

2026-OCW Contests

Showcase Awards

1. **Grand Showcase Award - 3 Prizes (\$200/\$100/\$50)**

- Write a short story (any genre). Put the genre's name at the top of the entry, above the title. Show us your best work!
- Limit 2000 words.
- Sponsor: Ozark Creative Writers Board of Directors.

2. **Oxbow Award in Memory of Dusty & Pat Richards - 3 Prizes (\$200/\$100/\$50)**

- Western short story must take place between 1820-1900.
- The west is any location west of the Mississippi River, including Alaska.
- Limit: 2000 words.
- Sponsor: Ozark Creative Writers Board of Directors.

3. **Founding Member Award in Memory of Arkansas Poet Laureate Peggy Vining - 1 Prize (\$100)**

- Poem about the 60th Anniversary of OCW.
- Limit: 24 lines.
- Sponsor: Ozark Creative Writers Board of Directors.

4. **Mike Willis Memorial Award - 1 Prize (\$150)**

- Write a short story about your most embarrassing moment, real or imagined.
- Fiction with a hint of truth (be funny, be creative, be imaginative).
- **Limit: 2000 words.**
- **Sponsor: Chrissy Willis, in memory of her late husband, Mike Willis.**

5. **Velda Brotherton Memorial Contest - 1 Prize (\$100)**

- **Western short fiction with a strong female lead character.**
- **Limit: 2000 words.**
- **Sponsor: Anthony Wood**

6. **Show Me Your Book Cover Children's (Picture Book-Middle Grade Book)- 1 Prize (\$50).**

Your entry should include the following (A single document)

- Page 1- The front cover of your book (published in 2025, or 2026)..
- Pages 2-3 (500 word max) Date of publication, the ISBN, genre of your book, and the back cover description.
- Judging will be based on how well the cover portrays the theme of the book. Judges will be from the art and design field and unrelated to OCW/Solander Press/Paper-Back Press.
- Sponsors Paperback-Press and Solander Press.

7. **Show Me Your Book Cover- (YA/Adult Fiction/Nonfiction)1 Prize (\$50).**

- Your entry should include the following (A single document)
- Page 1- The front cover of your book (published in 2025, or 2026).
- Pages 2-3 (500 word max) Date of publication, the ISBN, genre of your book, and the back cover description.
- Judging will be based on how well the cover portrays the theme of the book. Judges will be from the art and design field and unrelated to OCW.
- Sponsor Ellen Withers

Grand Conference Awards- 3 Prizes (\$50/\$30/\$20)

8. **Published Newspaper Column/Blog Award**

- Best opinion essay or column published in a newspaper, online news outlet, or blog for the 12 months preceding August 1, 2026. Columns or blogs may be on any subject or theme, including reviews or humor.
- Limit: 2500 words
- Sponsor: Max McCoy

9. Best Hook Contest

- In 25 words or less, provide the best opening for the thriller, suspense or mystery novel. It must grab the reader and make them want to read the rest of the story.
- Limit: 25 words
- Sponsor: J.C. Fields

10. Search for Excellence Award

- Nonfiction memoir about someone or some event that has positively influenced your life.
- Limit: 1500 words
- Sponsor: Leon Combs

11. "Gimme 500" Flash Fiction Contest

- A sparkling story that leaves readers stunned, smiling, sobbing or satisfied.
- Limit: 500 words or less.
- Sponsor: Micki Fuhrman

12. Point A to Point Z

- Write a complete story in 26 sentences. Each complete sentence must begin with a sequential letter of the alphabet from A-Z.
- The first sentence must begin with the word a or a word beginning with a. The second sentence must begin with a word beginning with the letter b and so on so that the 26th sentence begins with a word beginning with the letter Z.
- Limit: 500 words.
- Sponsor: Saturday Book Club

13. Sleuths' Ink Contest

- Short Story, mystery, thriller, crime, ending in a cliffhanger.
- Limit: 100 words (not including the title)
- Sponsor: Sleuths' Ink, Springfield, Missouri

14. Spooky Campfire Stories

- Write spooky tale that you might tell while sitting by a campfire.
- Limit: 1000 words
- Sponsor: Homegrown Books

15. Ozark Romance Authors Award

- Two sworn enemies want to adopt the same dog from their local animal shelter. Neither backs down, so they agree to share custody. What happens next?
- Must contain the following words: fall, elementary, ghost.
- Limit: 750 words
- Sponsor: Ozark Romance Authors, Springfield, Missouri

16. My Sister the Mooch

- Short story about a sister that is a mooch.
- Limit: 1000 Words
- Sponsor: Kathy Brown in memory of her son Jonathan Brown

17. Native American Short Story

- Write a short story featuring a strong Native American character

- Limit: 1500 words
- Sponsor: Clouse Literary Arts and Theater

Conference Awards- 3 Prizes (\$25/\$15/\$10)

18. Anniversaries: The Good, The Bad, or Ugly

- Write about a memorable anniversary: Good or Bad or Ugly.
- Fiction or Nonfiction
- Must have a title (Does not count in the 300 word limit).
- Limit: 300 words
- Sponsor: Coffee and Critique Writers of O'Fallon, Missouri

19. Junk Drawer Contest

- A Short Story, any genre. Please give us your best creative fiction
- Limit: 2000 words
- Sponsor: Little Red Writing Hood.

20. A Scream in the Night

- A horror short western short story
- Limit: 3000 words
- Sponsor: Tahlequah Writers

21. Historical Western Romance Contest

- Historical Western Romance short story
- Limit: 3000 words
- Sponsors: The Deadline Dames (Joy Keeney & Rhonda Harvey)

22. Hometown Nostalgia Column

- Write a nostalgic article about the Ozarks suitable for a newspaper column. The article should have a headline (title). Give your column a name.
- Limit: 500-1000 words.
- Sponsor: Lonnie Whitaker

23. The Scary House Around the Corner (Myth, Legend, or Real?)

- Devise a creative endeavor about "The Scary House Around the Corner"
- Be creative, not graphic or obscene.
- Any style of writing or voice
- Limit: 250 words
- Sponsor: Marcia Gaye

24. Quotable Quote Blog

- Choose a favorite quote and blog about it.
- Limit: 500 words.
- Sponsor: Linda Apple

25. Space Journey

- Science fiction genre in the style of 50's Sci-Fi movies.
- Limit: 2000 words.
- Sponsor: Tahlequah Writers

26. Travel Article

- Write it as if you were sending it to a reputable magazine. No photos, please.
- Limit: 1500 words.
- Sponsor: Johnny D. Boggs

27. Show Me Mystery

- A murder mystery of any genre, era, or type

- Must include a Murder
- Limit: 1500 words
- Sponsor: Ellen Withers

28. Things That Go Bump in The Night!

- Paranormal short story (No Horror).
- Limit: 1000 words.
- Sponsor: Ruth Weeks

29. Best First Paragraph

- Hook us with your best first paragraph from a novel or short story.
- Sponsors: Margarite Stever and Bonnie Tesh

30. Rainbolt Children's Book Award

- Easy Readers: K-3rd grade
- Limit: 1000 words.
- Sponsor: Doris Jean Shaw

31. Middle Grade Fiction for Kids 9-12

- Limit: 1500-2500 words
- Sponsor: Renee La Viness

32. Give Us the Best of Friends

- Short story about best friends, any genre.
- Must use the following words: elevator, diamond, argument, crusade.
- Limit: 1500 words
- Sponsor: Joni Cogbill and Betsy Gray

33. Senior Moment

- Short story with a protagonist over 50.
- Limit: 1500 words.
- Sponsor: Betsy Gray

34. Delicious Escapes Romance Contest

- Short story "the Color Red and how it ignites a steamy romance."
- Limit: 2000 words
- Sponsor: Delicious Escapes Publications

On-The-Spot Contest- One Prize \$25

- **Open only to those attending the full OCW Conference in October**
- **Details to be announced at the conference**
- **Entries are due by noon on Saturday**
- **Must be present at the Awards Banquet Saturday Evening to win**