

The West Michigan Holocaust Partnership Presents

The Henry Pestka Art & Poetry Contest

2025-2026: Interwoven Histories For Grades 6-12

WGVU
Public Media

ADL

FREDERIK MEIJER
Gardens & Sculpture Park

The Jewish Federation
of Grand Rapids

GRFORD

GRAND RAPIDS
PUBLIC MUSEUM

Beaumont

Kaufman
Interfaith
Institute

GRAND VALLEY
UNIVERSITY

GRAM

GRAND VALLEY
STATE UNIVERSITY

MECA



The Pestka Family, in memory of their father and grandfather, Henry Pestka, a Holocaust survivor, is proud to support Holocaust awareness and education to West Michigan through an art and poetry contest. This contest is designed for students who are completing the Michigan state requirement on Holocaust and Genocide Education, providing them the opportunity to process and reflect on the concepts they learned through writing or art.

Entries accepted October 20, 2025
through March 8, 2026.

The top 10 finalists in each grade will be invited to attend and be recognized at an event in May 2026. Their projects will be part of an exhibit. Finalists who attend the event will also receive a gift.

PRIZES

FOR EACH GRADE

1st Place \$150

2nd Place \$100

3rd Place \$50

Finalists will be notified in early April of 2026.

Open to 6th-12th grade students living in a West or Southwest Michigan County.

STUDENTS MAY BE ENROLLED IN A PUBLIC, PRIVATE, FAITH-BASED, CHARTER, VIRTUAL OR HOME-SCHOOL SETTING.

Project Choices

Prose | Poetry | 2D Art
Combined 2D Art & Writing

THIS YEAR'S THEME

Interwoven Histories

The Holocaust, while singular in scope and horror, was not an isolated event. The 20th century bore witness to multiple genocides and mass atrocities. Studying these histories, we not only see the devastating uniqueness of each event, but also the patterns and warning signs they share.

"A destruction, an annihilation that only man can provoke, only man can prevent."

-Elie Weisel, Holocaust survivor



Visit the
Contest Page



wgvu.org/pestka

Browse our collection of engaging
and meaningful resources!

STUDENTS ARE HIGHLY ENCOURAGED TO USE THIS CONTENT AS A FOUNDATION FOR THEIR PROJECTS. We've curated our top picks around this year's theme to support students in creating their projects. These interactives, lessons and resources from trusted organizations are age-appropriate and designed to help educators best meet the learning needs of their students.

ALONG WITH THEIR PROJECT, EACH STUDENT WILL SUBMIT AN ARTIST OR AUTHOR STATEMENT THAT ANSWERS:

In the context of what you've learned about the Holocaust, how does your art or writing project reflect the theme, 'Interwoven Histories'?

The Henry Pestka Art and Poetry Contest is coordinated by The West Michigan Holocaust Partnership, which consists of: ADL Michigan, Frederik Meijer Gardens and Sculpture Park, Gerald R. Ford Presidential Foundation, Grand Rapids Art Museum, Grand Rapids Public Museum, GVSU Art Gallery, GVSU Kaufman Interfaith Institute, The Jewish Federation of Grand Rapids, Michigan Rwandan Community Association, and WGVU Public Media. Members of The Partnership with proximity to student entries will not be permitted to judge entries.