

Essay Competitions: How to Write a Winning Paper

Lisa Parker, UIL Academics

lparker@uiltexas.org

512-471-5883



Before We Get Started

Remember to register your attendance and complete session evaluations.

Session numbers are in the program.



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NICE TO
MEET
YOU

ACADEMIC CONTESTS

Overview

Contest Materials

Accounting

Computer Applications

Current Issues & Events

Essay Contests

Literary Criticism

Ready Writing

Social Studies

Spelling & Vocabulary

ESSAY CONTESTS
CONTACT INFO

UIL Essay Contests



UIL Academics is proud to sponsor two essay competitions that provide exciting

UIL Essay Contest
Information

[https://www.uiltexas.org/
academics/essay-contests](https://www.uiltexas.org/academics/essay-contests)

Why you should enter...

- Learn about an incredible person/group/movement
- Become a state finalist through ONE essay
- Earn your campus sweepstakes points
- Have your paper become a part of Texas history
 - Dolph Briscoe Center for American History (Barbara Jordan essays)
 - Benson Latin American Collection (Latino essays)
- Become eligible for TILF scholarships

Money, money, money, money (scholarship eligibility)...

2016

- Anthony Garcia Harlingen South HS, \$1000
- Katrina Garcia, Center HS \$1000

2017

- Victoria Baltierra, Mason HS \$1000
- Brianna Miranda, Weslaco HS \$1000

2018

- Imelda Pacheco, Waller HS, \$2500
- Spencer Keith, Kaufman HS \$1000

2019

- Jacob Murphy, Kountze HS \$1000

2021

- Zachary Jones, Lindale HS, \$4000
- Yulissa Rodriguez, Laredo Alexander HS \$1000
- Kelsey Sheets, Gladewater Sabine HS \$4000
- Joshua Smith, Lindale HS \$1000

2022

- Eric Brogan, Longview Pine Tree HS
- Diego Cerda, Brownsville IDEA Riverview
- Claire Clark, Andrews HS
- Gavin James, Lindale HS
- Abril Ramirez, Mount Pleasant HS
- Eshal Warsi, Cypress Woods HS



It's All
Online

2 Essay Competitions

Barbara Jordan
Historical Essay
Competition

The diagram consists of two rounded rectangular boxes, one blue on the left and one green on the right. A thin blue arc connects the top of the blue box to the top of the green box, and a thin green arc connects the bottom of the blue box to the bottom of the green box, forming a partial circle around the two boxes.

Latino History
Essay
Competition

Barbara Jordan Historical Essay Competition

African Americans in Texas: Past and Present

Essays should focus on individuals or groups who are not well-known figures but who have made **significant contributions to African American history or culture in Texas**. Students should look first to their local communities for possible essay topics.

Latino History Essay Competition

Historical and cultural legacies of Latinos in Texas history

Essays should focus on a **prominent** or **relatively unknown** Latino individual, organization or movement in Texas history. **How has the subject of the essay significantly influenced today's Latino communities?**

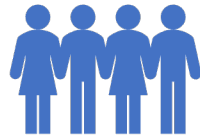
General Guidelines

- Essay with a word count between 1,500 and 2,500 words.
- Research paper format - [MLA format](#) or [APA format](#) recommended
- Source citations and bibliography required
- Essays should display *original* research; use of [primary sources](#) and interviews strongly encouraged

How to write a winning paper



Topic selection



Consider your own community



Reach out to those who might help with topics

Family members

Teachers

Librarians

Local genealogists

Members of the clergy

Community leaders

Local government officials

How to write a winning paper



Research conventions

Thesis statement

Citations

Concrete detail and commentary



Polished paper

How to write a winning paper



- Conventions of effective writing
 - Diction
 - Sentence variety
 - Voice
 - Taken from Geof Hewitt, Vermont's Writing Consultant to Secondary Schools on voice:
 - "The mind working alone produces thought; the heart produces feeling; the tongue makes speech and the hand makes scribble: all four together create voice. And all four create a successful writer."

• Judge Evaluation Form

ENTRY NUMBER _____



University Interscholastic League
Essay Evaluation Form

PLEASE RECORD THE ENTRY NUMBER IN THE SPACE ABOVE!

Instructions: Judges evaluate each essay about the following criteria: thesis statement, research, paragraph construction, grammar, and parenthetical citations and bibliography. The sections below are intended for judges to provide brief constructive comments for contestants based on those criteria — strengths of the essay, areas needing improvement, and some suggested ways to improve.

Strengths of the Essay	
Select all that apply:	
Paper effectively addresses the essay prompt	Commentary bolsters key ideas
Thesis statement is effectively proven about far-reaching topic	Paper moves beyond a summary of the subject's life
Purposefully utilizes a variety of sources including primary sources	Contains very few grammatical mistakes
Paper is clear, well organized, and coherent	Parenthetical citations & Works Cited are mostly correct
Concrete details (quotes, paraphrases, summaries) are effectively incorporated	Essay is memorable
	Other _____
Additional comments:	
Areas Needing Improvement	
Select all that apply:	
Thesis statement is unclear and/or weak and/or not proven and/or topic is not far-reaching	Commentary about research is lacking
Paper does not move beyond a biography	Multiple errors exist that hinder understanding
Paper needs more source variety	Awkward sentences and/or word choice
Lack of clarity, organization, and/or coherency	Parenthetical citations and/or Works Cited page is inaccurate or missing
Concrete details are ineffective	Other _____
Additional comments:	
Constructive Comments and Suggestions for the Contestant:	

Example
Winning
Introduction

What works?

Any areas to
improve?

“Henry A. Guerra, Jr.: The Voice of San Antonio for All of Texas”

Pioneering broadcaster Henry A. Guerra, Jr., recounted in an oral history interview the story of finding himself in conversation years earlier at a party with a prominent San Antonio developer. Guerra described how the man, who had been drinking, “started going in on the Mexicans,” until Guerra interrupted him: “‘Well, Mr. So and so, you’ve got to remember one thing . . . I’m a Mexican.’ And you know what he said to me? He said, ‘Well, I don’t mean your kind of Mexican’” (Guerra and Noonan-Guerra 39-40). Guerra related his reaction: “I almost dropped the glass” (Guerra and Noonan-Guerra 39-40). Unfortunately, experiences such as these were commonplace. While the city was diverse, Hispanics still suffered from class segregation and racism throughout the twentieth century. Motivated by such examples of discrimination, Guerra determined to use his position and influence to educate Texans on the rich history of their state. His contributions to Texas helped to preserve true Texas history through education, which bridged ethnic barriers and promoted understanding between Hispanics and the then Anglo majority.

Example Winning Paper

What works?

Any areas to
improve?

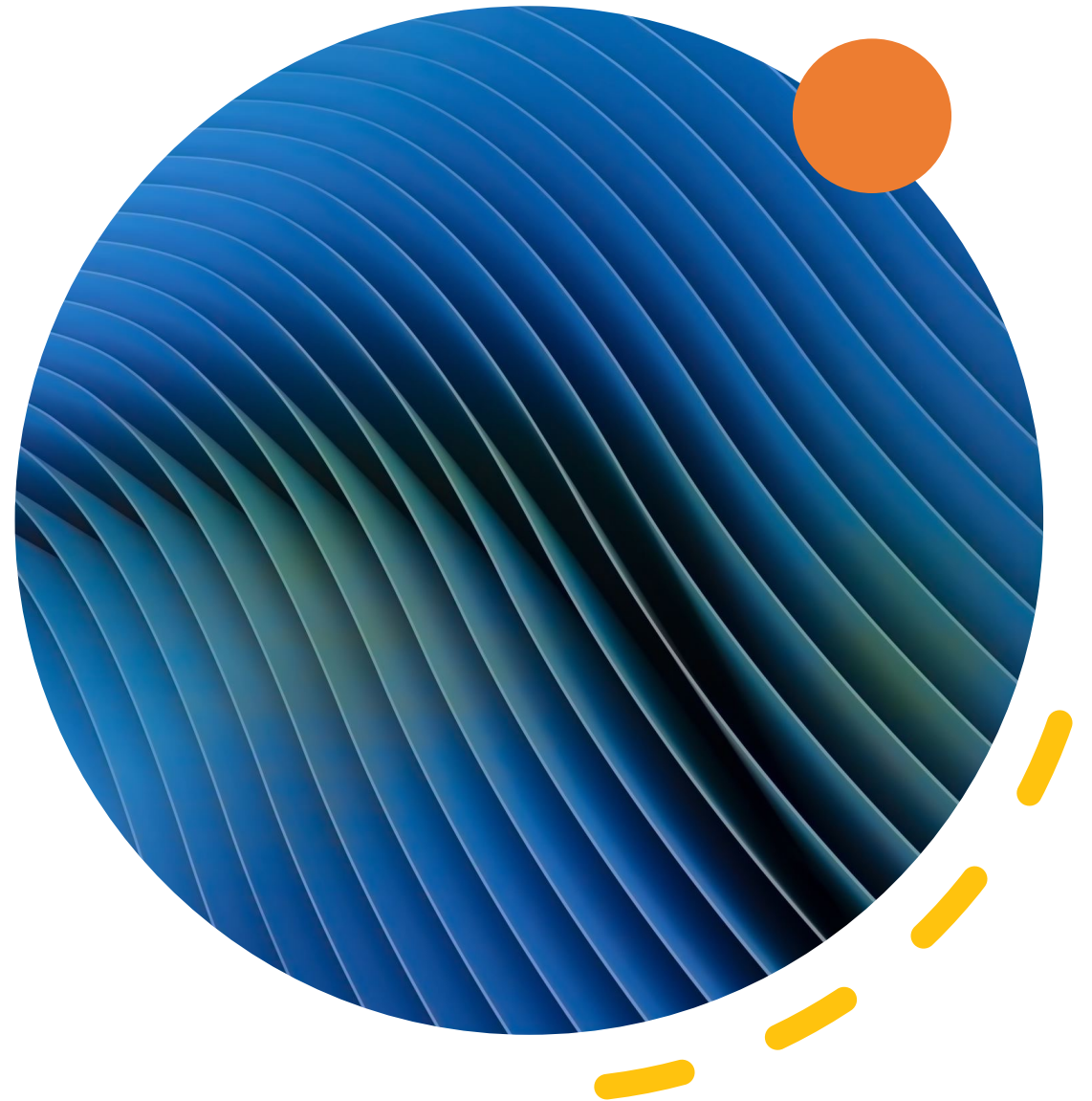
Concrete Detail & Commentary

- Concrete detail
 - Quotes
 - Paraphrases
 - Summaries
 - Commentary
 - Your thoughts/opinions
 - Analysis
- **Jane Schaffer**
 - **method**

Additional sample winning papers

Barbara Jordan
Historical Essay
Competition

Latino History
Essay
Competition



What questions do
you have?

Additional Resources

- Essay Contest Webpage: <https://www.uiltexas.org/academics/essay-contests>
- [YouTube Video by Lisa Parker](#)
- [YouTube Video by Gail Herman](#), a UIL essay contest coach who has repeated success with the competitions

Enter the Contest(s)!

- **Deadline is Wednesday, February 14**
- **<https://www.uiltexas.org/machform/view.php?id=897734>**

