



FRAN ABRAMS CREATIVE WRITING AWARD
For Montgomery County High School Juniors

2020 - 2021 AWARD GUIDELINES

SUBMISSION DETAILS

APPLICATION DEADLINE: Friday, April 16, 2021 at 11:59 p.m.

Award notifications will occur in June 2021.

**All applications and relevant materials must be submitted online through
AHCMC's application portal: <https://artsandhumanities.smapply.io/>**

Late applications and materials will not be accepted.

801 Ellsworth Drive, Silver Spring, MD 20910
(301) 565-3805
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The Mission of the Arts & Humanities Council of Montgomery County

The Arts & Humanities Council of Montgomery County (AHCMC), in partnership with the community, cultivates and supports excellence in the arts and the humanities, expands access to cultural expression, and contributes to economic vitality in the region.

Equity & Inclusion

With the acknowledgement and understanding that access to resources has been historically limited for certain groups of people, AHCMC is committed to cultural equity within all funding activities and to serving communities that have been traditionally underrepresented in mainstream funding, discourse, leadership, and resource allocation, including but not limited to, Black, Indigenous, Native American, Latinx, Chicax, Arab, MENASA (Middle Eastern, North African, South Asian), Asian, Pacific Islander, and other communities of color, socio-economically disadvantaged communities, differently abled individuals and/or people with disabilities, and Two-Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, and Asexual constituents.

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Introduction

The *Fran Abrams Creative Writing Award* is a competitive award open annually to all Montgomery County high school juniors. Established in 2010, this award honors both a high school junior who excels in creative writing as well as Fran Abrams, who worked tirelessly throughout her career to support the arts and humanities in Montgomery County.

Purpose

This award benefits a high school junior, enrolled in a public or non-public high school in Montgomery County, who intends to pursue the study of and/or a career in creative writing.

The 2020 - 2021 *Fran Abrams Creative Writing Award* will be presented to one recipient following a juried selection process that is based upon the merit of original submitted work and the applicant's commitment to the creative writing discipline, not financial need.

Award

The awardee receives an award of \$3,000, a mentorship with a professional writer, and the opportunity for the awardee to read their own work during an award ceremony.

2020 - 2021 *Fran Abrams Creative Writing Award* Estimated Timeline

Application Preparation Webinars	March 2021
Application Deadline	April 2021
Panel Review	June 2021
Award Announcement	July 2021
Award Ceremony	To Be Determined 2021

Important Notes

- Writing samples must be the applicants own work; collaborative works or group projects **will not be accepted**.
- Writing samples should be from work created within the last two years.
- Work samples are not limited to work created for school credit.
- Incomplete submissions **will not be accepted**.

Applicant Eligibility Requirements

An individual is eligible to apply if the individual meets all the following eligibility requirements **by the published deadline**:

- Resides in Montgomery County, MD;
- Is able to provide AHCMC with a Social Security Number (SSN) or Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN) prior to receiving the award disbursement;
- Is enrolled full-time during the fall of 2020 and spring of 2021 of their junior year in a public or non-public high school located in Montgomery County (home-schooled students are also eligible to apply); and
- Will be graduating high school in the spring of 2022.

Creative Writing Disciplines

The work submitted must demonstrate the applicant's proficiency in any of, or combination of the following creative writing disciplines:

- Poetry
- Fiction
- Songwriting
- Scriptwriting
- Creative Nonfiction¹

Work samples in the above disciplines may include but are not limited to:

- Novels
- Poems
- Short stories
- Song lyrics
- Memoirs
- Personal essays
- Screenplays for film or television
- Scripts for theater, podcasts, or radio

For applicants whose work has a performance aspect to it, such as spoken word, or is conveyed through media, such as a podcast or radio broadcast, a video and/or audio upload in addition to the written component is strongly encouraged.

Review Panel Process

All eligible applications are evaluated by a panel of writing professionals in an open panel review process. Panelists are chosen to represent a cross-section of professionals qualified to provide expert knowledge of creative writing and arts education. AHCMC staff make every effort to ensure that the panel is diverse in all respects.

AHCMC staff review applications for eligibility and completeness, but do not score. Staff manage all administrative and logistical tasks necessary to conduct a successful panel review, provide panelists all documentation necessary to evaluate applications effectively, inform the panel in matters of AHCMC policy and procedures, and facilitate panel meetings. Panelists are provided with the eligible applications and support materials approximately four weeks prior to the panel review meeting to allow sufficient time for their evaluation. All eligible applications are evaluated based on the following AHCMC Evaluation Criteria: Activities & Relevant Skills, Career Goals, Technical Skills, and Originality & Creativity (described in detail below).

The panel convenes to discuss and provide scores for each application. Panel meetings are open to applicants who wish to observe; however, applicants are not permitted to make any comments or participate in any way at the panel meeting. Applicants may not contact panelists before or after the panel meeting regarding their application review. Once the application deadline has passed and the panel has received the application for review, AHCMC staff will not forward updates from the applicant to the panel.

AHCMC grants staff use the applicant's panel scores to recommend an awardee to AHCMC's CEO. AHCMC's CEO has final authority to approve the recommended awardee.

Panel scores and comments are available to all applicants upon request after the award notification has been publicly announced. Applicants are **highly encouraged** to schedule a feedback appointment to review panel scores and comments by contacting Ana-Alicia Feng, Grants Program Assistant Manager, at AnaAlicia.Feng@creativemoco.com or (301) 565-3805 ext. 21.

¹ Creative Nonfiction is the retelling of factual events and/or people in a dramatic, creative way. For the purposes of this award, research/history papers will not be accepted. If you have any questions, please contact Ana-Alicia Feng, Grants Program Assistant Manager, at AnaAlicia.Feng@creativemoco.com or (301) 565-3805 ext. 21.

Evaluation Criteria

Panelists evaluate and score each 2020 – 2021 *Fran Abrams Creative Writing Award* application based on the extent to which the application addresses the following Evaluation Criteria. An applicant's commitment to each Evaluation Criteria should thread through the entire application, including the narratives and work sample(s).

Activities & Relevant Skills (25 points)

- ✓ Clearly describes creative writing activities outside school, additional extracurricular activities, and other obligations, which can include paid work
 - If the applicant does not participate in any extracurricular activities, the applicant should provide a statement explaining why
- ✓ Demonstrates interest in developing skills that will serve them in a creative writing or creative writing-related career

Career Goals (25 points)

- ✓ Demonstrates commitment to the creative writing discipline
- ✓ Provides clear statement of goals for a creative writing or creative writing-related career
- ✓ Outlines specific steps to achieve the stated goals

Technical Skills (25 points)

- ✓ Demonstrates proficiency in the discipline(s) that is appropriate for an emerging writer
- ✓ Provides a description of skills and techniques used
- ✓ Presents work samples that are appropriately formatted

Originality & Creativity (25 points)

- ✓ Demonstrates creativity, originality, and strong conceptualization
- ✓ Shows versatility by challenging standard clichés, genre boundaries, and/or notions of how a particular concept or emotion can be expressed
- ✓ Explains themes and patterns present throughout the work

The Online Application Process

All applications and relevant materials must be submitted online through the AHCMC [SurveyMonkey Apply \(SM Apply\)](#) application portal. For questions about SM Apply, please contact Ana-Alicia Feng, Grants Program Assistant Manager, at (301) 565-3805 ext. 21, or AnaAlicia.Feng@creativemoco.com.

Required Application Materials

A completed, online application includes:

1. Completed Narrative

- [Download a template of the application under the "Application" tab on the AHCMC website by clicking here.](#) Please note that templates are for the applicant's reference only and all applications and materials must be submitted through SM Apply.

2. High School Transcript

- Applicants must upload one copy of their current high school transcript verified by the original signature of their guidance counselor as a PDF document. This signature verifies

that the applicant's grades are up-to-date and that they are on track to graduate with a high school diploma in the spring of 2022.

- Home-schooled applicants may have their current high school transcript signed by their primary instructor if a guidance counselor is not available.
- **Transcripts will only be used to verify eligibility; transcripts will not be sent to the panel and will not be used as part of the evaluation process.**

3. Home-School Notification Form (required for home-schooled students only)

- All home-schooled applicants must submit a Home-School Notification Form signed by a parent or guardian who verifies that the student is home-schooled and that they comply with Maryland State Department of Education home-schooling regulations.
- **The Home-School Notification Form will only be used to verify eligibility; the form will not be sent to the panel and will not be used as part of the evaluation process.**

4. Work Sample(s)

- Upload a **maximum of 10 work samples, maximum 10 pages and 10 files total** that are original work, created within the past two years.
 - At least one piece must be work that the applicant would feel comfortable sharing and reading publicly.
 - Check work sample(s) for spelling, grammar, and syntax.
- Applicants may submit work samples for a combination of disciplines.
 - If submitting more than one work sample, upload a cover page with work sample number, title of each work, genre, and year completed.
 - [A template for the cover sheet can be found on the AHCMC website under the "Application" tab by clicking here.](#)
- The work sample(s) must consist of the following:
 - Poetry/Songwriting: Submit no more than 10 poems and/or song lyrics, **10 pages maximum**.
 - Fiction/Creative Nonfiction/Scriptwriting: You may submit multiple pieces, or an excerpt that is part of a larger piece, double-spaced with 1" margins, **10 pages maximum**.
 - If the written work sample has a performance component, the applicant has the option of uploading a supplemental sample **in addition** to the written work sample as follows:
 - Video: Maximum 2 videos, up to 100 MB per file, no more than five minutes combined.
 - Audio: Maximum 2 audio files, up to 10 MB per file, no more than five minutes combined.
 - Live video or audio hyperlinks can also be placed within a PDF (i.e., a live hyperlink to YouTube within a PDF).
 - If the submitted video and/or audio is more than 5 minutes combined, applicants will be provided with a space to include instructions for which segments the panel should pay attention to. (Ex: Please click on the YouTube hyperlink to watch the video from 0:47 to 4:10)

Application Preparation Assistance

Applicants are highly encouraged to contact AHCMC grants staff with any questions prior to the application deadline.

Application Preparation Webinars

AHCMC staff will hold free preparation webinars to provide assistance to those applying for the *Fran Abrams Creative Writing Award*. While attendance is not required, AHCMC strongly encourages all potential applicants to attend a webinar. Whether or not an applicant attends a webinar will not be a factor in evaluating the application. Please go to <https://www.creativemoco.com/find-opportunities/newsletters/> to join the AHCMC Grants Program email list and receive notifications about opportunities, deadlines, and webinars.

Personal Appointments

Personal appointments are available for students who are unable to attend a webinar or who need additional assistance. Assistance for both the content of the application and the online application system is available. Consultation services in languages other than English are available by appointment.

Personal appointments must be held **at least two weeks prior to the application deadline**. To schedule an appointment, contact Ana-Alicia Feng, Grants Program Assistant Manager, at (301) 565-3805 ext. 21, or AnaAlicia.Feng@creativemoco.com.

Post-Award Information

Applicants are strongly encouraged to read this section carefully before submitting an application.

Award Recipient Responsibility

As conditions for accepting the award, the award recipient understands and agrees to honor the following obligations:

- The award recipient will work with a creative writing mentor designated by AHCMC;
- The award recipient must attend the award ceremony;
- The award recipient must agree to read their original work at the award ceremony;
- AHCMC reserves the right to produce one slide from the award recipient's submission, at the Council's expense, to publicize the award ceremony, and for other AHCMC publications. AHCMC agrees to credit the award recipient by name and include copyright symbol on the written work. AHCMC will not use the recipient's writing for monetary advantage; and
- AHCMC reserves the right to publish the name of the recipient and the recipient's high school in press releases to publicize the *Fran Abrams Creative Writing Award*.

Award Disbursement

The full award will be disbursed to the award recipient following AHCMC's receipt of:

- A W-9 form with the award recipient's Social Security Number (SSN) or Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN);
- The Bill.com contact form and the creation of a Bill.com account, allowing direct deposit of funds to the award recipient's bank account²;
- The required Intellectual Property Release Form; and
- The Media Release Form.

² AHCMC uses a paperless payment process to disburse awards. Bill.com is an online system that allows AHCMC to send secure E-payments.

The Bill.com Contact Form, Intellectual Property Release Form, and Media Release form must all be signed by both the award recipient and a parent and/or legal guardian of the award recipient.

Important Reminders & Tips

- Applications must be submitted online through AHCMC's application portal **by 11:59 p.m. on the posted deadline. Late applications will not be accepted.**
- Applications that are emailed, delivered in person, faxed, or submitted in any fashion other than the online application system will not be accepted.
- **Follow the instructions in SM Apply carefully.**
- Write clearly and concisely—do not use jargon. Remember that the panelists who are reading the application may be unfamiliar with the applicant's work.
- Keep in mind that the AHCMC staff does not participate in panel discussions—the application must stand on its own.
- Be sure to reference the evaluation criteria when preparing and writing the application.
- Before submitting, proofread the application for readability and content.
- **To avoid unanticipated technical glitches, do not wait until the deadline to submit.**

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Questions?

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