

## About the Contest

### How did the contest get started?

In 1987, Sir John Templeton created the *Laws of Life* Essay Contest in his hometown of Winchester, Tennessee, to encourage young people to reflect and write about their own *laws of life*. At that time, Sir John never imagined that the contest would spread throughout the United States and around the world, that thousands of students would write a *laws of life* essay each year, or that individuals, business leaders, and community organizations would fund and sponsor their own contest.

### What are the *laws of life*?

The *laws of life* are the core values, ideals, and principles by which we live. Honesty, perseverance, good will to others, these are ‘laws’ that transcend religions, cultures, and national borders. They are as universal and central to our lives as gravity. However, unlike the laws of gravity, each one of us must discover and practice the *laws of life* in order to benefit from them.

### Who sponsors a *Laws of Life* Essay Contest?

Each contest is sponsored by an individual or organization that cares about the character development of young people. In some communities, a business leader may decide to sponsor the contest and work with the local school district to implement it. In other cases, a concerned parent or teacher may “champion” the contest and persuade a community organization to get involved. The contest sponsor provides the funding for the cash prizes or scholarships that are awarded to the prizewinning students.

### What is the contest really about?

The *Laws of Life* Essay Contest invites young people to express in their own words the ideals and principles that mean the most to them. The contest enables students to think about the values that will guide them the rest of their lives, using a challenging and engaging writing activity that emphasizes a process-approach to writing.

## Who is vital to the success of the contest?

TEACHERS! Time and time again, contest sponsors talk about how important it is for teachers to believe in the ideals and benefits of the contest. Sponsors report that in schools where teachers encourage their students to write an essay, the number of essays submitted dramatically increases. At the awards ceremony, dedicated teachers involved in the essay contest are publicly recognized for the support and encouragement they give to their students.

## What does the contest involve?

Though no two contests are exactly alike, there are several common components:

- Teachers learn how the contest works;
- Teachers introduce the contest to their students and encourage them to submit an essay;
- Students turn in their essays by a deadline;
- Impartial judges from the community read and rank the essays;
- The prizewinners are announced at an awards dinner or reception.

*"I use the essay contest as a way to have a meaningful, one-on-one discussion with each of my students."*

*Jennifer Ralston, English Teacher  
Acton, Ontario*

