

## FAQs & TIPS

**What is plagiarism and how do I prevent it?** Plagiarism is the use of another's work, words, or ideas without giving them proper credit and is thus a form of academic dishonesty. It is fine and even encouraged to reference someone else's ideas or work, but it is not okay to pass it off as your own. The conclusions you draw from having learned from others are your own ideas. To prevent plagiarism, use citations.

**What are citations and how do I include them?** Don't let the citation process intimidate you. Just do the best you can using the following guidelines. If, in your essay, you attribute a quote or idea to someone or to a group, you will assign a number to that reference and then provide the details in a corresponding endnote on the back of your essay. Your bibliography should be included there, as well, which will list any sources you examined while researching the topic.

To see examples of citations in past winning essays, visit:

[https://hildene.org/sites/default/files/pdf/2021\\_LEC\\_FirstPlaceEssays.pdf](https://hildene.org/sites/default/files/pdf/2021_LEC_FirstPlaceEssays.pdf)

To learn how to include citations, use one of these resources recommended by Vermont librarians:

1. Purdue Owl Writing Lab at:

[https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research\\_and\\_citation/mla\\_style/mla\\_formatting\\_and\\_style\\_guide/mla\\_formatting\\_and\\_style\\_guide.html](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/mla_style/mla_formatting_and_style_guide/mla_formatting_and_style_guide.html)

2. ZoteroBib, at <https://zbib.org/> (Fast, free bibliography generator - MLA, APA, Chicago, Harvard citations)

3. NoodleTools Free Tools at <https://www.noodletools.com/free/>

4. MyBib at <https://www.mybib.com/> (Free APA, Harvard, & MLA Citation Generator)

Please also check out the organizer template that a recent LEC winner created to help him keep track of his sources and organize his thoughts: [https://hildene.org/sites/default/files/pdf/LEC\\_Steps\\_to\\_Success\\_student\\_organizer.pdf](https://hildene.org/sites/default/files/pdf/LEC_Steps_to_Success_student_organizer.pdf)

**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. If the teacher is unable to sign student application forms due to COVID restrictions, they must send an email to: [lec@hildene.org](mailto:lec@hildene.org) certifying each student's compliance.

**How will my essay be judged?** Essays are judged on overall effectiveness, organization and development, use of language, mechanics, grammar and factual accuracy. Essays that do not answer all parts of the prompt will not advance to the final round. Please refer to the attached Judges' Assessment Rubric which should serve as a writer's guideline for you. The judges come from a variety of backgrounds, ethnicities, geographical locations, vocations, religions, genders, 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.

**If my essay wins an award, do I need to attend the luncheon?** Yes! We ask that all winners, including honorable mention, attend the awards luncheon at which time all first-place essays will be read 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 15, 2022, following a tour of The Lincoln Family Home. In the event that we need to cancel the luncheon due to the COVID pandemic, we will ask winners and honorable mentions to video record a reading of their essay. A compilation of recorded submissions will be available for viewing through Hildene's YouTube channel.

**Submissions by Teachers:** If you, as the teacher, are submitting one or more submissions via email, please include each student's application form and essay as individual attachments.

**Can I submit via multiple means?** Yes, if necessary, but it is not recommended. If submitting pieces of the application separately, indicate you are doing so.

**Signatures, application form:** Protocols with regard to the COVID pandemic, or extenuating circumstances, may require teachers and/or parents and caregivers, to submit emailed "signatures." Signatures may be submitted via email or mail, and in the form of a simple acknowledgement. Acknowledgments cannot come from entrants' own email address.

Home schooled students are required one adult signature only, from a 1) teacher, or 2) parent/guardian.

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

- 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.
- 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. There is also a checklist on the back of your application form to help you with this.
- Check your grammar and mechanics (sentence structure, spelling, capitalization, punctuation). Essays with these problems almost never make it to the final round.
- 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 you'll bring your essay to a compelling conclusion.
- Seek ongoing appropriate feedback from your language arts teacher, history teacher, reading specialist, parent, school or town 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 determines the adjustments and makes the editing decisions.
- 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.
- If you are mailing your essay to Hildene, please postmark your entry at least a week before the deadline to ensure it arrives on time. Faxed 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, over 40,000 guests from far and wide visit the 412 acre estate. 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.