

Applying for Creative Awards

Writing Sample

When putting together a sample of creative work, it's useful to think about the direction of your writing—how far you've come and how you'll continue to grow. You may want to choose work that is recent enough to reflect your newfound strengths, but not so recent that it's rough or unrevised.

Tips:

- **Be bold.** Submit work that will surprise the judges with unique ideas and fresh language. Judges read many submissions, so try to make yours stand out in a good way.
- **Be polished.** Pick your best work, which is probably something that's already been critiqued and revised in (or beyond) class. It can be tempting to submit brand new work that you're excited about, but if it hasn't been revised yet, it's probably still too rough.
- **Be cohesive.** Choose work that represents your focus as a writer. It's a good idea to stick to one genre per submission. For fiction or creative nonfiction, one longer essay or story is best, but you submit several flash stories or poems, try to pick strong pieces that have a common theme, forms, or voice.

Personal Statement/Essay

For any personal or creative statement, you should **be specific** and pay attention to what the application calls for. The department application form calls for an essay statement of 500 words that may address the following: How does your work match the specifications of the scholarship? Why did you become an English major, or why are you pursuing a graduate degree? What are your academic, creative, and/or scholarly qualifications? What departmental activities or services do you participate in?

Tips on writing about your creative work:

- **Find a central idea to guide your essay.** This should be something honest that you can return to for cohesion throughout the essay (i.e. your interest in hybrid genres or fabulist fiction.) Let the judges know that you have a clear artistic vision and goals.
- **Complement your writing sample.** Be sure that what you say matches what's in your creative sample—but also be sure to tell them things they won't necessarily get from your sample. (Don't just say, "I write fabulist fiction." Instead, tell them why you write fabulist fiction, and what you hope to do in your fabulist fiction.)
- **Talk yourself up.** Discuss your awards, your coursework, your extracurricular activities, your volunteer work. This doesn't have to be limited to campus. Judges want to see that you are hardworking, motivated, responsible, and driven *in addition* to being creative.
- **Look ahead.** Why do you want, need, and deserve this award? How will it help you accomplish your creative and scholarly goals? What are your plans for the rest of your time here and beyond?