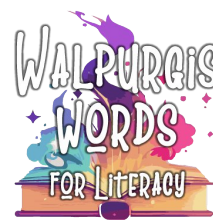


2nd Annual Halloween Horror Student Flash Fiction Contest

Classroom Packet for Teachers, Librarians, Advisors · Fall 2026



Dear Teacher, Librarian, or Writing Club Advisor,

Thank you for bringing our contest to your classroom, club, or group (we'll say "classroom" from here on—read it as whichever one is yours). Walpurgis Words for Literacy is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit supporting young readers and authors, and this contest gives students something classroom writing rarely offers: an outside audience. For many students, it may also be their first opportunity to earn a publication credit and experience the professional submission process used by working authors. Students write an original horror, thriller, or dark fantasy flash fiction piece on this year's theme, **Urban Legends**, and your classroom submits its top five stories. Entries are judged anonymously by published horror and dark fantasy authors from The Dark Veil Society. Their members include award-winning writers, editors, anthology contributors, and independently and traditionally published authors with experience evaluating fiction for publication.

At a Glance

Who can enter	Students in grades 9–12 (or international equivalent of secondary education)
Theme	Urban Legends — an original urban legend of the student's creation, written as horror, thriller, or dark fantasy flash fiction
Length & format	500–1,500 words · Classic Shunn manuscript format · .docx or .pdf
Window	Opens September 1, 2026 · Closes October 15, 2026, 11:59 PM ET
Entry limits	Up to 5 entries per classroom · 1 entry per student · Limited to the first 20 registered classrooms
Judging	Anonymous judging by published horror and dark fantasy authors from The Dark Veil Society
Prizes	1st: \$150 · 2nd: \$75 · 3rd: \$25, plus certificates and publication in our online student showcase · Free to enter

Why Run It as an Assignment?

- **Students actually want to write it.** Horror consistently ranks among teenagers' favorite fiction genres, and the creative freedom of inventing an original legend makes this an assignment many students genuinely look forward to rather than simply complete. Teachers often find students invest more time planning, revising, and polishing than they would for a traditional assignment.
- **It fits naturally into your curriculum.** Students practice narrative writing, revision, writing for an authentic audience, and professional manuscript formatting without requiring a lengthy unit or major project.
- **They write for readers beyond the classroom.** Publication, cash prizes, and evaluation by published authors give students a real-world audience.
- **Your school library benefits too.** Schools that participate are placed at the top of our school library book donation list.
- **Registration guarantees your classroom's place.** The contest is limited to the first **20 registered classrooms**. Once your registration is confirmed, your five submission slots are reserved through the deadline.

The following pages will provide everything you need to participate in the contest. Thank you for supporting the readers of today and the authors of tomorrow.

The Walpurgis Words for Literacy Team

Student Assignment: Write an Urban Legend

Halloween Horror Flash Fiction • 500–1,500 words

The Prompt

Every town has one. The road you don't drive after midnight. The house nobody will buy. The thing that happened to a friend of a friend—everybody swears it's true, and nobody can prove it. **Invent an original urban legend and tell it as a piece of flash fiction.**

Your story can be horror, thriller, or dark fantasy. It should feel like a legend: local, and just plausible enough to keep someone up at night. Don't retell an existing legend (no Bloody Mary, no Slender Man, etc.). The judges want the story only *you* could invent.

Requirements

- **Length:** 500–1,500 words. Stories under or over the limit will be disqualified, so check your word count.
- **Original work:** Written entirely by you; no AI-generated text and no previously published work.
- **Content:** Keep it PG-13: no graphic gore, no explicit language, nothing you couldn't read aloud in class. The judges are much more impressed by dread than by shock.
- **Format:** Classic Shunn manuscript format (your teacher has the guide). This is how authors submit to magazines and publishers, so treat it as practice.
- **File type:** .docx or .pdf

What Makes an Urban Legend Work

- **Specificity of place.** “A town” is forgettable. “The drainage tunnel behind the Route 9 Park-and-Ride” is a legend.
- **The friend-of-a-friend trope.** Legends are always secondhand, retold orally at slumber parties and campfires. Write yours the way it would be told: by someone who heard it from someone who swears it really happened.
- **A rule.** Don't look in the mirror. Don't stop the car. Don't say its name. The best legends give you a rule, and a character with a very human reason to break it: a dare, a doubt, a shortcut home.
- **A memorable, unresolved ending.** The legend shouldn't feel finished, as all great urban legends never really die. Someone, somewhere is bound to break the rule again.

What You Could Win

Your class submits its top five stories. Entries are judged **blind** by published horror, thriller, and dark fantasy authors from The Dark Veil Society. Winners receive cash prizes (**\$150 / \$75 / \$25**), a certificate, and publication in our online student showcase, which is a publication credit you can put on college applications.

Due to your teacher: _____ Contest deadline: October 15, 2026

Choosing Your Top Five

A quick guide to classroom selection · For teachers, librarians, and advisors

Each classroom may submit up to **five entries**. How you choose them is entirely up to you, but here are three approaches that work well, plus a simple rubric based on how our judges actually read.

Three Ways to Select

1. **Teacher's cut.** You read and pick. Fastest, and perfectly fine. You know your writers.
2. **Peer workshop vote.** Students read anonymized classmates' stories and vote. Every student gets to be a judge for a day, and reading critically tends to improve their own revision.
3. **Hybrid.** Students vote a shortlist of ten and you pick the final five. This is the one we'd recommend, since it keeps buy-in high without giving up quality control.

Selection Rubric

Score each story 1–5 on the four criteria below. These mirror what our judges reward:

- **Originality (x2):** Is this a legend we haven't heard before? Does it avoid cliché and borrowed premises?
- **Atmosphere & dread:** Does the story build unease through detail and restraint rather than shock?
- **Voice & craft:** Sentence-level control, a narrator we believe, an ending that lands.
- **Legend-ness:** Does it actually read as an urban legend (local, rule-bound, unresolved) rather than a generic scary story?

A note on ties: when two stories score evenly, our judges consistently favor the **more original** one over the more polished one. We suggest you do the same.

Fairness Notes

- Blind the selection if you can. Have students submit with ID numbers instead of names, the same way the contest itself is judged.
- One entry per student applies contest-wide, even if a student produces two strong pieces.
- Please verify originality before submitting. An entry found to be plagiarized or AI-generated is disqualified, and we'd hate for that conversation to happen after the fact.

Submission Checklist

Everything in order before you hit send

Before the Assignment

- ☐ Register your classroom at walpurgiswords.org/for-educators to reserve your five entry slots. Registration is **limited to the first 20 classrooms**, first come, first served; once confirmed, your slots are held through the October 15 deadline. Registering from an official school or library address — e.g. .edu, .k12, .gov — confirms your spots straight away; any other address we confirm within 3 business days
- ☐ Share the assignment sheet and the Shunn manuscript format guide with students
- ☐ Photocopy the parent/guardian consent & publication release form (the last page of this packet) and send it home with students. Only your submitted top five need signed forms, but collecting them early avoids a scramble

Before Submitting Entries

- ☐ Each story is 500–1,500 words (it's a hard limit, so check the word count)
- ☐ Each file is .docx or .pdf, in Classic Shunn manuscript format
- ☐ Student name and contact info appear in the manuscript header per Shunn format. We redact all names and personal information before entries go to the judges, so judging stays blind
- ☐ Content is PG-13: no graphic gore, explicit language, or sexual content
- ☐ Maximum five entries; one entry per student
- ☐ Each of your top five has a **signed parent/guardian consent form**, and you have **each parent's email address** ready to enter in the submission form

Submitting

1. Open your classroom's **custom submission link**—it's in your registration confirmation email
2. Review your name and school (already filled in from your registration)
3. Upload each story file, and enter the student's name, grade, and parent/guardian email in the form fields
4. Submit before October 15, 2026, 11:59 PM ET

After Submitting

- ☐ You'll receive a confirmation email right away; if nothing arrives within a few hours, contact contests@walpurgiswords.org
- ☐ Winners announced Halloween night, October 31, 2026, at walpurgiswords.org and on our social channels
- ☐ Certificates for our winners and finalists go out in early November — watch your inbox

Walpurgis Words for Literacy is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit supporting young readers and authors. Full official rules: walpurgiswords.org · Questions: contests@walpurgiswords.org

Parent/Guardian Consent & Publication Release

2nd Annual Halloween Horror Student Flash Fiction Contest • Fall 2026

Your student would like to enter a story in the Halloween Horror Student Flash Fiction Contest, run by Walpurgis Words for Literacy, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit supporting young readers and authors. Entry is free. Full official rules are available at **walpurgiswords.org**. Because entrants are under 18, we need a parent or guardian's written permission before we can accept an entry.

Student name: _____

Grade: _____ **School:** _____

Story title: _____

By signing below, I confirm that:

1. I am the parent or legal guardian of the student named above, and I give permission for their story to be entered in the contest.
2. The story is the student's own original work.
3. If the story is selected as a winner or for publication, Walpurgis Words for Literacy and its partner, The Dark Veil Society writing collective, may publish it in the online student showcase at walpurgiswords.org and at darkveilsociety.com, along with the student's first name, last initial, grade, and school. The student keeps full ownership and copyright of the story.
4. Submitting a photo of the student is optional. If we receive one from the student or family, Walpurgis Words for Literacy and The Dark Veil Society may publish it alongside the story in the online showcase on either site.
5. If the student wins a cash prize, it will be issued to the parent/guardian signing this form, on the student's behalf.
6. The contact information on this form and in the submission will be used only to administer the contest (confirming consent, notifying winners, and delivering prizes and certificates). It will not be added to any mailing list or shared outside the organization.

Optional — initial if you agree: _____ Walpurgis Words for Literacy may also publish the student's full name with their story.

Parent/guardian name (print): _____

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Email: _____ **Phone (optional):** _____

Questions? Contact us at contests@walpurgiswords.org • Please return this signed form to your student's teacher.