

ESSAY IDEAS and GUIDELINES FOR THE 2014 STUDENT CONTEST

Choose and discuss one of the four topics listed below:

(1) In support of the 2013 “One Book, One San Diego” book titled *CALEB’S CROSSING* by Geraldine Brooks, focus your essay on early American History (1600’s) and the struggles of Native Americans and women during this time period. This book, inspired by a true story and narrated by Bethia, captures the triumphs and turmoil of two brave young spirits who risk everything in a search for knowledge at a time of superstition and ignorance.

Bethia Mayfield, the 12-year-old daughter of a minister, is a child in the mid 1600’s on a beautiful, wild island that would later be named Martha’s Vineyard. She’s not allowed to study like her brothers even though she is smarter than they are. She sees how the settlers treat the local Indians, the Wampanoag, and the disdain with which they viewed this tribe’s religion. When she becomes a woman in this early American society, Bethia isn’t treated much better; she must submit to the authority of the men who dominated puritan life and certainly never speak her mind.

Girls could not be schooled, but Bethia learns Latin, history, and the Wampanoag language on her own by eavesdropping as the boys are taught. While exploring the island on her horse one day, she meets a young Wampanoag boy named Caleb. He teaches her about his world. She helps him understand her world. Bethia’s family is unaware of the friendship between Bethia and Caleb as the two grow up side by side. Their bond is based on friendship, not flirtation. The novel’s title refers to Caleb’s journey from his world into Bethia’s, but it is really a story about both of them.

Geraldine Brooks based this novel on several historical facts, including the founding of Harvard College in 1636; the purchase of Martha’s Vineyard by Puritans in the early 1640s; and the graduation from Harvard in 1665 of Caleb Cheeshahteumauk. Because few written items, especially by women of the 1600’s, survive, the process of creating the narrator’s voice became a challenge for Geraldine Brooks. While writing *Caleb’s Crossing* she had to invent a kind of 1600’s “language” for Bethia to “speak”.

Using narrative techniques, write an essay that tells how you feel about the historical hardships faced by native Americans and women and how they have fought to gain respect, success and leadership roles throughout our history.

Follow the guidelines for size, spacing, font, etc. as outlined on the entry form.

KPBS “One Book, One San Diego” also selected, for 2013, *JINGLE DANCER* by Cynthia Leitich Smith. The main character in this story, Jenna, is a modern Muscogee (Creek) young Native American girl in Oklahoma.

Jenna wants to honor a family tradition by Jingle Dancing at the next powwow. This simple story of culture, tradition and love in a modern American Indian family is delightful and will appeal to all ages.

Previous Year’s “One Book, One San Diego” title selections included modern issues such as immigration, religious differences, culture ‘clash’, parental discord, consequences of war, sorrow, grief and friendship. Listed below are some of those titles that you might enjoy:

2012: *Sky of Red Poppies*, Ghahremani; *Moloka’i*, Brenner; *Into the Beautiful North*, Urrea; **2011:** *The Gangster We Are All Looking For*, le thi diem thuy; **2010:** *Outcasts United*, St. John; **2009:** *The Zookeeper’s Wife*, Ackerman; **2008:** *Three Cups of Tea*, Mortenson & Relin; **2007:** *Enrique’s Journey*, Nazario.

Or you may want to choose another title: see the attached list of similar titles. (Several for younger students)

2014 Traditional Topics you might decide to write about:

(2) A book that inspired me to help save the earth I will inherit is...Why?

California Literacy Standard: 2.2 - Response to Literature (Grades 4, 8, 10)

(3) If all the books in the world were about to disappear, but I could save one, what would it be? ...Why?

California Literacy Standard: 2.3 - Information Report (Grades 4, 8, 10)

(4) What resources are available to me at my San Diego Public Library relating to my personal interests, such as my favorite sport, hobby, etc.?...Describe.

*California Literacy Standards: 2.3 - Information Report (Grade 4, 8, 10)
2.4 - Persuasive Composition (Grades 8 & 10)*

For more information about “One Book, One San Diego” go to <http://www.kpbs.org/one-book/>