

“TELL ME A STORY”

TCPL WARREN SCHOLAR WRITING COMPETITION

GRADES
K-12

Every story
deserves to be heard!

2026 Theme:

“The Past in the Present”

March 3rd–April 16th

EVENT RULES

- Open to all students in grades K-12.
- Each entry must have a title and the student's name, grade, and contact information on a separate cover page.
- Poems & Stories must be original. Plagiarism is not allowed.
- Entries will be judged on theme, character development, imagination, and writing style.

★ PRIZES ★

1st PLACE
\$200 + Warren Scholar Plaque

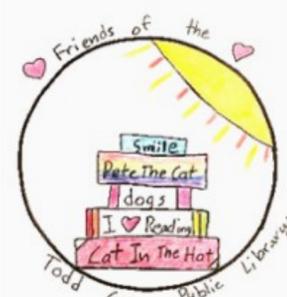
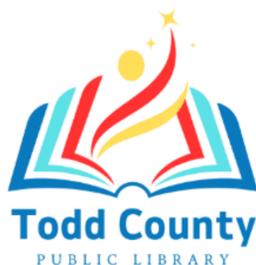
2nd PLACE
\$100

3rd PLACE
\$50

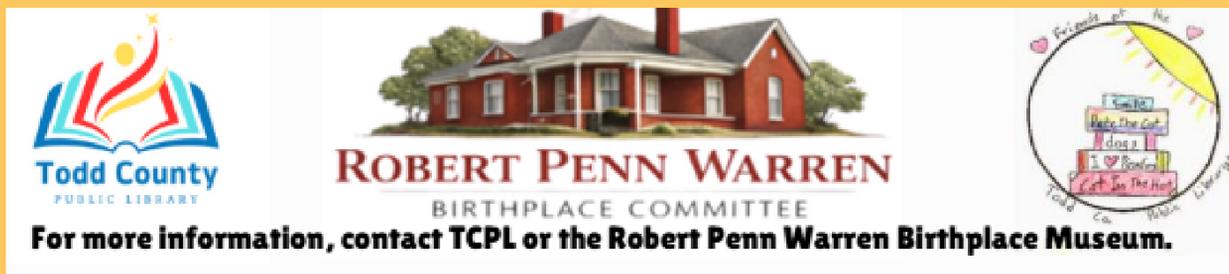
How to

Register?

Submit your poem or story to TCPL, your Todd County school, or library@toddcountylibrary.org



For more information, contact TCPL or the Robert Penn Warren Birthplace Museum.



TCPL's "Tell Me a Story" Robert Penn Warren Scholar Writing Competition

Theme: "The Past in the Present"

Objective: To encourage students to craft narrative works (short stories or narrative poems) that explore how historical events, family legacies, or past personal actions influence the present moment.

Eligibility: Open to all public and homeschooling students (Grades K-12) residing in Todd County, Kentucky.

1. Competition Prompts (Choose One)

Inspired by Warren's poem "Tell Me a Story"

Prompt A (Narrative Fiction): "In this century, and moment, of mania, tell me a story." Write a story about a character trying to find a "deep delight" or a moment of peace amidst modern chaos.

Prompt B (Historical Fiction/Poetry): "History among the rocks." Write a story or poem that uncovers a hidden piece of local history (a forgotten building, a local legend, a family secret) and reveals how it shapes a character's life today.

Prompt C (The Moral Dilemma): Robert Penn Warren often explored "guilt, loss, and the search for meaning". Write a story about a character who must make a difficult moral choice, and live with the consequences, echoing the theme of "individual responsibility".

2. Submission Guidelines

Length: Short stories (1,000–2,500 words); Poetry (1–3 pages). Format: Times New Roman, 12pt font, double-spaced.

Anonymity: To ensure fair judging, submissions must be blind. The manuscript should have a title but no author name. The author's name and class year should be included in a separate "cover letter" document (or a sealed envelope).

Deadline: April 16th

3. Judging Criteria

Entries will be judged on the following, reflecting the "New Criticism" approach championed by Warren:

Voice and Style: Use of descriptive language to appeal to the senses.

Thematic Depth: How well the story tackles the complexities of the theme.

Character Development: Exploration of the human condition and moral struggle.

Structure and Narrative: Quality of imagination and engagement.

4. Prizes

First Prize: \$200 award and publication in the school literary magazine and local newspaper.

Second Prize: \$100

Third Prize: \$50

First Place Winner: An entry on the TCPL annual plaque recognizing the winner as a "Warren Scholar."