

# Patriot's Pen

2015 - 16 Theme  
**"What Freedom Means to Me"**  
 Student Entry Deadline: November 1, 2015



## WHAT IS PATRIOT'S PEN?

Conducted nationwide, this VFW-sponsored youth essay competition gives students an opportunity to write essays expressing their views on an annual patriotic theme. We invite you to join the more than 120,000 students who participated last year in this contest. The national winners will receive at least \$500. The first-place national award is currently \$5,000 plus an all-expense paid trip to Washington, D.C. for the winner and a parent or guardian.

The National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) has again approved this contest for its National Advisory List of Contests and Activities.

## BIG NATIONAL PRIZES

National awards total: \$50,000

Prizes include the various amounts listed below:

- 1st: \$5,000      7th: \$1,750
- 2nd: \$4,000      8-9th: \$1,500
- 3rd: \$3,500      10-11th: \$1,250
- 4th: \$2,750      12-13th: \$1,000
- 5th: \$2,500      14-15th: \$750
- 6th: \$2,000      16-54th: \$500

The Internal Revenue Service requires that any recipient that receives more than a \$599 award should receive a Form 1099 identifying the proceeds as taxable.

## HOW DOES THE CONTEST WORK?

All entries begin at the Post level. The only exception is where schools/classes/youth groups have large numbers of students and wish to conduct their own competition, submitting one winner for each 15 students to the local VFW Post competition. Individual students may submit their entry directly to the Post. This participating Post should be within your local area and within your U.S. state of residence.

The contest consists of four levels. The first level (entry) is sponsored by local VFW Posts. Post winners advance, one for every 15 entries, to the VFW District (regional) level where the one first-place winner is advanced to the VFW Department (state) level. The one first-place winner at the Department level is then advanced into the VFW national competition. The winner from each Department (state) then competes for the national prizes.

## WHO CAN ENTER?

Patriot's Pen is open to 6th-, 7th- and 8th-grade students enrolled by the Nov. 1 deadline in public, private or parochial schools in the U.S., its territories or its possessions. Home-schooled students also are eligible. Although U. S. citizenship is not required, students must be lawful U. S. permanent residents or have applied for permanent residence (the application which has not been denied) and intends to become a U.S. citizen at the earliest opportunity allowed by law. Dependents of U.S. military or civilian personnel in overseas schools can participate too. (Foreign exchange students and former winners that placed in the national finals are excluded from the contest.)

## HOW DO I GET STARTED?

- Ask a teacher or youth group/club adult leader to supervise the Patriot's Pen writing competition.

**2015-16 OFFICIAL STUDENT PATRIOT'S PEN COMPETITION  
 ENTRY FORM MUST BE COMPLETED BY ALL CONTESTANTS  
 PLEASE PRINT OR TYPE**

Name: First, M.I., Last \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_

( ) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth (mm/dd/yy) \_\_\_\_\_ Grade in School \_\_\_\_\_ Essay Word Count \_\_\_\_\_

School Name, City, State \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher's name and E-mail (if applicable) \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian's name phone/email \_\_\_\_\_

**I HAVE READ AND UNDERSTAND THE CONTEST RULES**

Signature of Student Participant \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**TO BE COMPLETED BY THE VFW POST**

I certify that this student is an authorized entry in our VFW Post Level Patriot's Pen Competition.

Post Commander's/Chairman's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Post # \_\_\_\_\_

VFW Auxilliary President's/Chairman's Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Post Address \_\_\_\_\_ City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_

No. of students participating \_\_\_\_\_ No. of winners advanced to District \_\_\_\_\_

Amt. of Post/Aux. awards \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Amt. of Post/Aux. additional expenses (banquet, pins, etc.) \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**TO BE COMPLETED BY THE VFW DISTRICT**

I certify that the student named in the previous section is the duly selected winner of the Patriot's Pen Essay Contest District Competition and is our sole entry into the Department finals.

District Chairman's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Dist. # \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_

( ) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

**TO BE COMPLETED BY THE VFW DEPARTMENT CHAIRMAN**

I certify that the student named in the previous section is the duly selected first-place winner of the Patriot's Pen Essay Department Competition, and is our sole entry into the National Judging.

Department Chairman's Signature \_\_\_\_\_

( ) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Daytime Phone \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

The winner  has been  will be (check one) notified that they are the first place Department winner on \_\_\_\_\_.  
**Note:** National Headquarters will contact your winner after this date to notify them of their national placement.

# Patriot's Pen

## 2015-16 Theme

### “What Freedom Means to Me”

**Student Entry Deadline: November 1, 2015**

- Contact a local VFW Post within your local area within your state and indicate your interest in participating.
- Establish a contact person who is a member of that VFW Post or its VFW Auxiliary.
- Make sure that your essay is submitted to the VFW Post before the contest deadline of Nov. 1, 2015.

#### HOW AM I JUDGED?

You will be judged on how well you understand, develop and present the theme. A positive approach is recommended to express your viewpoint.

Knowledge of the theme is worth 30 points:

You must show a thorough knowledge of the theme in your work. Demonstrate you have researched the issue extensively.

Theme development is worth 35 points:

Answer all relevant facts about the theme such as the who, what, where, when and why. Relate the theme to your own experiences.

Clarity of ideas is worth 35 points:

Write your essay in an easy-to-understand format. Leave your reader with a clear understanding of your explanation of the theme.

#### WHAT IS THE THEME?

VFW's Commander-in-Chief annually chooses the year's theme. The 2015-16 theme is

**What Freedom Means to Me.**

#### WHAT ARE THE RULES?

- Essay length: 300-400 typewritten words.
- You must write your own essay.
- All essays should be typed in English with no color or graphics and cannot be less than 300 words or greater than 400 words in length. (Essays under or over these word amounts will be eliminated.) Every word is counted regardless of length. The essay title (theme) or added footnotes do not contribute to the word count. At any time during the contest additional participant personal information (i.e. SSN, photo, etc.) could be requested by the VFW.

In no way may contestants identify themselves within their essay. Do not put your name on your essay. The entry form is your essay's cover sheet. Secure the Official Student Entry Form with a staple or other fastener on top of your essay. Contestants are allowed to enter only once (one Post competition). Contestants found in violation of this rule will face elimination from the competition and will be

required to return any and all prize money awarded or received. The essay must be a contestant's original work and a product of the contestant's own thinking. The approach to the Patriot's Pen theme should be positive and clearly focused. Poetry is not acceptable. Quotations may be used sparingly if plainly identified wherever used. A contestant's teacher, counselor or parent may check the essay for punctuation, grammar and/or spelling, but the content must remain the contestant's. Contestants will be judged on the basis of their essay alone and are not required to present the essay orally. All essays become the property of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. The VFW retains non-exclusive rights to use your essay and likeness in the promotion and execution of the organization's programs and activities.

#### DEADLINE INFORMATION

To qualify, all entries must be submitted to a sponsoring local VFW Post by midnight November 1, 2015.

#### Note --

All entries must be submitted to a VFW Post competition. If you have difficulty identifying a sponsoring Post in your area, call the Patriot's Pen national office at: (816) 968-1117 or e-mail: [kharmer@vfw.org](mailto:kharmer@vfw.org). You may also visit our website at [www.vfw.org](http://www.vfw.org), selecting the "Find A Post" option.



Veterans of Foreign Wars & VFW Auxiliary  
National Headquarters  
Kansas City, Missouri  
816.968.1117  
E-Mail: [kharmer@vfw.org](mailto:kharmer@vfw.org)  
[www.vfw.org](http://www.vfw.org)

Revised 9/2015

#### LOCAL VFW POST INFORMATION :

**CONTACT:** \_\_\_\_\_

**PHONE:** \_\_\_\_\_ **BEST TIME TO CALL :** \_\_\_\_\_

**ALTERNATE CONTACT:** \_\_\_\_\_

**PHONE:** \_\_\_\_\_ **BEST TIME TO CALL :** \_\_\_\_\_