



PitchIt!

NYC Student Essay Contest

May 2022

Student voice is a catalyst for positive change in schools and communities.

For this reason, the New York City Department of Education, in partnership with the News Literacy Project, is hosting a writing contest to empower students to be civically informed and engaged.

Learning Task and Essay Topic

News literacy is the ability to determine the credibility of news and other content. Students will write an essay about a local, national or international event that would have benefited from news literacy skills being applied to stop misinformation from being spread about it. They will answer one of the prompts from the list.

Eligibility

This contest is open to middle and high school students in New York City's five boroughs, participating with the support from a teacher. Schools are encouraged to conduct their own internal essay competition to coordinate, so teachers submit their top three essays per grade (6-8 and 9-12).

CONTEST DEADLINE

May 13, 2022,
9 p.m. ET

To Enter

Schools/teachers should submit their top three winning essays per grade with cover letter via email to:

Alesha Smith, NLP's New York City news literacy ambassador, at Aleshasmith292@gmail.com

Prompts

- The First Amendment has five freedoms, and in many ways they are dependent on one another. Explain how other freedoms of the First Amendment are required to protect the freedom of the press.
- What steps should someone take to fact-check false statements by a well-known figure and what problems might arise as a result?
- People have responsibilities – things that they should do but are not required to by law. Why would providing reliable information be a responsibility?
- Imagine you heard a rumor about public figure, but you're not sure if it is true or not. What are the potential consequences if you share it online?



AWARDS

for each grade band
6-8 and 9-12

GRAND PRIZE
\$200 gift card

FIRST PLACE
\$150 gift card

SECOND PLACE
\$100 gift card

THIRD PLACE
\$50 gift card



NYC Finalists will participate in the PitchIt! Grand Prize event on Zoom on Wednesday, June 1, 2022, where they will share their essays and receive feedback from the journalists. The winners will be chosen at this time.

Criteria

- Essays must be the original, unpublished work of one student.
- Essays must be 500-1000 words, clearly addressing one of the prompts.
- All essays must have a title.
- Proper citation of sources is required.
- Only three essays from each grade may be submitted per school.
- Essays must be proofread and should follow the rules for standard English (grammar, punctuation, mechanics) in writing.
- A cover page **MUST** be included with the following information: student name, student ID, grade level, student complete address, best student phone number, school's name, principal's name, teacher's name, best teacher's phone number and email address and title of essay.
- Entries must be submitted via email to Alesha Smith, NLP's New York City news literacy ambassador, at Aleshasmith292@gmail.com.
- NYC Finalists must be able to virtually participate in the PitchIt! Grand Prize event on **June 1, 2022**.



Consult the [complete contest rules](#) and student tips before entering.

Teaching and Learning Goals

- Teachers have an authentic and engaging writing assignment that amplifies student voices and explores issues aligned to district curricula, standards and required topics, such as the First Amendment.
- Students analyze different types of misinformation and show the ability to think critically about what is and is not verifiable information.
- Students apply their news and media literacy skills to solve the misinformation problem.
- Finalists receive real-time feedback from journalists in the field who report on

Process

Step 1. Teacher introduces the writing assignment to students and the process by which the top essays will advance. News literacy topics are explored with students as they relate to the curriculum.

Explore our free educator resources on [NewsLit Nation](#) or the [Checkology](#)® virtual classroom on topics like the First Amendment. See resources from the [New York Public Library](#), which includes access to The New York Times, or any other available sources.

Step 2. Ask students to pick one of the prompts below to write about.

Step 3. Encourage students to review the article formatting requirements before submitting their essays to you.

Step 4. Teachers select up to three student essays per grade, per school, and submit.

Step 5. NLP's educator panel selects six essays per grade band (6-8 and 9-12), to advance to the finalist stage.

Step 6. All finalists pitch their stories to a panel of journalists during the PitchIt! Grand Prize event on Zoom and receive personalized feedback and a certificate. Panelists choose the winners, who receive prizes awarded during the event.

