
Creative Writing Division

Local Level Veteran Participation - VA Local Staff Contacts should keep track of all Veterans who enter through their facility and enter Veteran information into **Local Level Veteran Participation Excel sheet**. VA Local Staff Contacts may access the Local Level Veteran Participation Excel sheet in the Microsoft Teams channel: NVCA Competition-Local Staff Contacts or by emailing Arts4Vets@va.gov.

Drama Entry vs. Creative Writing Entry - Veterans who wish to have their original work judged by **performance criteria** (stage presence, expressiveness, and interpretation) should submit the entry into the **DRAMA** division in one of the categories below that best fits the entry. Veterans who wish to have their **original work** judged by criteria based upon the **merit of the composition** (creative content, message clarity, use of language, and originality of topic or idea) should submit the entry into the **CREATIVE WRITING** division.

Submit Top Three Finalists in Each Category - Facilities may submit the top three finalists in each category. A formal competition is not required at the local level but is strongly encouraged. All eligible Veterans should be given the opportunity to participate regardless of degree of talent.

National Judging and Results - The national judging will occur in October-December via the Word document judging process with results being announced in January. VA Local Staff Contacts at each facility will be notified of the competition results via E-mail and through Microsoft Teams channel: NVCA Competition-Local Staff Contacts. All first-place winners from the national level of the competition will be invited to attend the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival.

Creative Writing Booklet - First-place winning writing entries at the national level of the competition will be printed one-time in a 2025 National Veterans Creative Arts Festival Creative Writing Booklet AND an excerpt of the piece will be printed one-time onto a banner for use during the Festival Writing Exhibition. This banner, excluding the display stand, will become the property of the Veteran post-event.

First-Place National Winning Veterans Invited to the Festival - Veterans invited to the Festival and who accept the invitation to attend must commit to participating fully in the Festival week to the best of their ability. The Festival week is structured with daily workshops, seminars, rehearsals, exhibitions, and the stage show performance. Veterans should not view their attendance at the Festival as a vacation experience. While there are downtimes, attendance and full participation is required at all scheduled events.

Veteran Artists, Writers, Performers who are also VA Employees

VA employees who are eligible to compete and if invited to attend the Festival event, must use annual leave (AL), compensatory time off (CT), sick leave (SL) or disabled veteran leave (DVL) (SL and DVL are only appropriate when the individual's participation is part of their required medical treatment/ordered by their provider), travel CT, or, leave without pay (LWOP). Normal leave approval procedures and rules, as outlined in VA Handbook 5017 and applicable labor agreements, apply.

Creative Writing Division Rules

1. Entries in the creative writing division must have been completed after October 1, 2023.
2. Veterans need to communicate (as early as January 2024) with their local VA facility to find out their local competition deadline date.
3. Veterans may submit an entry (singular) in up to three creative writing categories and one group entry in the special recognition category.
4. **Veterans may only submit one entry per category.** A Veteran may not have more than one entry in a category moving forward to the national level of the competition.
5. Veterans who have received a gold medal in the same category from any of the 5 divisions (art, creative writing, dance, drama, and music) for two consecutive years must enter a different category the third year. Failure to comply with this rule will result in the entry being disqualified.
6. Prior to submitting entries in the competition, eligible Veterans who are also VA employees should discuss leave options/restrictions with their supervisor in the event they might be invited to attend the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival.
7. References to diagnosis and explanations of emotional or personal content related to the Veteran will not be read or communicated to the national judges. The exception to this rule is an entry submitted into a category that requires a write-up.
8. All entries submitted into the Creative Writing Division must be original compositions written solely by the eligible Veteran who is submitting the entry.
9. The National Veterans Creative Arts Festival is not liable for any copyright infringement on the part of the entrant and will not become involved in copyright disputes.
10. Entries **must be** submitted as Microsoft Word documents in 12-point font. Do not send PDF attachments. **Entries submitted as file types other than Word documents will be disqualified.**
11. Creative Writing entries must be submitted as text only. Do not send documents with pictures or graphics. Only the text of the entry will be judged.
12. Entries that contain a combination of writing and art should be entered into the Mixed Arts category in the Drama division – see page 46, Category #13.
13. Judges reserve the right to move an entry to the appropriate category or disqualify the entry if rules are not followed.
14. Collections of poems, essays, stories, etc. submitted as one entry will not be allowed.
15. Veterans who are invited to the Festival and accept the invitation to attend must commit to participating fully in the Festival week to the best of their ability. The Festival week is structured with daily workshops, seminars, rehearsals, exhibitions, and the stage show performance. Veterans should not view their attendance at the Festival as a vacation experience. While there are downtimes, attendance and full participation is required at all scheduled events.

Creative Writing Categories

Important Reminder: Entries **must be** submitted as **Microsoft Word** documents in **12-point font**. Do not send PDF attachments. **Entries submitted as file types other than Word documents will be disqualified.**

1. **Rhyming Poetry-Military Experience** – A verse composition related to military experience, **no longer than 48 lines** in length.
2. **Rhyming Poetry-Inspirational** – An inspirational verse composition, **no longer than 48 lines** in length.
3. **Rhyming Poetry-General Topic** – A general topic verse composition, **no longer than 48 lines** in length.
4. **Non-Rhyming Poetry-Military Experience** – A composition related to military experience, **no longer than 48 lines** in length.
5. **Non-Rhyming Poetry-Inspirational** – An inspirational composition, **no longer than 48 lines** in length.
6. **Non-Rhyming Poetry-General Topic** – A general topic composition, **no longer than 48 lines** in length.
7. **Personal Essay-Military Experience** – A non-fiction essay, **no longer than 850 words**, written in ordinary speech or writing (not poetry) by one eligible Veteran that is a discussion of military experience from the author's personal point of view.
8. **Personal Essay-Inspirational** – A non-fiction essay, **no longer than 850 words**, written in ordinary speech or writing (not poetry) by one eligible Veteran that is an inspirational discussion from the author's personal point of view.
9. **Personal Essay-General Topic** – A non-fiction essay, **no longer than 850 words**, written in ordinary speech or writing (not poetry) by one eligible Veteran that is a general topic discussion from the author's personal point of view.
10. **Humor** – All types of works which employ humor as the primary component should be submitted in this category. **Poetry entries should be no longer than 48 lines and prose entries must not exceed 850 words.**
11. **Short, Short Story** – A short story, **no longer than 1,000 words**. The story must have a beginning, middle, and an end.

12. Short Script – Part of a script for one or more characters. Scripts should document the movement, scene descriptions, acting style instructions, and dialogue of the characters and should be written in a screenplay format and resemble the blueprint for a play, television show, or film. Short Script entries written in prose format (written language that follows the natural flow of speech, with words and phrases that build full sentences and paragraphs) will not be accepted. Entries in this category **must not exceed 850 words**.

13. Special Recognition - Individual or group. Entries by Veterans who exhibit creative expression through use of creative writing while possessing significant physical or psychological limitations. The intent of this category is to reinforce the concept of the arts as therapy, where individuals use artistic expression to facilitate successful treatment outcomes. **Poetry entries should be no longer than 48 lines and prose entries must not exceed 1,000 words.**

Entries in this category **MUST** also include:

- **A Word document containing a typed statement/narrative** (50 to 250 words) composed by a VA staff person or the Veteran explaining why the Veteran is deserving of special recognition. **Entries submitted without a write-up will not be judged.**
- Consent form 10-3203 and 10-5345 (included in this handbook) must be signed and dated by the Veteran. The staff contact person submitting the entry for the Veteran should safeguard the signed consent forms at their VA facility.

Sample Creative Writing Judging Criteria

Sample Creative Writing Judging Score Sheet

Category Number:	Category Name:
Title of Entry:	

CRITERIA	POINTS									
Creative Content	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Message Clarity	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Use of Language	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Originality of Topic or Idea	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Overall Strength of Composition	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

TOTAL SCORE _____

How to Submit Entries to the National Competition

Entries may be submitted **only by VA Local Staff Contacts** to the national level of the competition using the Arts4Vets App.

Non-VA Staff from other government Veteran medical facilities will not have upload access to the Arts4Vets App and may continue submit entries in other ways. Please reach out to the National Director or division chairpersons to coordinate.

Veterans will not be able to submit their own entries through to the national level of competition or directly into the Arts4Vets App. They must work with the VA facility where they are enrolled and meet the local competition deadline dates.

File Naming Convention: There is no required file naming convention. Files uploaded to the Arts4Vets App will automatically be renamed to coordinate with the entry data.

Creative Writing Division Entry Form

Individual Entry – For an entry submitted by one Veteran

Veteran Name:		Email:	
Gender:		Phone #:	

**Gender information used only for national participation data collection.*

Group Entry – For an entry submitted by a group of Veterans into the Special Recognition category

Veteran Name and Gender	Veteran Phone Number and Email

**Gender information used only for national participation data collection.*

Group Name:	
Number of Veterans in Group:	

Category Number and Name:	
Title of Piece:	
Line count (for poetry entries only):	
Word count (for prose entries only):	
Veteran(s) give(s) permission for the entry to be included in a booklet if the entry wins first place at the national level of the competition.	Veteran Initials:

***Veterans:** By entering this competition, you acknowledge that your name, email, phone number, entry, and entry detail information may be uploaded into the VA Arts4Vets/Salesforce Application for the purpose of collecting and organizing competition entries.

Veterans: *I/we confirm this piece was completed after October 1, 2023. I/we have read all the rules for the division in which I/we am/are entering. If this entry wins first place at the national level of the competition, I/we give permission for this writing piece to be printed in a compilation booklet and distributed at the at the 2025 National Veterans Creative Arts Festival. I/we have signed the required Consent for Picture/Voice form (VA form 10-3203).*

Veteran(s) Signature(s):

VA Staff Checklist

- Meets the competition eligibility criteria
- Is approved to enter the NVCA Competition as a representative of this VA facility
- Has signed the necessary consent forms (10-3203 and if necessary, 10-5345) – reference Page 10 for links to forms

