

## 2023 Achievement Awards in Writing Prompt: “Education First”

In an address to the United Nations on July 12, 2013, Malala Yousafzai said this:

*Dear brothers and sisters, we must not forget that millions of people are suffering from poverty and injustice and ignorance. We must not forget that millions of children are out of their schools. We must not forget that our sisters and brothers are waiting for a bright, peaceful future.*

*So let us wage . . . a glorious struggle against illiteracy, poverty and terrorism[.] [L]et us pick up our books and our pens[;] they are the most powerful weapons. One child, one teacher, one book and one pen can change the world. Education is the only solution. Education first.*

Write a piece about education. Below are some ideas to get you started; however, you are free to go in a different direction.

1. Respond to the idea that “one child, one teacher, one book and one pen can change the world.” What do these words mean to you? In what ways do they speak to you?
2. Reflect on your own experiences of school. Identify the most important things you have learned. Has your education changed who you are or how you see the world? What is the purpose of education?
3. Think about how you would like to see schools change. If you could design your dream school, what would it look like? What classes would be available? How would teaching and learning work? Why?
4. Research how education is structured outside of the United States. You might take a closer look at who has access to education, subjects taught, the purpose of schooling, etc.
5. Conduct primary research (e.g., through interviews, surveys, artifacts) to learn about people’s perspectives on education.
6. Examine an issue or problem facing schools in the United States. What is at stake? What solutions do you propose?

Select a form of writing that best suits your purpose and message. For example, a piece might take the form of an informative or persuasive essay, a research report, a personal narrative, a fictional story, a series of poems, a photo essay, or a comic or graphic narrative.

This piece must not exceed 10 pages.

**Teachers**, we invite you to incorporate the Achievement Awards in Writing theme and writing prompt into your curriculum. In fact, we hope that the themed prompt is a topic that you will encourage **all** of your students to address in reading, writing, and discussion activities, as well as beyond the classroom. You may also find the literature and teaching resources presented on the NCTE Web site useful, as well as attending the ALAN (Assembly on Literature for Adolescents of the National Council of Teachers of English) held in conjunction with NCTE's Annual convention each year.

Also, if your state has adopted the Common Core State Standards, it may be helpful to note that nominees for the Achievement Awards in Writing program may choose to write their Theme entry in any genre, including nonfiction writing in History/Social Studies, and Science & Technical Subjects.

While we believe that the Achievement Awards in Writing program may be seamlessly interwoven with your existing literacy curriculum, we urge you also to explicitly welcome any writing that students may have created outside of your class or even your school.

*You may produce any genre, or kind, of writing (e.g., personal essay, graphic novel, news article, love letter, eulogy, oral history, photo essay, scientific report, letter to a politician, local petition, speech).* If you find it helpful to state your intended audience at the beginning of your entry, you are welcome to do so.