

The English Department at Western Kentucky University is pleased to announce our fourth annual Literature Essay Contest. Students should visit <https://www.wku.edu/english/essay-contests.php> to complete an application and submit a 500-750-word essay (MLA style; pdf format) based on the prompt below. The English Department will invite finalists, their teachers, and family to campus for a reception and ceremony on February 15th where they will be recognized. The winners will receive scholarships if they choose to major or minor in English at WKU and cash prizes whether or not they attend WKU. First Place: \$500 Scholarship and \$200 cash; Second Place: \$300 Scholarship and \$100 cash; Third Place: \$200 Scholarship and \$50 cash. **Applications and essays are due January 15.**

The following poem is by Cheryl Hopson. Read the poem carefully, and then write a well-organized, 500-750-word essay that discusses the overall theme and message of the poem and some of the poetic devices the poet uses to express that message. Be sure to analyze what the poem means as a whole and describe how its particulars work.

"On Origins"

Cheryl R. Hopson

Last night I dreamed that I,
not my house but I was a stop
on the Underground Railroad, and I
huddled masses in the bend and tuck
of my skirt and bellowed "Shhhh,"
and the safe space of I held, until
I sent them flying, fleeing not knowing
but trusting in the strength of the well-oiled
collective, and I awoke, startled
by what was, for all intents and purposes,
a nightmare—

Reverse me, She

born 110 years before

the Emancipation Proclamation, born

unfree to a woman born

unfree to a woman born free

and speaking an old tongue, carrying