

# ISA Essay Competition

Open to Years 5-13

Visit the ISA website for more information

Competition open to ISA Members' schools only.

Deadline  
Thursday 24 April  
2025

ISA

ARTS

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The ISA Essay Competition is an annual opportunity for pupils at ISA Members' schools to showcase their writing skills. Young writers are invited to submit entries to a range of categories. Open to Years 5-13.

### Eligibility

This competition is open to ISA Members' schools only. Schools may submit a maximum of two entries for each category except for the Year 12-13 category, who may enter up to six essays in total. We encourage schools to run their own competition in house and submit their successful entries in the competition.

At ISA, we are committed to making our opportunities accessible, we welcome applications from all pupils, including those with learning difficulties or disabilities. If your pupil(s), those with an EHCP or on the school's SEND register, are working at a level that differs from their age group's key stage, or if your school or student focuses on development and skills rather than year groups, please contact us.

Alternative formats of these guidelines are available on request. Please notify us at the earliest opportunity so we can provide the document accordingly, if required.

### Age group categories

- Year 5-6
- Year 7-8
- Year 9-11
- Year 12-13

### Judging criteria

- Originality and creativity
- Style and presentation
- Use of language
- Form and structure

### How to enter

- Entries must be submitted via the online entry form on the ISA website [here](#) by **Thursday 24 2024**.
- All files must be PDF or word documents named in the following format: school name followed by the pupil or group name e.g. SchoolName\_JohnSmith
- Entries can be handwritten or typed.
- Entries should be unaided work. They should not have been heavily edited/re-drafted following teacher comments or feedback.
- Entries can be written in any language, provided an English translation is given.
  - For the sixth form competition, students can choose to write about any topic or genre.
  - For the other three age groups there are a range of titles to choose from.
  - Please see titles and guidelines per category below.

- Entries must mention final word count at the end of each essay.
- Essays can be creative or academic. Themes for each category below.
- While we recognise the potential benefit of AI, we kindly request that participants are using it for inspiration and support and in line with their schools policies on its use, rather than using it to generate their essays. Please include details about the process of using AI under “any special circumstances” box if applicable, so judges are aware.
- Entries must be the work of individuals only.

### Themes

#### Year 5-6

For this Category, candidates will turn/have turned 10 or 11 years old in the 2024–25 academic year (equivalent to Years 5 and 6). Schools can submit a maximum of two entries in this category.

Candidates should submit an original piece of writing in response to the following titles (Word limit of 500-800):

1. **Imaginative:** Lost, I knocked at a door. To my surprise a monster answered! Write my story.
2. **Fantasy:** You are a wizard specialising in fire. Imagine your adventures and spells.
3. **Science fiction:** Describe your very own robot. Write about their adventures.
4. **Autobiography:** Narrate a typical day from your pet's point of view.
5. **A news article:** Write an advice sheet for a local newspaper on returning to school after the summer holidays.

#### Year 7-8

For this category, candidates will turn/have turned 12 or 13 years old in the 2024–25 academic year (equivalent to Years 7 and 8). Schools can submit a maximum of two entries for this category.

Candidates should submit an original piece of writing in response to the following titles: (Word limit of 500-800)

1. **Write a story or description entitled:** The Village Show *or* The School Fete.
2. **The Experiment That Went Wrong**
3. **Write a story inspired by these lines from a well-loved poem:**  

‘We listened, flinching there:  
And looked, and looked, on the untouched meal,  
And the overtopped chair.’
4. **‘Social media: friend or foe?’**
5. **My Favourite View.**

### **Year 9-11**

For this category, candidates will turn/have turned 14, 15 or 16 years old in the 2024–25 academic year (equivalent to Years 9-11). Schools can submit a maximum of two entries for this category.

Candidates should submit an original piece of writing in response to the following titles: (Word limit of 500-800)

- 1. Turning the Tide**
- 2. The Traveller**
- 3. Hope springs eternal**
- 4. Homecoming**
- 5. In the shadows**
- 6. Commitment**

### **Year 12-13**

Entrants must be still in full-time education at an ISA School at the time of entering. Schools may submit a maximum of six entries for this category. An original piece of writing (1,000 words maximum) is required on any topic and in any genre. Submissions will be judged in the following categories:

- 1. Fiction writing**
- 2. Arts, English, and Humanities**
- 3. Science and Technology**
- 4. History, Politics, and Economics**

Submissions can be pieces of work that have already been completed during sixth form studies, however they should not have been heavily edited/re-drafted following teacher comments or feedback.

If you have any questions, please contact [isaarts@isaschools.org.uk](mailto:isaarts@isaschools.org.uk)  
We look forward to receiving your entries.