident or have applied for permanent residence (the application which has not been denied) and intend to become a U.S. citizen at the earliest opportunity

Required

☐ Yes

I understand that the Internal Revenue Service requires a recipient awarded more than \$599 be given Form 1099 identifying the proceeds as taxable income. This may require the winner to provide their social security number.

Required

☐ Yes

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Required

☐ Yes

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Required

☐ Yes

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Required

☐ Yes

Student Signature

Signature of Student Participant (Type Name)

Required

Date

Required

Parent Signature

Signature of Parent/Guardian (Type Name)

Required

Date

Required