



Submission Guidelines THE TOMORROW PRIZE & The Green Feather Award

SCI-FI WRITING COMPETITION for
L.A. County high school students

What are The Tomorrow Prize and The Green Feather Award?

The Tomorrow Prize encourages young writers to use sci-fi to explore the diverse issues humanity wrestles with, spark creative solutions, and unite the worlds of art and science. We seek stories that explore and connect themes such as social justice, feminism, identity, inequity, environmental sustainability, ethics, and technology. We are excited to read original, inclusive stories from the diverse voices that make up L.A. high school students' individual and collective experiences.

We are seeking stories for **The Green Feather Award**, our special eco sci-fi prize, that integrate creative solutions to the climate and biodiversity crises. Strong entries will highlight the importance of ecology and biodiversity, and we are particularly excited to see the local ecology, geography, culture, and environmental concerns of Southern California emphasized. We recognize that issues of inequity and social and environmental justice strongly overlap with those concerning wildlife conservation, sea-level rise, water conservation, climate change, and energy, and encourage writers to explore these overlaps. Keeping that in mind, a story about a single neighborhood or school overcoming an environmental challenge would be equally as valid as a story that tackles a much broader scale. This award is specifically focused on solutions and reimagining new ways of living.

What do I need to know to submit a story?

Submissions are due February 13, 2024 at 11:59 pm PST. Finalists and Honorable Mentions will be announced in April 2023, and our live Culminating Event will be in Pasadena on May 11, 2023. Each student may submit up to two (2) stories (total) that are between 500 and 1,500 words to either our general sci-fi category or our special prize, The Green Feather Award. Only students attending high schools in L.A. County may submit stories. **See below for specific details under the SUBMISSION CHECKLIST and the TIPS FOR SUBMISSIONS to guide your writing process.**

How will students be recognized?

Stories are judged in three rounds. We select four to six finalists in our general prize category and one winner for The Green Feather Award. We also select a number of Honorable Mentions in both categories. Honorees will all be invited to attend our culminating event on May 11, 2024, where celebrity guests will perform live readings of the finalists' and The Green Feather Award stories. First, Second, and Third place general category winners will be announced after the readings. All honored students receive certificates. The First place winner will also be published in *L.A. Parent Magazine*. The Tomorrow Prize partner, the Nature Nexus Institute, a sister organization to past prize supporter Los Angeles Audubon, will present The Green Feather Award, which highlights an environmentally focused sci-fi story.

Is there a fee to submit my story?

The Omega Sci-Fi Awards is a nonprofit program and it is free to submit your story.

SUBMISSION CHECKLIST

- Entrants must be currently enrolled in an L.A. County high school.
- Use the submissions form to submit up to two (2) stories, each between 500 and 1,500 words (excluding the title).
- Entry should be formatted as a Microsoft Word document (.doc/.docx).
- Do not list your identifying details on your story document, just the title, and story text.
- Indicate on the submission form whether you wish your story to be considered for the general sci-fi category (The Tomorrow Prize) or The Green Feather Award. Stories that don't win The Green Feather Award will be considered for the general category prizes.
- Stories must not have a previous publication of any type online or in print, including personal websites and social media.
- Stories must be fully original work. **Stories that feature characters, settings, or other defining features of any existing media properties (books, film, TV, etc.), including fan fiction, will not be considered.**
- Stories must be science fiction and not fantasy (magical elements are not appropriate).
- Stories should be submitted through the submission form and received by 11:59 p.m. PST on February 13, 2024. [Submission form link.](#)**

PRIZES

The Tomorrow Prize

- First place: \$250.00 & *L.A. Parent Magazine* publication online.
- Second place: \$150.00
- Third place: \$100.00

The Green Feather Award

- \$250.00 & online publication presented by Nature Nexus Institute.

Certificates will also be awarded to all Winners, Finalists, and Honorable Mentions. Prizes and certificates will be presented at our live culminating celebrity guest readings and awards in Pasadena in May 2024.

Tips for All Stories

- Focus on telling an engaging story with strong characters, imagery, conflict, mood, tone, themes, etc.
- While we appreciate a strong plot with a clear beginning, middle, and end, this isn't always necessary. **Don't be afraid to experiment with your writing style or even brainstorm!**
- Know the difference between science fiction and fantasy - **don't submit a story about magic.** However, we do accept a broad range of science fiction genre types, including science-fiction with fantastical elements or comedy. Feel free to contact the competition organizer with questions.
- Read the competition description carefully. Think about what interesting themes you can weave into your narrative.
- Polish your work - make sure to edit your story, correct errors, and improve your telling.
- Don't be afraid to ask for someone (teacher, friend, or someone you trust) to proofread and help you edit your story - **a second set of eyes can help catch things you may have missed.**
- **HAVE FUN!** Don't over worry. Above all, have fun with your story writing. Write about what interests you!

We'd love to see:

- Science fiction that brings your personal experiences into the story.
- Stories that address issues you care about. Ex: Your local community, current events, social and environmental justice, gender identity, feminism, intersectional issues, etc.
- Sci-fi that uses humor to explore issues and ideas.
- Stories from diverse perspectives and under-represented groups, settings, and cultures.
- Nuanced science fiction themes.

What we see too often:

- Common tropes such as: "Science gone wrong:" aliens, monsters, zombies, "mad" scientists, "evil corporations," people who are either physically challenged or neurodivergent who are evil, etc who are depicted in ways that are reductive.
- Stories that are similar to the storylines of popular American sci-fi movies.
- Stories that are clearly fantasy and therefore do not qualify as science fiction.
- Environmental apocalypse themes (which disqualify Green Feather Award submissions) rather than solutions-oriented stories.

Tips for A Strong Green Feather Award Submission

- Engage environmental issues (including both conservation and justice issues) as a lens for our future. **Keeping in mind, a story about a single neighborhood or school overcoming an environmental challenge is equally as valid as a story that tackles a much broader scale.**
- **Consider exploring how life (especially wildlife, birds, plants) in Southern California might be different in a future time.**
- We specifically look for positive outcomes that feature imaginative solutions - **stories that use the science fiction lens to depict overcoming our environmental crises instead of doomsday scenarios—a diversity of solutions and hopeful narratives.**
- **Show us what a better future or near-future environmental world might look like - climate change, energy use, species extinction/proliferation, and greener/more just urban lives and landscapes.**
- Make sure your work reflects great storytelling: strong characters, an engaging, interesting, original, and clear plot, strong use of narrative tools such as a conflict, crisis, dialogue, symbolism, theme, tone and mood, etc.