

 **WKU** *Department of*
ENGLISH **Literature Essay Contest**

The English Department at Western Kentucky University is pleased to announce our fifth annual Literature Essay Contest. Students should visit [here](#) 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 March 26th 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 March 4th.

The following poem, "When I Try to Say I'm Sorry to Those Who Are Suffering," is by WKU English professor Trish Lindsey Jagers, originally published in the journal, *The Red Penguin Review*. Read the poem carefully and consider how this poem might compare to any current events.

Write a well-organized, 500-750-word essay that discusses the comparisons made in the poem to any recent events which involved suffering. Discuss what poetic devices are being used to make these comparisons. Consider how the poem's comparisons could represent the details of the current event you chose. Be sure to analyze how these comparisons affect the meaning of the poem as a whole.

When I Try to Say I'm Sorry to Those Who Are Suffering

In my head, the word has a certain ring to it,
like bells in the distance, like church
getting ready to start
somewhere, a silver slice through
the clean, blue air,
no,
rather, more like a clap of thunder
against a cloudless sky
where I question whether I heard
it at all, but still, I go in, close the windows
and wait for the opening up,
for a storm to hit, hope
the wind spares the oak tree, old as Egypt,
the swing untwisting itself
on the lower branch,
the swing-path
earth worn through
to the bone of root
where I once fell,
no,
like a bird, I let go,
went singing flat through the rain
and broke my arm,
and I could hear it happen,
though I couldn't say a word,
and that hurt so much
it should have bled,
it should have bled.

Trish Lindsey Jagers
Published in Kentucky Monthly, 2022