



NIAF NCCA Christopher Columbus Essay Contest

Since 1996, NIAF has joined with the National Christopher Columbus Association to sponsor an annual national essay contest on Christopher Columbus. The contest is open to students in grades 9 through 12 in public, private, or parochial schools, or to those who are home schooled. This contest is conducted without regard to race, religion, gender, or national origin.

For information about the National Columbus Day celebration in Washington, D.C., please visit the National Christopher Columbus Association's website, www.ChristopherColumbus.org.

2026-2027 Topic: Decades before Washington, D.C. existed, Americans had already begun calling their newly formed nation "Columbia," a poetic name derived from Christopher Columbus that appeared in Revolutionary-era songs, poems, and speeches as a symbol of the young republic's identity. In 1791, this name was formally given to the new federal district. Using historical and literary sources from the era explain how Columbus's name became a symbol of the nation itself, and how that legacy is still visible in Washington, D.C. today through its name and its monuments, including the recently restored Columbus Memorial Fountain.

Essay Criteria

Essays must have a word count between 800-1,200 words and will be judged for historical accuracy, adherence to topic, organization of materials, interest, originality, spelling, grammar, punctuation, and neatness. In addition to the required length, students must include the following elements in their essay:

- A title page with an original title, name, mailing address, e-mail address, phone number, school, grade, and word count
- MLA formatted citations and bibliography
- 3 number of print/non-internet sources

Important dates:

All submissions must be sent as PDF or Word Document format via e-mail to education@niaf.org by the deadline below for consideration.

Deadline: 11:59 PM EST March 15, 2027

Notification: June 15, 2027 by 5:00 pm ET

Recognition:

First, second and third-place national winners are selected after judging on a national level. To qualify for first place, the winner must be able to go to Washington, D.C. to read his or her winning essay at the Christopher Columbus Celebration on October 11, 2027. The first-place national winner will receive a \$1,200 prize in addition to paid lodging and transportation to Washington, D.C. in October for the winner and one parent or guardian to attend the NCCA's annual Columbus Day Celebration and read their essay. The second-place national winner receives \$500, and the third-place winner receives \$300.