

QUEENS' COLLEGE ESTELLE PRIZE FOR ENGLISH  
Competition Guidelines and Questions – 2024

Queens' College invites submissions for the Estelle English Prize 2024, which will be awarded to the best essay submitted by a Year 12 (Lower Sixth Form) student. Entries should answer one of the attached three questions, should be no longer than 2,500 words (including footnotes, references, illustration captions, and any other text), and should reach the College's Tutorial Office no later than Friday 19 July 2024. **The main focus should not be on something that has been or is currently being studied in the classroom or offered as A-level coursework.** The winner will receive a £500 prize; depending on the strength of the field of submissions, honourable mentions may also be made.

Each entry should be accompanied by a completed cover sheet, and submitted no later than 5 p.m. on Friday 19 July 2024 to the Tutorial Secretary, Tutorial Office, Queens' College, Cambridge CB3 9ET; essays and cover sheets may instead be scanned and submitted (as a single PDF file) by email to [tutorial.secretary@queens.cam.ac.uk](mailto:tutorial.secretary@queens.cam.ac.uk). **Entries received after 5 p.m. on 19 July 2024 will not be considered. Entries that are over the prescribed maximum length will not be considered. Entries submitted without a cover sheet will not be considered.**

Please note that entries will not be returned and entrants may therefore wish to keep their own copy of the submitted essay.

Receipt of entries will be confirmed by email. The winner and any honourable mention(s) will be notified by email in August 2024.

**The College does not enter into correspondence about any aspect of the competition or the results thereof. Feedback on the essays submitted is not provided.**

Prescribed essay topics for the 2024 competition (*please choose one*)

1. How does this poem by Edward Thomas organise, understand, and/or represent time?

The Mill-Pond

The sun blazed while the thunder yet  
Added a boom:  
A wagtail flickered bright over  
The mill-pond's gloom:

Less than the cooing in the alder  
Isles of the pool  
Sounded the thunder through that plunge  
Of waters cool.

Scared starlings on the aspen tip  
Past the black mill  
Outchattered the stream and the next roar  
Far on the hill.

As my feet dangling teased the foam  
That slid below  
A girl came out. "Take care!" she said –  
Ages ago.

She startled me, standing quite close  
Dressed all in white:  
Ages ago I was angry till  
She passed from sight.

Then the storm burst, and as I crouched  
To shelter, how  
Beautiful and kind, too, she seemed,  
As she does now!

2. This poem by Derek Walcott explores the connection between the writing of Edward Thomas and the landscape that it speaks, or represents. Taking your cue from Walcott's 'homage', write about the bond between any poem (or poems) and the place to which it is (or they are) immutably tied.

### Homage to Edward Thomas

Formal, informal, by a country's cast  
topography delineates its verse,  
erects the classic bulk, for rigid contrast  
of sonnet, rectory or this manor house  
dourly timbered against these sinuous  
Downs, defines the formal and informal prose  
of Edward Thomas's poems, which makes this garden  
return its subtle scent of Edward Thomas  
in everything here hedged or loosely grown.  
Lines which you once dismissed as tenuous  
because they would not howl or overwhelm,  
as crookedly grave-bent, or cuckoo-dreaming,  
seeming dissoluble as this Sussex down  
harden in their indifference, like this elm.

3. Consider the following passages (some prose, some poems) about animals. Starting from one or more of these passages, write about the literary representation of the encounter between humans and animals in any way that interests you. (You may write about one, or more, or all of these selections, or you may choose to focus on other works.)

(a)

Between Us And

Between us and  
animals is a namelessness.  
We flail around  
generically —  
*camelopardalis* is what  
the Romans came up with  
or "giraffe" ( it looked to  
them like a camel crossed  
with a leopard ) or get the  
category wrong — a musk  
Ox isn't an ox at all but  
more closely cognate with  
the goat — and when  
choosing to name  
individual animals we  
pretend they are objects  
(Spot) or virtues (Beauty)  
or just other selves (Bob).

Anne Carson

(b)

Short Talk on Vicuñas

A mythical animal, the vicuña fares well  
in the volcanic regions of northern Peru.  
Light thunders down on it, like Milton  
at his daughters. Hear that?—they  
are counting under their breath.  
Think about style of life for a  
moment. When you take up your  
axe, listen. Hoofbeats. Wind.  
It is they who make us at home  
here, not the other way around.

Anne Carson

(c)

Dog and Me

An ant can look up at you, too, and even threaten you with its arms. Of course, my dog does not know I am human, he sees me as dog, though I do not leap up at a fence. I am a strong dog. But I do not leave my mouth hanging open when I walk along. Even on a hot day, I do not leave my tongue hanging out. But I bark at him: "No! No!"

Lydia Davis

(d)

Bees are Black, with Gilt Surcingles –  
Buccaneers of Buzz.  
Ride abroad in ostentation  
And subsist on Fuzz.

Fuzz ordained – not Fuzz contingent –  
Marrows of the Hill.  
Jugs – a Universe's fracture  
Could not jar or spill.

Emily Dickinson

(e)

A Jelly-Fish

Visible, invisible,  
A fluctuating charm,  
An amber-colored amethyst  
Inhabits it; your arm  
Approaches, and  
It opens and  
It closes;  
You have meant  
To catch it,  
And it shrivels;  
You abandon  
Your intent—  
It opens, and it  
Closes and you  
Reach for it—  
The blue  
Surrounding it  
Grows cloudy, and  
It floats away  
From you.

Marianne Moore