

8th Grade Lincoln Essay Competition

Throughout history, people have been forced to reckon with difficult issues and have passed through what Abraham Lincoln might call “fiery trials.” Pick one person who inspires you because they have chosen to take on a daunting societal challenge. This challenge could be within their community, their state, their nation or the world. Describe the challenge this person is tackling, the actions they are taking, the character traits that compel them to act, and the lesson(s) you draw from their example.

For the past twelve years, Hildene has administered the Lincoln Essay Competition informed by our mission: *Values into Action*. Using Abraham Lincoln’s legacy as touchstone, Hildene seeks to inspire young people to tackle important issues, underscoring the responsibility each of us has to do our part to make our world a better place. The competition is open to all eighth graders in the state of Vermont, whether they enter as part of a class assignment or on their own. Essays will be judged on the student’s understanding of the subject, as well as by her or his ability to convey that understanding through good writing.

PLEASE NOTE: To encourage participation in all parts of the state, we have reconfigured the design of the competition. In place of one statewide competition, we now have four regions. There will be a first, second, and third place winner from each region and up to four honorable mentions which the judges may choose from anywhere in the state. As always, the judging is blind.

Students enter the competition according to the region in which their school is located. Home-schooled students will enter according to the region they live in. The regions are listed in the FAQ section.

Winners will receive certificates and cash prizes, as follows:

First Place Winners: \$600 each

Second Place Winners: \$300 each

Third Place Winners: \$200 each

Up to four Honorable Mentions: \$100 each

In addition, each winner will be invited to an awards luncheon, along with her/his parents, teacher and principal as our guests. In order to receive their checks and certificates, all winners **must** attend the luncheon and all first place winners **must** read their essays aloud. The celebration will be at Hildene on Sunday, May 19, 2019.

Deadline for submissions: All essays and application forms must arrive at Hildene by mail or by hand no later than 4:30pm on Lincoln’s birthday, Tuesday, February 12, 2019. Hildene is open 9:30am to 4:30pm daily. *Please note: Emailed submissions and late entries will **not** be accepted.*

Notification: All students will be notified of the results in early April.

Attached materials:

- FAQ’s: Rules, Guidelines and Tips
- Judges Assessment Rubric
- Application Form, to be signed by student, teacher and parent/guardian

All materials may be downloaded from our website, hildene.org/learning/lincoln_essay, where you can also find examples of winning essays from previous years.

Questions? Contact Stephanie Moffett-Hynds at stephanie@hildene.org or 802.367.7960.

FAQ'S

Guidelines, Rules and Tips

Throughout history, people have been forced to reckon with difficult issues and have passed through what Abraham Lincoln might call “fiery trials.” Pick one person who inspires you because they have chosen to take on a daunting societal challenge. This challenge could be within their community, their state, their nation or the world. Describe the challenge this person is tackling, the actions they are taking, the character traits that compel them to act, and the lesson(s) you draw from their example.

This year's topic asks you to identify someone who has recently addressed or is currently addressing a substantial challenge to society. Briefly explain the challenge and then describe both the actions taken to overcome the obstacle(s) and the character traits that motivate that person to persevere. We also want to know how this person's example is inspiring you: what lesson(s) are you learning from them that you might apply to your own life?

Please note that we want you to focus on one individual. Whomever you choose might be a part of a group. It is fine to note the group's efforts, but for the purpose of this short essay, focus on the one individual who most inspires you. Remember that someone working at the community level is just as worthy of consideration as someone who engages on the state, national or international level.

Who is eligible to participate?

The competition is open to all eighth grade students who live in Vermont or go to public, private, or home schools in the state of Vermont. Each entrant is permitted to submit one entry. (There are a few schools in neighboring states which are the designated schools for some Vermont eighth graders. Those Vermont residents are also eligible to participate. Please check with Hildene to verify eligibility.)

What are the four regions?

Students should enter the competition according to the region in which their school is located. Home-schooled students should enter according to the region where they live. Regions are comprised of counties:

Region One: Grand Isle, Franklin, Orleans, Essex, Lamoille, Caledonia, Washington
Region Two: Chittenden
Region Three: Addison, Rutland, Bennington
Region Four: Orange, Windsor, Windham

What are the essay format requirements?

Essays must:

- not exceed 500 words
- have a title (not included as part of the word count)
- be written in English
- be typewritten
- be on one side of a single page (just the essay on one side)
- include only endnotes and bibliography on back of essay
- not have name or any other identifier of applicant or applicant's school on essay or within the text of the essay

How do I cite my sources?

If you attribute a quote or idea to someone or to a group, please do not use footnotes. Rather, include your attribution(s) in the form of endnotes on the back of your essay. Your bibliography should be included there, as well, which will list any sources you examined in researching the topic. (Please remember that *Wikipedia* is not an acceptable source.) For citation style, we suggest you use the Style Guide of the Modern Language Association.

May others write my essay or parts of my essay?

No. The essay must be the original work of the submitting student. While editorial comment or guidance from fellow students, teachers, parents or other advisers is permissible, the actual writing and editing decisions must be the student's own work and reflect their own voice. It is possible for others to cross the line from what is considered acceptable guidance into what we would consider unacceptable collaboration. Teachers, parents and any other advisors should keep this in mind while guiding their students. For example, it is okay to ask students to come up with sources but not okay to pick the sources out for the students. It is okay to indicate where there are grammatical errors, but not okay to tell the student specifically how to correct them. While teachers guide the process, it must remain primarily student-driven and result in an essay that truly reflects each student's thoughts and ability. To this end, the student, teacher and parent/guardian must each sign the oath on the attached application form.

Can this be used to satisfy Common Core and State Standards?

Yes. The Lincoln Essay Competition supports the following 8th Grade Common Core State Standards for *English Language Arts Literacy in Writing: W.8.2.A-F; 8.4-6; 8.8-9, in History/Social Studies; RH.6-8.2, .4, .6-8; in Listening: SL.8.1A-B; 8.2; 8.3; in Language: L.8.1-6; and in Standards of Writing: WHST.6.8.2A-F; 6.8.4-6; as well as the Vermont Framework of Standards and Learning Opportunities in Civics, Government and Society: H&SS.7-8:14.*

How do I submit my essay?

All essays and application forms must be submitted by mail or by hand to:

Hildene, The Lincoln Family Home
Attention: Lincoln Essay Competition
PO Box 377
Manchester, VT 05254

Is it okay if my essay is a little late?

No. The essay and application form **must** arrive by mail or by hand at Hildene on or before President Lincoln's birthday, Tuesday, February 12, 2019, by 4:30pm. Hildene is open 9:30am to 4:30pm daily. *Please Note: Emailed submissions and late entries will **not** be accepted.*

How will my essay be judged?

Essays are judged on overall effectiveness, organization and development, use of language, mechanics, grammar and factual accuracy. Please refer to the attached Judges Assessment Rubric which should serve as a writer's guideline for you.

Who will judge my essay?

The judges come from a variety of backgrounds, ethnicities, geographical locations, vocations, religions, etc., and include a mix of new and repeat judges every year. The judges never see anything that identifies the student, their address or the school they attend.

When and how will the announcement of winners take place?

Winners and non-winners will be notified by early April. Announcements to the press will be made in May.

If my essay wins an award, do I need to attend the luncheon?

Yes. In order to receive the awards, all winners, including honorable mention, **must** attend the awards luncheon and all first place winners must read their essays aloud. The winners, their parents, teachers and principals will be Hildene's guests at this special event held annually to honor Abraham Lincoln's legacy. The awards luncheon will be at Hildene on Sunday, May 19, 2019, following a tour of The Lincoln Family Home.

Are there any disclaimers?

Hildene reserves the right to use all submitted pieces in future publications and there will be no compensation to the author for such use.

Does Hildene offer any additional tips for how I can best go about writing my essay?

Yes! So glad you asked...

TIPS ON WRITING A WINNING ESSAY: WHAT WE'VE LEARNED

- Enjoy the process of researching. The Hildene essay question changes every year and provides an opportunity for students to speak with an expert on the topic, view online podcasts or video, take a field trip, read a variety of related materials and so forth. Brainstorm with other students about places where you can locate reliable and relevant information.
- Break the prompt down into each of its parts and check that your essay addresses all aspects of the assignment. One of the biggest reasons an essay does not advance to the final round is because the student has not fully answered every element of the question. Teachers can help you to understand exactly what is being asked by analyzing the prompt. This will guide your research as well as your writing.
- Allow enough time to write several drafts. Re-writing is the essence of good writing. Winning students typically write five or more drafts.
- Assess and strengthen your essay using the attached rubric as a tool. Did you support your position with relevant examples, facts and logic? Do you have a strong beginning, middle and end? Many essays start out with a strong introduction and make excellent points, but then fizzle out at the end. Give some thought to how to bring your essay to a compelling conclusion.
- Check your grammar and mechanics (sentence structure, spelling, capitalization, punctuation). Essays with these problems almost never make it to the final round.
- Seek ongoing appropriate feedback from your language arts teacher, history teacher, reading spe-

cialist, parent, school librarian or other knowledgeable persons for improving your grammar, punctuation, historical accuracy, thinking process and syntax. They may give guidance (point out where there might be a problem), as long as you are the one who makes the editing decisions and adjustments.

- Read your essay aloud, or have someone else read it aloud to you to see if it flows logically and to hear if there are any awkward or incomplete sentences.
- Set deadlines for research, submitted notes and drafts, and feedback from parents and/or teachers to ensure you have enough time to complete the entire process.
- Mail your essay to Hildene **at least** a week before the deadline to ensure it arrives on time. Emailed or late submissions will **not** be accepted.

What is Hildene, The Lincoln Family Home?

For 70 years, Hildene was home to three generations of direct descendants of Abraham and Mary Lincoln. It was built in 1905 by presidential son, statesman and successful industrialist Robert and his wife Mary Harlan Lincoln, with the intention that it be their ancestral home.

Annually, tens of thousands of guests from far and wide visit the 412 acre estate's Welcome Center and The Museum Store; historic home and gardens; Lincoln exhibit; 1903 Pullman car, Sunbeam; goat dairy and cheese-making facility; wetland; floating boardwalk and sustainable agriculture and education project at Dene Farm, and more than 12 miles of four-season walking trails. While rooted in Lincoln's values, Hildene is focused on 21st century social, environmental and educational goals as seen through the lens of history, preservation, conservation and sustainability.

Hildene's mission, *Values into Action*, is about making a difference. No matter how people interact with Hildene, our goal is for them to leave thinking about the world in a deeper way. The core values attendant to Hildene's mission are integrity, perseverance, and civic responsibility, all of which are manifest in venues and programming across our 412 acres and beyond.

We believe people are hungry for meaningful involvement with their community, their state, their country and the world. Hildene works to inspire them to act.

Whom may I contact, if I have questions?

Stephanie Moffett-Hynds, Programming Director, 802.367.7960 or stephanie@hildene.org

Judges Assessment Rubric

Place an "X" on the number that best describes this work.

Grading: 1 - 4 (1 = Low Score, 4 = High Score)

A Overall Effectiveness	Answers prompt fully: addresses all parts of the assignment; includes relevant supporting information and reflects depth of thought.	Answers prompt fully: addresses all parts of the assignment; includes supporting information, some of which is too general and/or irrelevant but reflects depth of thought.	Answers most but not all of the assignment; provides mostly relevant supporting information; lacks sufficient depth of thought.	Answers some but not all of the assignment; supporting information is irrelevant and/or inadequate, lacks depth of thought.
	4	3	2	1
B Organization & Development of Essay	Careful, logical progression with clear beginning, middle and end; transitions connect ideas effectively and lead to a very strong conclusion.	Logical progression with clear beginning, middle and end; some awkward transitions; and a strong conclusion.	Gaps in logical progression with some redundancy; ineffective transitions; and a weak or unsubstantiated conclusion.	Random or weak progression; lacks clear beginning, middle and end; transitions and conclusion are ineffective or missing.
	4	3	2	1
C Use of language	Rich, expressive, accurate language and vocabulary used throughout.	Effective use of language and vocabulary.	Frequently imprecise use of language and vocabulary.	Ineffective use of language and vocabulary.
	4	3	2	1
Over				

D Mechanics & Grammar	No errors in sentence structure; syntax is varied and effective; punctuation is solid. No errors in spelling.	Few errors in sentence structure or mechanics. 1 - 2 errors in spelling.	Imprecise, confusing sentence structure; some problems with mechanics. Several errors in spelling.	Little sentence structure; many grammatical errors. Many errors in spelling.
	— 4	— 3	— 2	— 1
E Obvious Factual Accuracy	No errors in obvious factual accuracy.	One error in obvious factual accuracy.	Several errors in obvious factual accuracy.	Many errors in obvious factual accuracy.
	— 4	— 3	— 2	— 1

Column Totals + + + = Grand Total

HILDENE

Lincoln Essay Competition

APPLICATION FORM

Applicant's Name: _____ Region: One _____ Two _____ Three _____ Four _____

Date of Birth: _____ Current Grade: _____

Home Telephone Number: _____ Email Address: _____

Home Mailing Address: Street _____ PO Box: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Are you submitting this essay as a Home Study student?: Yes _____ No _____

Name of School: _____

School Telephone Number: _____

School Mailing Address: Street _____ PO Box: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Teacher's Name: _____ Email Address: _____

Teacher's Telephone Number: _____ Extension: _____

Principal's Name: _____ Email Address: _____

Essay Question: ..

Throughout history, people have been forced to reckon with difficult issues and have passed through what Abraham Lincoln might call "fiery trials." Pick one person who inspires you because they have chosen to take on a daunting societal challenge. This challenge could be within their community, their state, their nation or the world. Describe the challenge this person is tackling, the actions they are taking, the character traits that compel them to act, and the lesson(s) you draw from their example.

Student Pledge: By signing below, I certify that I live or go to school in Vermont and that the submitted essay is my own work. I authorize Hildene to use my work in all future related events and publications without compensation and I understand that if I am a winner, I must attend the luncheon and if my essay is chosen for first place, read it aloud to receive my prize. I have also completed the checklist on the back of this form.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Print your name: _____

Teacher/Advisor Pledge: I certify that I have read all the contents of the competition packet, that the essay is the student's original work and that it meets all the requirements of Hildene's Lincoln Essay Competition.

Teacher's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Print your name: _____ Is this your first time participating? _____

Parent/Guardian Pledge: I certify that I have read all the contents of the competition packet, that the essay is the student's original work and that it meets all the requirements of Hildene's Lincoln Essay Competition.

Parent's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Print your name: _____ Email Address: _____ Telephone: _____

Submission Deadline: Tuesday, February 12, 2019. Essay and application form must arrive at Hildene before 4:30pm. Please note: Emailed submissions and late entries will **not** be accepted.

CHECKLIST

Complete this check list before submitting your essay and application form:

- _____ I identified one person who inspires me.
- _____ I have briefly explained the societal challenge they are working to address.
- _____ I have described the actions they are taking to address the challenge.
- _____ I have identified the character traits that compel them to act.
- _____ I have described the lesson(s) I have drawn from their example.
- _____ I checked my essay using the Judges Assessment Rubric to make sure I have satisfied all the requirements for writing a strong essay.
- _____ I typed my essay on one side of a page, included a title, and put all citations on the reverse side of the essay.
- _____ I made sure not to include my name on or in the essay, nor did I include the name of my school.

What is Hildene's hope for participants?

While it is always fun to win, the reality is that not everyone will win a prize. We cannot emphasize enough that it is the *process* of examining a tough issue and endeavoring to articulate a well thought-out and compelling response to it that is the most important aspect of this competition. We hope you'll nurture a sense of pride in developing this skill which will surely be useful throughout your lives. Whether you win an award or not, this competition is very challenging and you are to be commended for making your best effort to offer a genuine response. All participants will receive a letter of acknowledgement, along with guest passes to Hildene. Do plan a visit!

Hildene 8th Grade Lincoln Essay Competition

February 12, 2019

Topic

Throughout history, people have been forced to reckon with difficult issues and have passed through what Abraham Lincoln might call “fiery trials.” Pick one person who inspires you because they have chosen to take on a daunting societal challenge. This challenge could be within their community, their state, their nation or the world. Describe the challenge this person is tackling, the actions they are taking, the character traits that compel them to act, and the lesson(s) you draw from their example.

Dates to Remember

Essays Due: On or before Lincoln’s Birthday: February 12, 2019

Awards Luncheon: Sunday, May 19, 2019

Your School Contact: _____

PLEASE NOTE that the competition has been significantly modified. Please refer to the revised competition guidelines.

Questions???

Contact Stephanie Moffett Hynds
802 367-7960 or stephanie@hildene.org

Application materials can be downloaded at hildene.org/learning/lincoln_essay