

The Bernice L. Fox Classics Writing Contest 2022

Sponsored by the Department of Classics at Monmouth College

Topic: Nostos ("Return")

The COVID-19 pandemic left many of us isolated from people we love and eager for reunions with them. Our separations left many of us feeling *nostalgic* for times we had shared. The word "nostalgia" literally means "return-sick" in Greek—we want to return to others so badly that it hurts. This is the inspiration for this year's Fox Writing Contest topic.

Nostos, "return," was a theme of several stories that followed the Trojan War's conclusion. Odysseus, for example, spends ten years striving to get home to his wife, Penelope, before finally doing so and reuniting happily with her in Ithaca. Agamemnon's return to Clytemnestra in Mycenae is not so blissful; she and her lover murder him shortly after his return (caveat: while no one deserves to be murdered, he was not the best behaved of husbands). Menelaus and Helen return to Sparta and renegotiate their marriage after a very public and acrimonious separation leading up to and during the war. Those tales are recounted in such works as Homer's *Odyssey*, Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, Euripides' *Helen*, and Apollodorus' *Library* (aka *Epitome*).

Your task is to tell a *nostos* tale of your own. You could expand on an existing instance of return from classical literature, history, or mythology, imagine a 'what if' *nostos* scenario involving classical figures, or create a brand new story set in classical antiquity using your own characters.

Your entry must be a compelling tale of *nostos* that makes clear, one way or another, the motivation for the return and the circumstances in both places (left behind and returned to) that justify that return. It may take the form of a mythical narrative (like Homer's *Odyssey* or Ovid's *Metamorphoses*), a poem (like that of Catullus), all or a portion of a play (like one of Seneca's), or any number of other genres or formats.

Contest Parameters and Judging

This contest is open to any student enrolled full-time in high school anywhere in the world during the current school year. An award of \$250 will be given to the author of the best entry, which may take the form of a short story, essay, play, poem, or original literary work of any other sort.

Entries will be judged on accuracy to ancient sources (as relevant to this project), appropriate use of those sources, originality, quality of material, thematic development, English style, and effectiveness of presentation.

About Bernice L. Fox

The Fox Classics Writing contest was established in 1985 by Dr. Tom Sienkewicz and the Department of Classics at Monmouth College in Monmouth, Illinois, to honor Bernice L. Fox, to promote the study of Latin and the Classics in high schools, and to recognize the good work of high school students. Bernice L. Fox taught courses in English, Latin and Greek at Monmouth College from 1947 to 1981, and served as chair of the Department of Classics from 1970 until her retirement in 1981. Throughout her long and dynamic career, she worked tirelessly to promote the Classics in Illinois high schools and colleges. She is also the author of *Tela Charlottae*, the Latin translation of E. B. White's *Charlotte's Web*. In 1991, Monmouth College conferred on her the honorary degree of Doctor of Humane Letters. She died in 2003.



Contest Guidelines

- Entries must fit the theme of this year's contest and must be in English.
 - Entries must be typed and should be submitted electronically (if possible) by a teacher or other adult (as explained below) to Dr. Robert Holschuh Simmons at rsimmons@monmouthcollege.edu. If electronic submission is not feasible, printed entries (double-sided, please) may be sent via post to the mailing address given below.
 - There is no minimum or maximum length.
 - The entrant's name and school must not appear on pages on which the text of the entry is printed. Instead, contestants should place a personal identification code (a randomly selected nine-character series) on the top left-hand corner of every page of the entry and include with their submission a separate page containing the following information:
 - author's name, date of birth, and personal identification code
 - school name, address, and phone number
 - teacher's name and email address
 - No more than ten entries will be accepted from any individual school, and only one entry per student will be accepted.
 - Students who wish to enter the contest without school sponsorship (i.e., if they are homeschooled or at a school that is not taking part in the contest) must have a parent or other adult submit their work, and must include on their information page an explanation for their independent submission.
 - Failure to follow these guidelines will result in disqualification.
 - All entries become the property of Monmouth College.
 - Every entrant will receive a certificate of participation from Monmouth College.
 - The winner will be announced on or close to April 15, 2022, on the contest website.
 - For further information, including a list of previous winners, please consult the contest website at <https://www.monmouthcollege.edu/academics/classics/writing-contests/>. For information about our department, please visit <https://www.monmouthcollege.edu/academics/classics/>.
- Send any questions to Dr. Robert Holschuh Simmons at rsimmons@monmouthcollege.edu.

All entries must be sent via email or postmarked no later than **March 15, 2022**, and either emailed to rsimmons@monmouthcollege.edu or mailed to the following address:

Dr. Robert Holschuh Simmons, Monmouth College, 700 E. Broadway Ave., Monmouth, IL 61462