

Black History Essay Contest 2024 Guidelines

Essay Theme

Representation Matters: Being Black in Books

Grade-Level Essay Prompts

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| Elementary (3-5): | After reading at least one source about representation of diverse people in literature, develop an essay that supports your claim that diverse representation in books has impacted the lives of African Americans. |
| Middle School (6-8): | After reading at least two sources about representation of diverse people in literature, develop an essay that supports your claim that diverse representation in books has impacted the lives of African Americans. |
| High School (9-12): | After reading at least three sources about representation of diverse people in literature, develop an essay that supports your claim that diverse representation in books has impacted the lives of African Americans. |

Thesis Statement

Your thesis statement should explore the impact of diverse representation in literature on the lives of African Americans. In your essay, you must explain how diverse representation in books has impacted the lives of African Americans in one or more of the following ways:

- Environment
- Culture
- Health
- Housing
- Business Development/Economics
- Behavior
- Educational Attainment
- Job Attainment
- Civic participation (such as protesting, voting, or running for public office)

Sample Thesis Statements

1. Richard Wright's 1940 novel, *Native Son*, impacted the lives of African Americans by highlighting the ways that racism influenced the mental state of Black people in this country.
2. "The Hate You Give" impacted the lives of African Americans by portraying the common experience of Black Americans' negative interactions with the police and bringing attention to this issue for a larger audience.

What Must Be Included in Your Essay

1. Provide the problems that existed that made diverse representation important. Include the context of what was or is happening in the country at the time.

2. Describe the ways that diverse representation improved the lives of Black people. Did it help to prevent discrimination? Did it help to improve civic action? Did it help people to get jobs, vote, or go to school? Include all the ways diverse representation helped improve the lives of African Americans.
3. If possible, describe the effects that diverse representation had on the community. Include any statistics about how many people's lives improved or any other information you can find about the effects of having diverse people in books.
4. Provide a description of how diverse representation in books affect you personally. You may include the reason you chose your topic, how it has made you feel, or what you will do differently now that you know more. **You must include this personal statement. It is mandatory.**
5. If you are in high school, you must also include one counter-argument. Why have people been opposed to diverse representation in books?

Examples of Topics

- You may write about books written by an African American or a book whose main character is African American.
- You may write about significant newspaper articles, magazine articles, or blog posts that feature African Americans.

Submission Guidelines

- All writing must be in your own words. No copying from text unless it is a direct quote or otherwise necessary to support an argument.
 - Elementary school students must have at least 200 words. Middle school participants must have between 200 – 400 words. High school participants must have between 500 – 700 words.
 - Presentations must be submitted as a PDF file.
 - Participants must include a Bibliography with all sources listed (at least one source for elementary, two sources for middle school, and three sources for high school).
 - Participants may send the "Intent to Submit" form by the deadline (see below). However, this is not required for participation in the contest.
 - High school students must have at least one counterclaim. A counterclaim is an opinion that rebuts yours.
 - Text must be in Arial, Calibri, or Times New Roman and at least 12 point font.
 - All essays must include a Cover Page that includes:
 - Name and Grade
 - School and Teacher(s)
 - Participant's email address, if applicable
 - Home address, including zip code
 - Parent/Guardian's name, phone number, and email address
 - Title of the essay
- *The Cover Page is not included in the word count.

Important Dates

January 19, 2024

Intent to Submit form due

Email To: sdac.bhec@gmail.com

February 7, 2024 Essay Due
Email PDF File To: sdac.bhec@gmail.com

February 8 – 23, 2024 Scoring Period

February 26, 2024 Finalists Notified

March 2, 2024 Reception and Awards Program

**Black History Essay Contest
Intent to Submit
“Representation Matters: Being Black in Books”**

Filling out this form provides your intent to submit an essay for the 2024 Black History Essay Contest. This form will not be graded but helps you to think through your essay topic more carefully and ensure that it meets the guidelines of the contest. You will find important dates and contact information. Please mark your calendar so that you submit your essay on time.

Name: _____

Grade: _____

School: _____

In two sentences or less, tell us which book, article, or author you will be writing about:

Did the book, article, or author impact any of the following areas of American life? Check all that apply.

*Remember, you are required to write about the conditions that existed beforehand and how diverse representation in the book impacted the lives of African Americans for each of the areas you check below.

Environment _____

Culture _____

Health _____

Housing _____

**Business Development/
Economics** _____

Behavior _____

Job Attainment _____

Educational Attainment _____