

“The legitimate object of government is ‘to do for the people what needs to be done, but which they can not, by individual effort, do at all, or do so well, for themselves’.”
~ Abraham Lincoln

The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln edited by Roy P. Basler, Volume II, “Fragment on Government” (July 1, 1854?), p. 221.

Identify one issue facing Vermont that you think your state government (the Scott administration and/or the legislature) should address. Describe the challenge and its negative impacts. Then explain why governmental action is appropriate, suggest one or more actions that state government should take, and explain why you think such action would improve the situation.

For the past thirteen 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 help 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 their ability to convey that understanding through good writing.

PLEASE NOTE: This competition is divided into 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 select 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:	\$500 each	Third Place Winners:	\$300 each
Second Place Winners:	\$400 each	Up to four Honorable Mentions:	\$200 each

Awards Luncheon: Each winner will be invited to an awards luncheon, along with their parents, teacher and principal as our guests. In order to receive their checks and certificates, all winners/honorees **must** attend the luncheon, at which time all first-place essays will be read aloud. The celebration will be at Hildene on **Sunday, May 17, 2020**.

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, Wednesday, February 12, 2020. Hildene is open 9:30am to 4:30pm daily. *Please note: Emailed, faxed, and late entries will **not** be accepted.*

Notification: All winners will be notified by April 1 and announced on Hildene’s website.

Attached materials: Please read the entire packet before submitting entry.

- 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 • Rules, Guidelines & Tips

Identify one issue facing Vermont that you think your state government (the Scott administration and/ or the legislature) should address. Describe the challenge and its negative impacts. Then explain why governmental action is appropriate, suggest one or more actions that state government should take, and explain why you think such action would improve the situation.

Although 8th graders are not old enough to vote, they are old enough to feel strongly about issues, to explore causes, consider possible solutions, and to send their suggestions to government representatives. In this year's competition, we are asking students to identify a problem and explore solutions. If the problem is one with which the government is already grappling, students should identify what they think still needs to be done about it.

Please note: While state government has jurisdiction over most issues, some laws are under federal control. As students do their research, they should make sure the issue they have chosen is one which can be addressed legally by state government.

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 in 12pt font (Times New Roman or Calibri preferred)
- 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.

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, Wednesday, February 12, 2020, by 4:30pm. Hildene is open 9:30am to 4:30pm daily. *Please Note: Emailed, faxed 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. 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.

Who will judge my essay?

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.

When and how will the announcement of winners take place?

Winners will be notified by early April and will be announced on our website. Non-winners will receive a letter by mid-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 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 17, 2020, 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. There is also a checklist on the back of your application form to help you with this.
- 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.
- 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 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.
- 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, 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'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 programs 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

APPLICATION FORM

Applicant's Name: _____ Region: One ____ Two ____ Three ____ Four ____
 Date of Birth: _____ Current Grade: _____
 Home Telephone Number: _____ Email Address: _____
 Home Mailing Address: Street or 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 or PO Box _____
 City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____
 Teacher's Name: _____ Email Address: _____
 Teacher's Telephone Number: _____ Extension: _____
 Principal's Name: _____ Email Address: _____

Essay Question:

Identify one issue facing Vermont that you think your state government (the Scott administration and/or the legislature) should address. Describe the challenge and its negative impacts. Then explain why governmental action is appropriate, suggest one or more actions that state government should take, and explain why you think such action would improve the situation.

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: Wednesday, February 12, 2020. Essay and application form must arrive at Hildene before 4:30pm. Please note: Emailed submissions, and late entries will not be accepted. Please be sure the address used for applicant is that used for U.S. mail delivery.

CHECKLIST

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

- I identified one issue facing Vermont that I think my state government should address.
- I made sure this issue is one that can fall under state jurisdiction and is not pre-empted by federal law.
- I described the challenge and its negative impact.
- I explained why government action is appropriate.
- I suggested one or more actions that state government should take.
- I explained why I think such action would make the situation better.
- 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 **only**, included a title, and put all citations on the reverse side of the essay (one sheet, two-sided).
- 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!