

Patriot's Pen

Are You Proud of Your Country?

What are the rules?

- Essay length: 300-400 typewritten words.
- You must write your own essay.
- All essays should be typewritten 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.

Deadline—

The completed essay and entry form must be in the hands of the VFW Post Chairman by midnight Nov. 1, 2011.

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.

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) 756-3390, ext. 220 or e-mail:

How do I get started?

- Ask a teacher or youth group/club adult leader to supervise the Patriot's Pen writing competition.
- Contact a local VFW Post and indicate your interest in participating.
- Establish a contact person who is a member of that VFW Post or its Ladies Auxiliary.
- Make sure that your essay is submitted to the VFW Post before the contest deadline of Nov. 1, 2011.

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 2011-12 theme is Are You Proud of Your Country?

LOCAL VFW POST INFORMATION:

CONTACT: Ruth L. Larrison

PHONE: 425-337-1559 BEST TIME TO CALL: _____

ALTERNATE CONTACT: _____

PHONE: _____ BEST TIME TO CALL: _____



Patriot's Pen Competition Veterans of Foreign Wars & Ladies Auxiliary

Kansas City, Missouri
(816) 756-3390, ext. 220
E-Mail: swilson@vfw.org
www.vfw.org

Patriot's Pen

Are You Proud of Your Country?



Patriotic Essay Writing Contest
Grand Prize: \$10,000 savings bond

What is Patriot's Pen?

Conducted nationwide, this VFW sponsored youth essay competition gives students an opportunity to write essays expressing their views on democracy with the prospect of winning U.S. savings bonds. We invite you to join the more than 112,000 students who participated last year in this contest. The top 46 national winners all receive at least a \$1,000 savings bond. The first-place award is currently a \$10,000 savings bond plus an all-expense paid trip to Washington, D.C. for the winner and a parent or guardian.

Big National Prizes

Prizes include the various amounts of U.S. Savings Bonds listed below:

1st: \$10,000 Bond	7th: \$3,500 Bond
2nd: \$8,000 Bond	8-9th: \$3,000 Bond
3rd: \$7,000 Bond	10-11th: \$2,500 Bond
4th: \$5,500 Bond	12-13th: \$2,000 Bond
5th: \$5,000 Bond	14-15th: \$1,500 Bond
6th: \$4,000 Bond	16-46th: \$1,000 Bond

When is the deadline?

To qualify, all entries must be submitted to a sponsoring VFW Post by November 1, 2011.

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

How does the contest work?

The contest consists of four levels. The first level (entry) is sponsored by local VFW Posts. Post winners advance 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 in public, private or parochial schools in the U.S., its territories or its possessions. Home-schooled students also are eligible.

Dependents of U.S. military or civilian personnel in overseas schools can partici-

2011-12 OFFICIAL STUDENT PATRIOT'S PEN COMPETITION ENTRY FORM MUST BE COMPLETED BY ALL CONTESTANTS

Name: First, M.I., Last

Address

City, State, Zip

()
Home Phone

E-mail

Date of Birth

Grade In School

Essay Word Count

School Name, City, State

I HAVE READ AND UNDERSTAND THE CONTEST RULES

Signature of Student Participant

Date

TO BE COMPLETED BY THE VFW/AUXILIARY 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 #

Ladies Auxiliary President's/Chairman's Signature

Post Address

City, State, Zip

No. of students participating ____ No. of winners advanced to District ____

Am't. of Post/Aux. awards and bonds \$ ____

Am't. of Post/Aux. additional expenses (banquet, pins, etc.) \$ ____

TO BE COMPLETED BY THE VFW/AUXILIARY 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

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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

()
Fax

E-mail

The winner ☐ has been ☐ will be (check one) notified that they are the first place Department winner on _____
Note: National Headquarters

PATRIOT'S PEN CONTEST

FIRST PLACE 2011 NATIONAL WINNER

**Julia Funk
South Carolina**

Julia Funk, recipient of the \$10,000 First Place North End Post 144, Paul A. Spera Past Commander-in-Chief Award, is a seventh grade student at Oakbrook Preparatory, and she lives in Duncan, South Carolina. Julia was sponsored by VFW Post 9539 in Roebuck, South Carolina.

"Does Patriotism Still Matter?"

By Julia Funk

Is patriotism our star spangled banner swirling in the cool breeze over a stadium? Is it singing the national anthem at a sports game? Or is it a lone trumpet honoring a fallen soldier while loved ones grieve? All of these American traditions are symbols of our patriotism, but true patriotism is much more. Webster defines patriotism as "devoted love, support, and defense of one's country." Does this mean that you agree with every decision and are proud of everything your country has done? No, I believe patriotism is loving your country but questioning and standing firm in your beliefs. Patriotism for one's country is like a mother's love for her child. She may not like or agree with everything he does, but she loves, supports and encourages him in his hopes and dreams. Doing our part to help make this country the best it can be is part of life long patriotism. We need to establish our patriotism today with true unity, support, and service.

Our country's ability to be unified in our case for freedom allows us to be "one nation under God." Who would have thought that 12 small colonies could battle the strongest army in the world to become the United States of America? Our country was formed because people united to work for a common cause. We had patriotism from the beginning and without it, America would not exist. Americans must continue to work together or our beloved country will perish.

How can we as citizens today demonstrate and sustain our patriotism? Speaking out and standing firm in our beliefs exercise our constitutional rights. If you disagree with something you see you need to act and try to improve your country. Voting is an important right which allows us to express ourselves. You also need to look for ways to serve your country. Some ultimately risk their lives for their country's freedom, but we can all volunteer in public service to help our individual communities.

Finally, we are a united nation under God and Americans must trust in the Lord. Our founding fathers built this country on their hope for a Christian nation and their desire for religious freedom. Patriotism means unity, support, and service to make America the best it can be. Patriotism definitely matters and is our responsibility as citizens of American today.