

2025 FFRF Student Essay Competitions

The Freedom From Religion Foundation offers the following 2025 essay competitions for freethinking high school students.

William J. Schulz Memorial Essay Contest for College-Bound High School Seniors

Topic: “. . . .To do good is my religion”

Prompt: Thomas Paine, our “forgotten Founder,” famously wrote that “to do good is my religion.” Write a first-person essay that asserts why “doing good” is not dependent on religious belief. Explain why you are not religious, and what you think morality should be based on instead of God, holy books or dogma. How would you counter common myths that atheists are immoral or “can’t be good without God.” If you have examples of how you’ve “done good” to help others, include in your essay.

Word Limit: 350-500

Eligibility: Open to all high school seniors who graduate in spring 2025, who will be attending a North American college or university in fall 2025. Exception for “gap year” students. Fill out application, read other rules and submit essay here.

Deadline: Fill out the application and submit your essay no later than 11: 59 p.m. CDT, May 1, 2025. Winners will be notified no later than August 2025.

David Hudak Memorial Essay Contest for Freethinking Black, Indigenous & Students of Color

Topic: “How white Christian nationalism endangers my rights.”

Prompt: Research and write a first-person essay about how white Christian nationalism poses a danger to your rights. Choose one particular attack by Christian nationalism on civil liberties — such as against DEI, voting rights, LGBTQ rights, reproductive rights, or general civil rights — and explain how white Christian nationalism poses a threat and how that threat impacts you, your family or others in the BIPOC community. Suggest one or two strategies that you as a nonreligious individual could personally do to combat white Christian nationalism and champion secularism and equality.

Word Limit: 350-500

Eligibility: Open only to Black, Indigenous and Students of Color ages 17–21, who are either high school seniors graduating in spring 2025 who will be attending a North American college or university in fall 2025, or who are currently enrolled in a North American college or university. FFRF offers other essay contests open to all students in your age group. Students may only enter one FFRF contest annually. This contest is offered to provide support and acknowledgment for freethinking Students of Color, as a minority within a minority. Fill out application, read other rules and submit essay here.

Deadline: Fill out the application and submit your essay no later than 11:59 p.m. CDT, June 1, 2025. Winners will be notified no later than August 2025.

Requirements: Winners may be asked to send verification of student enrollment.

Students will be disqualified if they do not follow instructions, including word limit and deadline. Students are required to submit their essays via the online application and should carefully review all contest rules. FFRF monitors for plagiarism. Include links or footnotes for quotes, studies cited, or major facts relied upon. Entrants must verify the essay is their original work and that AI was not used in the writing of the text (beyond grammar and spellcheck).

THE HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES

The history of the United States is a story of growth and change. From the first European settlers to the present day, the nation has evolved through various stages of development. The early years were marked by exploration and the establishment of colonies. The American Revolution led to the birth of a new nation, and the subsequent years saw the expansion of territory and the growth of industry. The Civil War was a pivotal moment in the nation's history, leading to the abolition of slavery and the strengthening of the federal government. The 20th century brought significant social and economic changes, including the rise of the industrial revolution and the emergence of the United States as a global superpower.

The American Revolution was a defining moment in the nation's history. It was a struggle for independence from British rule, fought between 1775 and 1783. The revolution was led by a group of patriots who believed in the rights of the colonists to self-governance. The Declaration of Independence, signed in 1776, declared the colonies as free and independent states. The war ended with the signing of the Treaty of Paris in 1783, which recognized the United States as a sovereign nation.

The American Civil War, fought from 1861 to 1865, was a conflict between the Northern states and the Southern states. The war was primarily over the issue of slavery. The Southern states, led by Jefferson Davis, seceded from the Union in 1862. The Northern states, led by Abraham Lincoln, fought to preserve the Union and abolish slavery. The war ended with the Union's victory and the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863, which declared that all slaves in the Confederate states were free.

The American Civil War was a defining moment in the nation's history. It was a struggle for the soul of the nation, fought between the Northern states and the Southern states. The war was primarily over the issue of slavery. The Southern states, led by Jefferson Davis, seceded from the Union in 1862. The Northern states, led by Abraham Lincoln, fought to preserve the Union and abolish slavery. The war ended with the Union's victory and the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863, which declared that all slaves in the Confederate states were free.

The American Civil War was a defining moment in the nation's history. It was a struggle for the soul of the nation, fought between the Northern states and the Southern states. The war was primarily over the issue of slavery. The Southern states, led by Jefferson Davis, seceded from the Union in 1862. The Northern states, led by Abraham Lincoln, fought to preserve the Union and abolish slavery. The war ended with the Union's victory and the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863, which declared that all slaves in the Confederate states were free.