



CULTURAL CONNECTIONS AWARD

Throughout history, stories have helped us to connect with and understand one another. They've been our windows into the great, big world around us. Entries for this category will focus on specific cultures around the world, from festivals and holidays, to folklore, to family histories, and more. We want readers to see life as it is lived in all corners of the globe.

- Submissions must be **between 1,000 and 15,000 words**
- Intended audience is **teens and adults** (anyone 10 and older) who read below their age or grade level
- Stories should represent characters and situations that are complex and **authentically diverse** and include experiences that are **culturally relevant** for a range of identities & experiences, including but not limited to LGBTQUIA, people with disabilities, and ethnic, racial, cultural, and religious minorities.
- Use familiar **vocabulary** and straightforward sentences. Avoid long, unbroken paragraphs or chapters

TIPS AND GUIDANCE

What is culture?

Culture, simply put, is the many aspects of human life that define how a group of individuals behave and think. It includes everything from religion, to food, to the clothes we wear and the languages we speak. Our world is rich with a multitude of cultures, and one excellent way to get to know them is through books. With this category, we're looking for well-researched and carefully-detailed explorations of one or more cultures.

Elements of culture to consider:

- Art/music
- Food
- Religion
- Holidays
- Clothing
- Language
- Marriage ceremonies
- Social habits
- Education
- Rituals
- Gestures/symbols
- Architecture
- Pastimes
- Values
- Taboos
- Sports
- Roles (family, gender, etc.)
- Home life
- Economy
- Crafts
- History
- Pop culture
- Medicine
- Technology
- Government
- Legends/myths
- Attitudes

WRITING PROMPTS

- Set your story within a cultural celebration: one that you are familiar with yourself, or which you have researched/discussed with someone who celebrates. Don't make the celebration the story itself, but have your story taking place with the celebration as a backdrop. Work the history and customs of the celebration into your story with details and dialogue.
- Religious festivals are a great focus topic as well.
- Compare two different cultures/show cultures overlapping. Read about the concept of Nepantla and apply it to your story.
- Chapter by chapter, focus on a different individual from a different place, all of whom are working towards the same goal(s). Ex.) Write about people from different cultures working to protect endangered species.
- Write about how artists (painters, musicians, etc.) from the world use their tools to showcase their unique cultures/heritages.
- Write about a character who isn't quite sure what he/she believes in, despite growing up in a very religious family. Follow along as he/she explores the religions of the world.
- Use a traditional meal belonging to a particular culture as the center of your story. Perhaps a family member is passing down a recipe to the next generation, or an exchange student is teaching another student in the home how to create a dish from his/her home.
- Consider your own culture. Break it down in your writing to create a dystopian society, or build it up to create an idealized, utopian society. Use this as the setting for your character to explore his/her journey.
- Select a popular song from another culture. Close your eyes and feel the mood of the music. What are you experiencing? What does the song make you feel? Write the story, poem, lyrics, screenplay, etc. for the music. Add characters, visual imagery, and hints about the scenery.
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Questions? Send us a note: support@storyshares.org

