2026 Ideas for Student Consideration and Writing Prompts

Thomas Wolfe Memorial Student Writing Competition

ALL SUBMISSIONS ARE DUE BY 5:00PM on Friday, September 25th

Submit via Google Form: https://forms.gle/URjzYmgpF2HEehys7

Please choose one of the following prompts to write a short story from your own experiences or ideas!

1. "Gulliver," the tall man feels like the world was not made for him. Think about a time when something around you didn't seem designed for you—physically, socially, or emotionally. What happened? How did it make you feel? What did the experience teach you about yourself or about others?

2. The tall man hears the same jokes again and again about his height. Think about a time when people kept saying something about you that they thought was harmless or funny. How did it affect you? Did you respond, stay silent, or learn something from it? Tell the story and reflect on what it revealed about people.

3. Thomas Wolfe shows that the tall man gains wisdom because he feels different. Think about a person you misunderstood or judged quickly. What did you first think about them? What changed your perspective? Describe the moment you began to see them in a new way and what you learned from it.

4. Imagine you are a giant in a world of tiny creatures. What experiences might you have in this imaginary world? In writing your own story, what would you want people in the future to learn from your experience? Have you ever been in a situation where you expected one thing and found another to be true? Have you ever gone from a situation where everything seemed normal to a situation where everything was different? What was different, and how did this affect your experience? Was it your own foolish behavior that led you to a new discovery?

5. Create a character based upon something unique or different about yourself. How does it affect everyday life and interactions with others? It might be something physical (ex: Thomas Wolfe was taller than most people he met), or emotional (ex: something you fear that others are not). Is this difference something your character doesn't realize until others bring it to their attention? Is it something that used to exist but no longer does? Is it something they are afraid of others discovering? Does this difference make your character feel alone like Thomas Wolfe, or is the character proud of the difference? Does the character see themself the same way as others do?

6. Is there something in your life you cannot change but keeps you from getting something you want? Was there a time you were singled out to be tricked because of being different? Did someone say anything to make you change how you viewed your difference? Did you eventually come to realize others shared your difference? Or that you weren't as different as you originally believed? Do your differences give you an insight into society that others might not have? (Ex: being deaf might make you more observant of other people's actions/mannerisms etc.)