



Belmont Presidential Debate Essay Contest Belmont University & Metro Nashville Public Schools

Relevant Academic Standards:

- 12 Grade US Government-Topic 4: Elections, Media, and Political Parties (taught in the 2nd quarter of the semester course)
 - GC.18, GS.32, GC.33
- 4th & 8th grade U.S. History: 8.23, 4.14, 4.28
- ELA Writing Standards: W.TTP.1, W.PDW.4, W.RBPK.7, W.RBPK.8, W.RBPK.9

Submission Deadline: Monday October 5th, 5:00 pm CST

Submission Application Link: https://belmont.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_3DbjL96CmhlauS9

Middle School Essay Prompts (select 1):

- 1) Embedded within the U.S. Constitution are principles including but not limited to separation of powers, branches of government, and checks and balances. In an essay of 500-1,000 words, discuss the importance and significance of the office of executive branch of government, giving special attention to the importance and significance of the U.S. President.
- 2) Embedded within the U.S. Constitution are principles including but not limited to separation of powers, branches of government, and checks and balances. In an essay of 500-1,000 words, discuss one significant action our government could legally take to address a current area of inequity in the U.S.

High School Essay Prompts (select 1):

- 1) In an essay of 800-2,000 words, provide explanation and rationale for the U.S. Electoral College system, and either (a) make a resource-informed argument for its continued use, (b) make a resource-informed argument for its discontinuation, or (c) compare and contrast arguments for and against it. Cite resources as appropriate throughout the essay.
- 2) In an essay of 800-2,000 words, discuss the role of political parties in the nomination process for presidential candidates, and either (a) make a resource-informed argument for continuation of the U.S. two-party system, or (b) make a resource-informed argument for change to the U.S. two-party system. Cite resources as appropriate throughout the essay.
- 3) In an essay of 800-2,000 words, describe the role of the media as a means of communicating information related to the election of the U.S. President, and how the media influences public opinion, for better or for worse.
- 4) In an essay of 800-2,000 words, compare and contrast one area of the [Democratic](#) and [Republican](#) Party platforms (economy, healthcare, education, foreign policy, energy and natural resources, etc.). In the area you have selected, you may choose to (a) make an argument for one party's platform over the other, (b) identify elements of either platform you believe to be positive or negative, or (c) argue that neither party appropriately addresses the area you have selected.

Section I: General Rules:

Eligible MNPS students may submit entries that follow the Submission Guidelines as detailed in *Section III: Submission Guidelines*. Entries will only be accepted through the online submission application. Only one entry per student is permitted. Entries that are incomplete, are submitted late, or do not appropriately respond to one of the essay prompts will not be accepted. By entering the Belmont Presidential Debate Essay Contest, entrants agree that Belmont University will have the right to publicly share and publish essay submissions and that submissions are solely the work of the entrant.

Section II: Eligibility

The Contest is open to all MNPS middle and high school students (traditional, non-traditional, or charter). Students must be enrolled in grades 5-12 at the time of submission.

Section III: Submission Guidelines

Each submission must adhere to the topics and should fully respond to the prompt. Middle school essays must be between 500 and 1,000 words. High school essays must be between 800 and 2,000 words. Each submission must



adhere to the appropriate word limits for level of submission, and must be submitted by 5:00 pm CT on Monday October 5, 2020. Only online submissions will be accepted for the contest. Only one essay per student will be accepted.

Section IV: Judging and Timing

Each submission will be scored by a panel of three judges, including one (1) Belmont faculty member and two (2) Belmont students. After the submission deadline, the judges selected by Belmont will review, score and select finalists from all the eligible entries received. The judges will then select the prize-winners. Entries will be evaluated based upon the following criteria: adherence to the Submission Guidelines (as stated in Section III), originality, organization, writing style, and depth of analysis.

Winners will be announced on the contest site on or before Friday October 16, 2020. Belmont University, in consultation with MNPS, reserves the right in their sole administration of the Contest to disqualify any individual they find or believe to: (i) be tampering with the entry process or the administration of the Contest, (ii) be acting in violation of these Official Rules and Regulations, or (iii) plagiarizing content in any form.

The selection of the judges is within the sole and absolute discretion of Belmont University. The judges who are selected by Belmont may not have direct connection with students who have submitted the entry.

Section V: Awards

Winners will be announced publicly by Belmont and MNPS on or before Friday October 16, 2020. 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place winners will be required to provide publicity photos and biographical information. Winners will be asked to provide a video of themselves reading either the entire essay or an excerpt from the essay. Videos and essays will be shared publicly by Belmont.

First place winners at the middle and high school levels will have their essays published by The Tennessean and have the opportunity for a behind-the-scenes tour of the Belmont Presidential Debate grounds.

Monetary prizes for contest winners will be awarded as follows:

High School Contest:

- 1st Place: \$300
- 2nd Place: \$200
- 3rd Place: \$100

Middle School Contest:

- 1st Place: \$150
- 2nd Place: \$100
- 3rd Place: \$50



Belmont Presidential Debate Essay Scoring Rubric

Traits	4	3	2	1
Focus & Details	There is one clear, well-focused topic. Main ideas are clear and are well supported by detailed and accurate information.	There is one clear, well-focused topic. Main ideas are clear but are not well supported by detailed information.	There is one topic. Main ideas are somewhat clear.	The topic and main ideas are not clear.
Organization	The introduction is inviting, states the main topic, and provides an overview of the paper. Information is relevant and presented in a logical order. The conclusion is strong.	The introduction states the main topic and provides an overview of the paper. A conclusion is included.	The introduction states the main topic. A conclusion is included.	There is no clear introduction, structure, or conclusion.
Voice	The author's purpose of writing is very clear, and there is strong evidence of attention to audience. The author's extensive knowledge and/or experience with the topic is/are evident.	The author's purpose of writing is somewhat clear, and there is some evidence of attention to audience. The author's knowledge and/or experience with the topic is/are evident.	The author's purpose of writing is somewhat clear, and there is evidence of attention to audience. The author's knowledge and/or experience with the topic is/are limited.	The author's purpose of writing is unclear.
Word Choice	The author uses vivid words and phrases. The choice and placement of words seems accurate, natural, and not forced.	The author uses vivid words and phrases. The choice and placement of words is inaccurate at times and/or seems overdone.	The author uses words that communicate clearly, but the writing lacks variety.	The writer uses a limited vocabulary. Jargon or clichés may be present and detract from the meaning.
Sentence Structure, Grammar, Mechanics, & Spelling	All sentences are well constructed and have varied structure and length. The author makes no errors in grammar, mechanics, and/or spelling.	Most sentences are well constructed and have varied structure and length. The author makes a few errors in grammar, mechanics, and/or spelling, but they do not interfere with understanding.	Most sentences are well constructed, but they have a similar structure and/or length. The author makes several errors in grammar, mechanics, and/or spelling that interfere with understanding.	Sentences sound awkward, are distractingly repetitive, or are difficult to understand. The author makes numerous errors in grammar, mechanics, and/or spelling that interfere with understanding.
Reviewer's Comments				