

Submissions for the 2019-2020 Swiss Creative Writing Prize are now open.

Any student in the Swiss public education system studying for a Swiss high-school certificate/examination is invited to submit work in the following categories:

- Short Story (up to 1,000 words, either fiction or narrative non-fiction)
- Poetry (up to two poems of any length)

This year, writer and editor Jon Steele is judging the short story prize. Before submitting please remember to read about Jon, think about the theme he has chosen and what he is looking for. Don't forget to read the short story rules.

This year, prize-winning poet Yun Wei is judging the poetry prize. Don't forget to read about Yun, understand what she is looking for in a poem, understand the theme and read the poetry prize rules.

You can submit work from now until midday, Friday 5th April.

Best of luck!

Short Story Prize

1st Prize: CHF 250 | 2nd Prize: CHF 125 | 3rd Prize CHF 100*

All shortlisted writers are invited to the Writing Workshop, the Winner's Reception and will receive a copy of The Anthology

Submissions: Stories can be submitted from 7th October 2018 until midday, Friday 5th April 2020.

Shortlisted students will be contacted at the end of April and invited to the Workshop and Reception to take place in May 2020.

Submission is free, but is limited to one story per student. Students may submit to both the Poetry Prize and the Short Story Prize.

Theme

Jon Steele, the Short Story Prize Judge has chosen 'Memory' as this year's Theme. He writes:

"Given my relationship with the weight of memory, and the impact it has on my life, I would like to suggest "Memory" as this year's theme. I leave it to each writer to develop the theme as they wish.

See, I have a curious idea about memory. In my muddled head, memory is more than the result of a series of chemical reactions in the hippocampus region of the human brain. In my head, memory is time travel. Indeed, it was a concept I embedded in the characters of The Angelus Trilogy. But that's my how things are in my head. I am excited to see how the writers approach the theme in their own words.

It can be a story reflecting the concept of memory, a personal memory, someone else's memory, a first memory, a final memory, a haunting memory, a foggy memory, a memory that is clear as a bell__ what I'm interested in is the effect of a memory, or a string of memories, on the character(s) of the writer's story.

There are no bounds as to style or content. First person, second person, or maybe it's not a person at all. Maybe it's a lost dog trying to remember the way home; maybe it's an old tree along Lake Geneva about to be chopped down, trying to remember all the springs and summers of its long life. Funny, dramatic, simple, densely layered, realistic or a wild trip of imagination.

The only guide I would offer is for each writer to remember that filling a black page with words__ words that tell a story designed to carry a reader to another place__ is a singular act of bravery. So while this is a competition, I want every writer to know you have my deepest I admiration before you even begin. And I very much look forward to reading your words."

Word Limit: There is a 1,000 word limit, not including the title.

Entry requirements: The Short Story Prize is open to any student high-school-aged student in Swiss public upper-secondary education. There are currently no age divisions, however students must note whether they are mother-tongue English speakers, or following a bi-lingual study programme, and whether they are studying for the Maturity Certificate. The competition is not open to students from schools where the teaching is primarily in English, such as international schools, or students studying for international examinations.

Please read the rules before submitting.

Short Story Judge

The Short Story Judge – Not Your Usual Writer

Jon Steele was born in the American West. Considered ‘slow and somewhat troublesome’ by the good nuns of St Gerard’s Elementary School, he was told to accept the fact he would never amount to much in life. The nuns were generally right until 1980 when Steele lied his way into television news as a sound recordist in the Washington, D.C. bureau of a British TV network.

He quickly learned the skills he needed so he wouldn’t get fired, including how to tell stories with a video camera. He travelled across the North and South America filming everything from hurricanes to presidential elections.

Steele was transferred to Moscow in 1991 to film the chaos, riots and civil wars resulting from the collapse of the Soviet Union. In 1993 Steele was trapped in Kigali during the Rwandan Genocide as more than a half million human beings were slaughtered. That same year Steele covered the cholera epidemic in Zaire where tens of thousands of people fell ill and died in a matter of weeks.

These experiences were the source material for Steele’s autobiography *War Junkie*. Today the book is considered a cult classic of war reportage. In 1994 Steele was diagnosed with severe PTSD, but he rejected treatment and continued to film stories across Russia, as well as the war in Chechnya.

In 1995 Steele was transferred to Hong Kong to cover the final years of British rule. He travelled extensively through China and Asia, making several trips into Taliban-controlled Afghanistan.

In 1998 Steele moved to Jerusalem where he covered the ongoing tensions between Israelis and Palestinians. He also began making regular trips into Saddam’ Hussein’s Iraq, filming the daily life of ordinary Iraqi’s struggling under a brutal combination of Saddam’s dictatorship and American sanctions.

The Second Intifada between Israelis and Palestinians erupted in 2000. The West Bank and Gaza were warzones, Israeli cities were targets for suicide attacks. Steele often found himself caught in crossfire while filming.

Then in Baghdad, in 2003, on the day before Iraq War II began, Steele decided he had had enough. He put his camera on the ground and quit. By now Steele was emotionally broken.

He moved to Lausanne because he needed a place to hide from the weight of terrible memories. And it was in Lausanne where Steele found inspiration for *The Angelus Trilogy*__an epic mystical noir thriller about the last of the good angels hiding out in Lausanne Cathedral. The books were published worldwide by Random House and Penguin.

Currently, Steele lives in Bourg-en-Lavaux with his wife, two cats, and a PTSD service dog named Toby.

Short Story Prize Rules

By entering the prize you agree to the following terms and conditions. Failure to follow these rules could lead to disqualification:

1. The theme of the 2019-2020 Short Story Prize is, 'Memory'.
2. The stories can be either fiction or narrative non-fiction
3. You are limited to one submission of up to 1,000 words, not including the title
4. You must include the title of your work on your submission, but not your name
5. You may also submit to the Poetry Prize, but must submit your poem(s) separately through the Poetry Submission Portal
6. Submissions will open on 7th October 2019 at 11am, and close at midday Friday, 7th April 2020. Submission is free
7. You must cut and paste your submission into the form. We will reformat it into double-spaced 12-point Times New Roman. Please contact us if your submission requires special formatting.
8. Your work must be your own. It must be original and not already published online or offline
9. You must be in upper-secondary Swiss public education when you submit your work
10. Students studying for international examinations (such as the IB or A levels) or attending schools where the teaching language is primarily English are NOT eligible to enter the prize
11. During the submission process you must indicate whether you speak English with members of your immediate or extended family, or are undertaking a immersion course of study (such as a year abroad in an English-speaking country). Extra consideration will be given to students who are non-native and not in immersion programmes
12. During the submission process you must indicate whether you are studying for the Maturity Certificate. Extra consideration will be given to students who are not taking this examination.
13. Do not write your name on your submission. All submissions will be judged anonymously
14. The judge's decision is final and without appeal
15. The judges, the organisers, their friends and family are not allowed to enter the competition
16. Short-listed writers will be contacted at the end of April 2020. The results will also be published online
17. Up to 10 short-listed writers will be invited to a half-day writing workshop in May 2020 in Lucerne, where they will be taught by the prize judge
18. There will be a Reception following the workshop for the short-listed writers and a guest

19. The winners will be announced at the Reception and will receive CHF 250, CHF 150 and CHF 100 for first, second and third places respectively. Half of the Prize is paid in cash, the other in book tokens.
20. The workshop participants will receive a copy of the In Their Words anthology, as will their teachers.
21. By entering the prize you allow us to use any photos of the workshop, reception or prize giving on our website and communications materials
22. By entering the prize you give us the the exclusive right to publish the shortlisted and winning short stories for a period of six months following their announcement. After six months, rights revert to the author
23. The organisers reserve the right to change these terms and conditions at any time

Poetry Prize

1st Prize: CHF 250 | 2nd Prize: CHF 125 | 3rd Prize CHF 100*

All shortlisted poets are invited to the Writing Workshop, the Winner's Reception and will receive a copy of The Anthology

Submissions: Poems can be submitted from 7th October 2018 until midday, Friday 5th April 2020.

Shortlisted students will be contacted at the end of April and invited to the Workshop and Reception to take place in Luzern in May 2020.

Submission is free, but is limited to two poems per student. Students may submit to both the Poetry Prize and the Short Story Prize.

Theme

Poetry Judge Yun Wei has chosen the theme of 'Distance' for this year's Prize.

She writes:

“There are geographical distances across land and sea, and emotional ones inside the close space between people. Distance is a measure and a state of being. It measures the travel needed to reach a destination, or the journey to becoming the person you want to be. Being distant is a state of detachment or unfamiliarity, which can change to intimacy and belonging. Distances can grow or shrink. Distances mark the relationships between places, people and ideas. Even on the written page, the small spaces between words can have great meaning. There are cultural distances, the boundaries that define them, and those who work on transcending those boundaries. There can be a separation in beliefs and politics, and closeness because of shared stories and customs. Think about nearness and farness and everything that happens in between.

My favorite poems use language in an unexpected way, show emotion without falling into clichés and have a unique point of view. I enjoy all forms of poetry: from sestinas to ghazals, from the narrative to the philosophical, from lyrical to casual language. What is important is that the choice of form fits the poem, that there is thoughtfulness to the placement of line breaks, and that word choice has been intentional. Most of all, I want to be surprised, whether it's in the creative interpretation of the theme, or the lyricism of the lines.

For writers new to poetry, my recommendation is to read widely and see what you like, then figure out why you like it. If you were moved, why were you moved? If you liked the musicality of a poem, which sounds and rhythms made it musical? As an example, the poets I return to again and again are Adrienne Rich, Sharon Olds, Natalie Diaz, Stephen Dunn and Li-Young Lee.”

Line Limit

There is a 40-line limit per poem.

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schools where the teaching is primarily in English, such as international schools, or students studying for international examinations.

Please read the rules before submitting.

The Poetry Judge

Yun Wei received her MFA in poetry from Brooklyn College and studied international relations at Georgetown University.

Her writing awards include the Geneva Literary Prizes and the Himan Brown Poetry Fellowship. Her poetry and fiction have appeared in Poetry Northwest, Wigleaf, Word Riot, The Brooklyn Review and several other journals.

For the last few years, she has been working on global health in Switzerland, where she relies on chocolate and tears to survive mountain sports.

Her website is here: <http://thepomegranateway.blogspot.com/>

Poetry Prize Rules

By entering the prize you agree to the following terms and conditions. Failure to follow these rules could lead to disqualification:

1. The theme of the 2019-2020 Poetry Prize is 'Distance'
2. You may submit up to two poems
3. You may also submit to the Short Story Prize, but must submit your story separately through the Short Story submission portal
4. Submissions will open on 7th October 2019 at 11am, and close at midday Friday, 7th April 2020. Submission is free
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19. By entering the prize you give us the the exclusive right to publish the shortlisted and winning poems for a period of six months following their announcement. After six months, rights revert to the author

20. The organisers reserve the right to change these terms and conditions at any time

Please contact us if you have further questions

About

The Swiss Creative Writing Prize is a competition to encourage creative writing in English amongst high-school-aged students in Switzerland.

It aims to help students develop their thinking, self-expression and creative skills as well as their ability to write in English. Ultimately, we hope that students will develop a love for language and literature.

The Prize was launched in the 2018-2019 school year and we are running it again this year (2019-2020).

The Prize judges will choose up to 10 students for a shortlist. These students will be invited to a writing workshop with the judges at the Lili Centre, Lucerne, in May 2020.

First, second and third prizes will be awarded at the Reception following the workshop. The prizes are CHF 250, CHF 150 and CHF 100 respectively, half in book tokens, half in cash.

Every shortlisted story or poem will be published in an anthology and all shortlisted writers will receive a copy, as will their teachers.

The Prize is being run by Books Books Books, the independent English bookshop in Lausanne, as we believe in the power of creating the written word. While of course there will be ‘winners’ and ‘losers’, we believe that creating a work of fiction or poetry is already a great achievement. We leave it to Samuel Beckett’s poem *Worstward Ho!* to sum up our philosophy:

“On. Say on. Be said on. Somehow on. Till nohow on. Said nohow on.

Say for be said. Missaid. From now say for missaid.

Say a body. Where none. No mind. Where none. That at least. A place. Where none. For the body. To be in. Move in. Out of. Back into. No. No out. No back. Only in. Stay in. On in. Still.

All of old. Nothing else ever. Ever tried. Ever failed. No matter. Try again. Fail again. Fail better.”