MCHE's White Rose Research Contest ABOUT

This research contest is named in honor of the White Rose resistance movement of German university students. Hans and Sophie Scholl, Christoph Probst, other friends, and their professor were arrested and executed for distributing leaflets denouncing the policies of the Nazi regime. May memories of these brave young people inspire us to reflect upon our own responsibilities as citizens in a democratic nation.



Left to Right: Hans and Sophie Scholl, Christoph Probst

TWO CONTEST CATEGORIES

Lower Division: Grades 8 and 9 Essay
with Works Cited

Upper Division: Grades 10, 11, and 12 Essay
with Works Cited

There will be no documentary category of White Rose competition in 2026-2027.

Students may submit one entry per year. Students may enter the contest each year they are enrolled in grades 8—12. Previous finalists and winners may enter again.

Sponsoring teachers may submit ten of the best essays created by their assigned students during a contest year. Please use the contest rubrics when evaluating entries for submission.

CONTEST GOALS

- Increase understanding of the Holocaust.
- Promote interest in historical research.
- Develop skills in analyzing sources and using primary source materials.
- Practice critical thinking, including synthesizing info from multiple sources.
- Practice citing and documenting sources.
- Provide a "real world" audience for academic work and the incentive of public recognition.

"Somebody, after all, had to make a start. What we wrote and said is also believed by many others. They just don't dare express themselves as we did."
Sophie Scholl

AWARDS

Lower Division Essay Winner…….$300

Upper Division Essay Winner…….$300

The sponsoring teachers of contest winners will be awarded a $150 voucher they may use to purchase Holocaust-related books or instructional materials for classroom use. Teachers may apply the voucher to courses or books for professional development.

Contest finalists and their sponsoring teachers will be recognized at an Academic Awards Ceremony in early May where the winners will be announced and invited to read excerpts from their essays. Following the ceremony, winning essays will be available on the MCHE website.

The White Rose Research Contest is made possible by generous financial benefactors of the Midwest Center for Holocaust Education and many volunteers who evaluate submissions.

MCHE's White Rose Research Contest RULES

Failure to follow these rules may cause an entry to be disqualified.

GENERAL CONTEST RULES:

- No portion of the work may be plagiarized.
- No portion of the work may utilize artificial intelligence (AI).
- Sponsoring teachers may instruct, guide, review, and suggest, but may not rewrite or extensively edit student work.
- Entries must be submitted through the MCHE website by the contest deadline.
- Entries will not be returned.
- Entrants give MCHE permission to publish winning entries.
- Decisions of the judges are final.

CONTEST RULES GOVERNING THE USE OF SOURCES:

- Contestants must base their entry on **both required contest documents (the survivor testimony and Through Hell to the Midwest map)** for the survivor of their choice from the provided list**.**
- In addition, contestants must use **at least three additional sources** obtained through research.
- **All information beyond common knowledge must be cited** within the text of the essay.
- Citations must an official citation style of your choice (unless your teacher requires a specific style) and be consistent throughout the essay and Works Cited page. The OWL (Online Writing Lab) at Purdue is a good source of information about these style manuals.
- A **Works Cited page must be included** as the last page of the essay. It must list—in alphabetical order—**all and only** the sources cited within the essay.
- **The citation style used for the essay and Works Cited must be stated on the title line of the Works Cited page.** Example: "Works Cited - MLA"
- The Works Cited need not be included in the word count.
- **Bibliographies are not allowed.** (Please check the difference between a Works Cited and a Bibliography.)
- **White Rose is a RESEARCH contest.** An entry may be disqualified if it has not met the minimum standards for citations described above.

CONTEST RULES FOR ESSAYS:

- **1,600 words maximum are allowed for an essay**. The word count need not include the Works Cited.
- At minimum, **one-fourth of the total length of the essay (400 of 1,600 words) must be reserved for the reflection portion of the contest prompt**.
- Authors may make limited use of images in their essays. See the webpage for additional information.
- Essays must be the original work of a single student.

MCHE's White Rose Research Contest FAQs

- **What grade levels are eligible to participate?**
  Students currently enrolled in grades 8–12 may submit an entry.

- **How many entries may one student submit?**
  Students may submit one entry per year.

- **May a student enter the contest during more than one year?**
  Yes, students may submit one entry each of the five years they are eligible. Previous winners may enter the contest again.

- **May a student enter the contest without the sponsorship of a teacher?**
  White Rose is academically rigorous. Therefore, students must ask an adult – preferably an educator - to serve as an advisor/sponsor if they choose to undertake the contest independently.

- **Are students who attend alternative schools, home schools, online schools, or other non-traditional schools allowed to participate?**
  All students in grades 8—12 are welcome to participate.

- **May a group of students work together and submit one essay as a team?**
  Essays must represent the work of one student working independently.

- **How many entries may a school submit?**
  Each teacher who incorporates the White Rose contest into their instructional program and supervises students' work is eligible to submit the 10 best essays their students create in an academic year. Please consult the scoring rubrics for contest criteria.

- **Do students need to cite the sources used in their contest submissions?**
  Students must cite sources in the text of their essays using MLA, APA, or CMS format AND include a Works Cited page (not a Bibliography) with their essay.

- **How are entries evaluated?**
  Every entry is evaluated by **three volunteer judges**—such as language and history teachers, professional writers, librarians, lawyers, rabbis, ministers—using the same scoring rubric published for use by teachers and students. The scores for each paper are summed. Then the highest composite scores in each division are declared **finalists**. These entries are passed on to a small group of history professors who will evaluate the final round of entries. They use the contest rubrics to select the contest winners in each division.

- **How will contest results be communicated?**
  Finalists will be invited to attend MCHE's Academic Awards Ceremony held in early May. Contest results will appear on our website shortly after the ceremony.

- **Will students receive feedback on their entries?**
  Sadly, the number of entries received makes it impossible for us to return scores to students.

- **What happens to contest entries?**
  Entries will not be returned. Entrants give MCHE permission to reprint and publish entries.

- **Do you offer professional development for teachers to help them prepare for the contest?**
  Yes! MCHE offers a "Preview the Contest" workshop for teachers via Zoom. Check our website for specific dates and registration.

- **Are there limits on the geographic location of entrants to MCHE's contest?**
  Although we primarily expect to serve students in the midwestern states, students from any U.S. states and territories are welcome to participate.

- **Does a Holocaust Center near me have a White Rose contest?**
  Maybe. MCHE has helped other centers launch their own research contests, although they may have given it a different name. If you live outside the Midwest, contact us for more information.

MCHE's White Rose Research Contest FORMAT

YOU SHOULD KNOW:

An MCHE team member will assign a code number to each contest entry. This helps us track the entries as we distribute them to judges, receive their scores, and tabulate the finalists. Most of our judges choose to print their assigned entries before reading, annotating, and scoring them. We need your help to make this process as smooth as possible. It is also our goal to keep the contest fair and objective. In other words, we don't want our judges to know whose essay they are reading.

Therefore, it is important that you follow these **FORMAT GUIDELINES FOR WRITTEN WORK:**

- Type your essay in standard 8.5 x 11-inch document format. Allow 1-inch margins on all sides.
- Double-space text and use Times New Roman or Garamond font in a 12-point size. We recommend these fonts because the regular and italic type styles are easy to distinguish from one another.
- The title of the essay should be centered on the first line of the first page. A double-space is permitted after the title. The title should be relevant to the thesis of your paper. "White Rose Essay" is not an appropriate title.
- Create a header in the upper right-hand corner that numbers all pages consecutively. Students are allowed to use their last names along with the page number in this header. Teachers who have more than one student with the same last name may permit addition of a first name initial.
- Other than the header described above, there should be no other identifying information on the entry—no first name, teacher's name, course title, grade level, school name, city, state, etc.
- **DO NOT SUBMIT A COVER PAGE.**
- The citation style used must be stated on the title line of the Works Cited page. Example: "Works Cited - MLA"
- Please note the accepted file extensions on the contest submission form. **PDF file submissions will not be accepted.** If you work in Google Docs, download and save your work as a Word file before submitting.

MCHE's White Rose Research Contest TIPS

HOW TO CREATE A CONTEST-WINNING ENTRY:

Besides following the rules, these insider tips can help you create a winning entry.

- **The scoring rubric is the secret to success**. Having the scoring rubric in advance allows contestants to see exactly how their work will be evaluated. Note that the most successful essays will use all sources fully, offer consistent analysis and thoughtful reasoning, and maintain clear, compelling organization to support a clear thesis. Use the rubric as an asset.

- **Stick to the topic**. Essays that fail to address the research and reflection prompts will not score well—no matter how creative or well-composed they are.

- **This is a research contest**. Notice on the scoring rubric that accurate historical research is weighted three times! Demonstrating comprehensive and accurate historical research is vital to success.

- **Form an opinion about the topic**. **Persuade the reader or viewer to agree.** A winning essay or documentary does more than describe or summarize what the author learned from the research process; it takes a stand on the topic—formed as a result of the research. A statement of that opinion is called a thesis, or a claim, or an historical argument.

- **The ability to create new ideas formed from multiple sources of information is the most complex of the thinking skills**. The research process demands exercise of these skills. Contest entrants will be provided with video-taped testimonies from Holocaust survivors and interactive maps showing their journey. Students must synthesize information from—and cite—both provided sources in their essays (testimony and map). Students must also support their claims with information from a minimum of three additional sources.

- **Show the evidence!** If authors fail to credit their sources, their readers can't see their research. Consequently, their readers have no obligation to believe the information presented and accept the thesis of the essay. Nonfiction writing requires accurate and complete citation of sources.

- **Use technology to your advantage.** Almost all students will be creating their projects using computers. Use the spell-check and grammar-suggestion tools in these devices! But don't let technology tools take the place of your brain and old-fashioned proofreading. For example, spell check may not help you with Nazi's, Nazis' or Nazis; you simply need to understand and correctly use the possessive and plural forms.

- **Don't bore the teacher or the judge.** Students, you must create one essay. Your teacher and the contest judges must read many. Ask yourself: "Will this essay be interesting to my reader? Are my ideas presented in an order that is easy-to-understand? Will the reader be persuaded to accept my thesis? Will my work stand out for positive reasons?" Ask a few objective, honest people to read or view your work and provide suggestions for improvement.

- **Does this sound like a lot to manage? It is!** We know that White Rose is an academically rigorous contest. However, the skills you will practice are skills you will use for a lifetime. The sense of pride earned by a job well-done is worth the effort. And you could even earn some cash!

Revised 11/2026