



ECHOES

A Creative Writing Competition

TEACHER STUDY GUIDE
6TH - 8TH GRADE

INTRODUCTION

ECHOES is a creative writing competition developed by The REV Theatre Company which involves and encourages students in the creative writing process. This year-long project results in a script written entirely by middle school students, reflecting the thoughts and ideas of middle school students from across the state.

The ECHOES program combines the imaginations of students in grades 6-8 with the theatrical craftsmanship of professional artists. Using characters and actions created by student authors, our actors will add costumes, sets, props, mime, sound effects, and music to create a 50-minute showcase. The performance will feature at least one author from each participating school.

After the show, our actors will host an awards ceremony to honor the talented writers from each school. There is no limit to the number of awards that each student can earn.

TIMELINE

Fall: Students will take part in a 40-minute creative writing workshop. The workshop will introduce students and teachers who are new to our program to the ECHOES creative writing competition. The workshop will cover a brief history of the ECHOES program, the rules and guidelines of our competition, as well as the criteria we use when selecting submissions for the performance. The workshop also includes a creative writing exercise.

Late Fall / Winter: Students submit pieces to The REV Theatre Company by the December 1st deadline. Previously written student material may be submitted or teachers may use this program in combination with a classroom project. If the current thematic unit is poetry, for example, the students' poems could be submitted. Teachers may also encourage students to submit pieces voluntarily. Ultimately, teachers are encouraged to utilize this program in a manner that will best suit their classroom needs and schedule.

Spring: The REV Theatre Company creative team evaluates over 4,000 submissions yearly. From these, awards are determined for the best authors from each school. The script is finalized and extensively rehearsed before hitting the road in the spring.



RULES FOR SUBMISSIONS

No Plagiarism

Students must submit their own ideas and words to create characters and stories. Plagiarized pieces will not be performed or considered for an award.

Appropriate Subject Matter

Students may write about any subject as long as they treat the topic with respect. Stories with excessively violent themes and/or harsh and offensive language will not be selected for performance or considered for an award.

Format

There is no specific format for submissions. The most common entries are short stories, newscasts, poems, skits, and commercials. Students are also welcome to share original sheet music and/or artwork. CDs and DVDs are also accepted, although a typed or handwritten script must accompany each piece.

Length

Submissions should be no more than 1 1/2 pages in length. Due to restrictions on rehearsal time and performance, we cannot consider longer pieces.

Legibility

Illegible pieces cannot be performed or considered for an award.

Completed Manuscript Identification Form

Each student must attach a completed Manuscript Identification Form to their own work. Students should refrain from using nicknames on their ID forms as it is difficult to identify students with monikers that are unfamiliar to the teacher or school.

Multiple Authors

Students may work with a partner or in a group as long as all students attend the same school. There is space to list up to four authors on a single Manuscript Identification Form. If there are more than four authors, please feel free to add additional names and signatures to the back of the form.



WHY IS CREATIVE WRITING IMPORTANT FOR MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS?

Since 1991, ECHOES has been an opportunity for young writers to be recognized and rewarded for their exemplary writing, and has proved to be a catalyst to encourage young people to keep exploring the art of creative writing. Creative writing offers many benefits for middle school students, including:

Opportunities for Expression and Communication:

Creative writing provides a platform for students to express their thoughts, feelings and ideas. It helps them articulate their innermost thoughts, which can be challenging at this age when they may be experiencing a wide range of emotions and changes.

Improvement in Critical Thinking Skills:

Creative writing encourages critical thinking and problem solving skills. Students have to come up with unique storylines, characters and settings, which requires them to think critically and logically.

Fostering Imagination and Creativity:

Middle school is a crucial time for nurturing creativity and imagination. Creative writing encourages students to explore their imagination, invent new worlds and develop unique stories. It fosters a sense of wonder and curiosity about the world.

Encourages Empathy and Perspective Taking:

Creative writing often involves creating characters and situations that are different from one's own experiences. This can help students develop empathy and a better understanding of different perspectives and cultures.

Provides Stress Relief and an Emotional Outlet:

Middle school can be a stressful time for many students. Creative writing can serve as a therapeutic outlet for them to process their emotions and cope with stress. It provides a safe space for them to express themselves and find solace.



SUGGESTED FORMATS FOR SUBMISSIONS

Short Story

It's easy to go beyond 1 1/2 pages when writing a story. The key is to be interesting and concise. Stories should have a clear beginning, middle, and end, a strong protagonist, a conflict, and a resolution. Good stories are easy to stage, as all of the action takes place in a central location and in "real time."

Skit/Newscast

When writing skits and newscasts, the author should try to grab the reader's attention using strong nouns and verbs. The scene should also take place in one location and in "real time." Dialogue should be conversational and should always serve to advance the action.

Commercial

The first thing to determine when writing a commercial is what the product is and why people will want to buy it. The author should also address how the product will enhance the customers' lives. Finally, the commercial should inform the audience where they can get the product and how much it costs.

Poetry/Lyrics

The most successful poems/lyrics are always succinct with a lot of detail. In addition to great description, poems should also let the reader know how the poet feels about the topic.

SELECTION CRITERIA

Strong Story Line

Any piece of writing with a clear beginning, middle, and end and a well constructed and imaginative plot will translate from the page to the stage.

Dialogue

We are always interested in pieces with student-generated dialogue which adds depth and meaning to their work.

Clear Moral

It is our intent to educate, as well as entertain. As such, we look for submissions that communicate a strong moral lesson.

Topical Issues

We look for submissions that include a student's perspective on current national and international issues and events. We greatly appreciate unique perspectives and creative solutions to "hot" issues.

Technical Requirements

Although we do our very best to accommodate specified special effects, props, costumes and settings, please keep in mind that we cannot produce work that extends beyond the boundaries of our technical capabilities.

Student Learning Objectives

Students:

- Identify guidelines and procedures for the ECHOES Creative Writing Competition
- Determine whether a given writing sample is an effective example of creative writing using evidence from the ECHOES guidelines
- Revise a given writing sample by providing more details to create a stronger writing piece
- Explore different creative writing formats and identify which formats transfer best to the stage
- Practice adapting a piece of creative writing to various formats (e.g. dialogue, song, poem, commercial, etc.)

NYS Learning Standards Included

NYS Learning Standards for the Arts:

- Grade 6: TH:Cr1.1.6, TH:Cr2.1.6, TH:Cr3.1.6, TH:Pr4.1.6, TH:Pr5.1.6, TH:Pr6.1.6, TH:Re8.1.6, TH:Re9.1.6, TH:Cn10.1.6, TH:Cn11.1.6
- Grade 7: TH:Cr1.1.7, TH:Cr2.1.7, TH:Cr3.1.7, TH:Pr4.1.7, TH:Re8.1.7, TH:Re9.1.7, TH:Cn10.1.7
- Grade 8: TH:Cr1.1.8, TH:Cr2.1.8, TH:Cr3.1.8, TH:Pr4.1.8, TH:Re8.1.8, TH:Re9.1.8, TH:Cn10.1.8, TH:Cn11.1.8

NYS Next Generation English Language Arts Learning Standards

- Grade 6: 6W3, 6W4, 6SL1
- Grade 7: 7W3, 7W4, 7SL1
- Grade 8: 8W3, 8W4, 8SL1

For more information on specific grade level standards, please visit our website at www.TheREVTheatre.com.

Additional Resources

Books

DiPrince, Dawn & Miller-Thurston, Cheryl. Unjournaling: Daily Writing Exercises that Are NOT Personal, NOT Introspective, NOT Boring!. Cottonwood Press, 2006.

Whiteley, Carol. The Everything Creative Writing Book: All You Need to Know to Write a Novel, Play, Short Story, Screenplay, Poem, or Article (Everything Series). Adams Media, 2002.

Websites

- teachables.scholastic.com/teachables/subject/writing/creative-writing.html

- Build your student's writing skills with resources that incorporate technology and traditional lessons. Website features a User Guide, interactive tutorials, publishing opportunities, message boards, and creative ideas for guiding your students through the writing process.

- www.creativewritingprompts.com

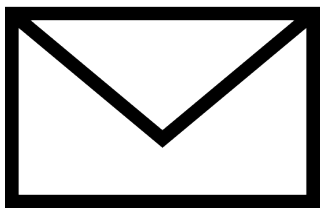
- Use the creative writing prompts and creative writing ideas from this website to create stories, poems and other creative pieces from your imagination.



ATTENTION TEACHERS!

**FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THIS PROGRAM,
INCLUDING SPECIFIC GRADE LEVEL STANDARDS,
PLEASE**

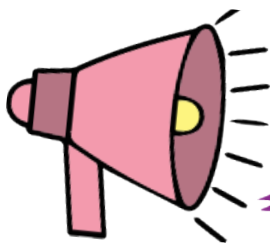
**VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT:
WWW.THEREVTHEATRE.COM**



**PLEASE SEND ALL SUBMISSIONS TO:
THE REV THEATRE COMPANY
282 NORTH STREET, SUITE G
AUBURN, NY 13021**

**PLEASE VISIT
WWW.THEREVTHEATRE.COM/ECHOES
TO VIEW HELPFUL VIDEOS WITH EXAMPLES
OF EACH SUGGESTED FORMAT.**





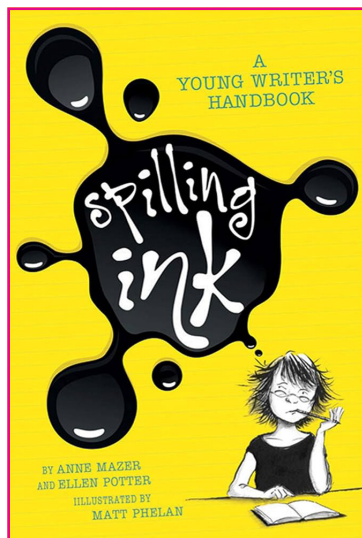
NEW FOR THE 24 - 25 SCHOOL YEAR!

We've partnered with Ellen Potter, co-writer of the popular book *Spilling Ink, A Young Writer's Handbook*, to create videos to help get your students over common writing obstacles and get them excited about participating in our ECHOES program! You can find the videos at <https://therevtheatre.com/echoes-2/>



Ellen Potter is the bestselling author of more than 25 award-winning novels for children and young adults, including the *Squirlish* series, *Hither & Nigh*, *Olivia Kidney*, *Slob*, *Big Foot* and *Little Foot*, *Piper Green* and *The Fairy Tree*, *The Humming*

Room, *Pish Posh*, and *The Kneebone Boy*. Several of her books have been chosen by New York Public Library as a Best 100 Books for Children, and have appeared on numerous State Reading Lists. Her non-fiction writing book, *Spilling Ink, A Young Writer's Handbook*, co-authored with Anne Mazer, was also chosen by New York Public Library as a Best 100 Books for Children.



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