



# A Tribute to Moral Courage: Standing Up Against Injustice

*Student Essay Contest*



## DETAILED GUIDELINES

### OVERVIEW

This essay contest uses the history of the Holocaust to educate students about the ramifications of present-day stereotyping, prejudice, racism and antisemitism. The Holocaust provides a context for exploring the dangers of remaining indifferent and silent in the face of the oppression of others. In addition, this essay contest invites the writer to learn about moral courage and the personal and societal benefits that may be realized by standing up to injustice.

**Moral courage** is the ability to take a strong stand on a specific issue based on one's personal beliefs or convictions and to defend it, regardless of danger or threats to personal safety.

During the Holocaust, it is estimated that eleven million people were killed by the Nazis and their collaborators. Fortunately, there were many who survived. Many survivors were rescued by "ordinary" people who took extraordinary risks to become an ally.

Rescuers during the Holocaust, such as Miep Gies, Carl Lutz, Vladka Mead, Oskar Schindler, Chiune Sugihara and Raoul Wallenberg, exemplify both courage and moral courage. They displayed courage in their ability to face difficulty, danger and/or pain without fear; they exhibited **moral courage** when they acted on their own values and beliefs to spare the lives of others at the risk of jeopardizing their own. Their actions serve as a model of personal triumph over adversity and inspire others to act accordingly.

### The Essay Topic:

**Describe a person who acted with moral courage. What can be learned from his/her actions and how do the lessons relate to you?**

### PURPOSE

The purpose of this contest is to

- I. Explain how individuals or groups illustrate an act of moral courage.
- II. Express your connection with such an act.

### **THESE ARE NOT BIOGRAPHY REPORTS!**

Any included biographical information should relate to how the subject(s) acted with moral courage. The focus of the essay should be on what can be learned from the act of moral courage described and how what was learned relates to the writer.

### STEP 1: CONTEXTUAL RESEARCH

Learn more about the history of the Holocaust and *investigate at least two of the stories of the rescuers mentioned above to **inspire** you to research and write your own essay on moral courage. Although some students*

may be tempted to skip Step 1, it will be impossible to write a successful essay for this contest without having the necessary contextual background. It will be apparent in the submission. The following are suggested websites to visit. Be sure to use *digital literacy skills* to find other reliable sources on the web:

- **Introduction to the Holocaust, U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum:**
  - <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/introduction-to-the-holocaust>
- **Coming of Age During the Holocaust, Museum of Jewish Heritage:**
  - <https://education.mjhnyc.org/coming-of-age-during-the-holocaust/>
- **The Righteous Among the Nations, Yad Vashem Museum:**
  - <https://www.yadvashem.org/righteous/about-the-righteous.html>
- **Echoes and Reflections:**
  - [www.echoesandreflections.org](http://www.echoesandreflections.org)
- **Shoah Foundation I-Witness:**
  - <http://iwitness.usc.edu/SFI/>



## **STEP 2: COMPLETE THE REFLECTION SHEET**

On a separate sheet of paper to be attached to the mailed-in application (see below for instructions on how to submit all materials online), complete this pre-writing exercise. This will help you formulate thoughts for your essay. After reading at least two of the stories of rescue in Step 1, respond in complete sentences to the following questions (a printable Reflection Sheet can be found at <https://mountainstates.adl.org/files/2024/01/REFLECTION-SHEET.pdf>).

- Write your own definition of moral courage and, if you desire, why you think your definition is better than the sample definition (hint: We want your definition to be better!).
- Given the testimonials and stories you have just read, what aspects of their stories are inspirations to you? Why? Based on your contextual research, briefly explain what was meaningful to you.
- In what ways might you make a difference in your community and how can you apply the lessons from the readings?

## **STEP 3: SPECIFIC RESEARCH**

Choose and research a person or group that demonstrates **moral courage** either from the Holocaust or during another time, contemporary or historic. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Rosa Parks, Mahatma Gandhi, Nelson Mandela, Marsha P. Johnson, Lech Walesa, and Ida B. Wells are a few examples, but there are many more. Be sure to discuss your selection with your teacher. Here are some other topics you can research to find other examples of **moral courage**:

- Rescuers of the Holocaust
- U.S. Civil Rights Movement
- Gender Equity
- LGBTQ+ Rights
- A local community leader
- The Rwandan, Bosnian and/ or Cambodian genocides
- Current examples of genocide or human rights crises, including Darfur, Chechnya, Sudan, the Congo, etc.

#### **STEP 4: WRITE YOUR REFLECTIVE ESSAY**

Utilizing your research and your best writing skills, write a personal reflective essay that addresses the following:

- I. A **summary** of how the individual or group selected by you exhibited moral courage. **Avoid a lengthy bio.** Unless the biographical information is important to the specific situation in which they exhibited moral courage, the information is likely irrelevant.
- II. How their actions have impacted the world, and
- III. **Most importantly, share a personal story or describe how this act of moral courage influences your actions today.**

Another way to look at the formatting is to identify the individual or group, give an example of how such an individual or group exhibited **moral courage**, and the manner in which such acts have meaning to you, connect with your life, and who such a person or group's act(s) of moral courage influence your present and/or future life.

#### **RULES & GUIDELINES**

- I. Writers must be Colorado, New Mexico or Wyoming students in grades 7-12.
- II. Essays can be no more than 1,000 words but must be a minimum of 700 words. Citations and bibliography are not included in the word count.
- III. All submissions must (i) have a title, (ii) be typed, and (iii) be double-spaced in 12 pt font Times New Roman (or similar serif typeface).
- IV. Two to five references must be properly cited in a **bibliography**. Only one source may be from an online non-academic database.

#### **Guidance regarding the use of Internet, Digital, and Electronic sources for the essay:**

- **Academic Databases:** It is fine to use **one or more** articles, essays, book chapters, etc. from various published sources (e.g., *The New York Times*; *Contemporary Black Biography*) that can be accessed via **academic databases** (i.e. *Biography in Context*). A citation would include both the original source publication information and the database used to access the material.
    - For example: "Elie Wiesel." *Encyclopedia of World Biography*. Detroit: Gale, 1998. *Biography in Context*. Web. 3 Feb. 2015.
  - **Websites:** Regarding the rule "only one source may be from the Internet," students may use only one Internet-accessed source that is a specific website wherein content is largely produced/published by a single organization. Internet sites are copyrighted and must be cited.
    - For example: the website of The Elie Wiesel Foundation for Humanity used for biographical information – <http://www.eliewiesel.org/eliewiesel.aspx>.
  - **eBooks:** One or more Internet-accessible eBooks may be used as references with proper citation.
  - **Publicly editable (i.e. Wikipedia), search engine results (i.e. Google), and AI generated information:** These will not be accepted as appropriate sources of information for your bibliography. However, properly cited links to academic resources from such platforms are acceptable.
- V. Any essay submission will be automatically disqualified if it violates or fails to meet any of the above Rules & Guidelines, does not include all required pieces, and/or is plagiarized in part or full.

## SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

### **MAIL/DELIVERY SERVICE (USPS, UPS, FEDEX, ETC.)**

- All submissions must include the following pieces:
  1. Completed Application Form <https://mountainstates.adl.org/files/2021/12/APPLICATION.pdf>  
(with signature of the student's parent/caregiver if under eighteen)
  2. Completed Reflection Sheet <https://mountainstates.adl.org/files/2024/01/REFLECTION-SHEET.pdf>
  3. Original Essay (**TWO COPIES**)
    - a. **DO NOT write your name anywhere on the essays.** Your application/entry form will include this information.
  4. Bibliography (**TWO COPIES**)
- DO NOT submit more than one entry.
- The deadline for submissions is March 29, 2024, at 11:59 PM (MT)

#### **Send to this address:**

ADL - Mountain States Region  
Attn: Essay Contest  
1120 Lincoln Street, Suite 1301  
Denver, CO 80203

ADL is not responsible for submissions that are lost or destroyed by any delivery method/service.

### **ONLINE ENTRY**

- Visit <https://mountainstates.adl.org/initiatives/adl-student-essay-contest-a-tribute-to-moral-courage-standing-up-against-injustice/> for instructions on how to submit required materials 100% online.

## FOR EDUCATORS

This essay can meet several state and Common Core educational standards in English Language Arts, Social Studies/Civics and Communication.

Encourage students to choose a figure connected to their identity (gender identity, sexual orientation, ethnicity/nationality, age, etc.) or areas of interest (future professional roles, role models, eras/events throughout history, etc.).

## ESSAY AWARDS

Award	Division 1 Grades 7-9	Division 2 Grades 10-12
1 <sup>st</sup> Place	\$500	\$500
2 <sup>nd</sup> Place	\$250	\$250
3 <sup>rd</sup> Place	\$100	\$100

## NOTIFICATION

Winners will be notified by April 19, 2024

## AWARD CEREMONY

May 5, 2024 – Governor’s Holocaust Remembrance Program, Denver, CO

The *A Tribute to Moral Courage: Standing Up Against Injustice* Student Essay Contest is supported by a Generous Donor.



### **Mission Statement since 1913:**

**“...to stop the defamation of the Jewish people and to secure justice  
and fair treatment to all.”**