

PROMISES ESSAY CONTEST

“You are what you do” – Sam Haskell

The Mary Kirkpatrick Haskell Scholarship Foundation invites all students in Mississippi private schools, grades 9 –12, to write an essay about meanings, universal truths, or lessons learned from their personal experiences. The “Promises” essay contest is named for Sam Haskell’s best-selling memoir *Promises I Made My Mother*, which focuses on the lessons he learned that gave him a roadmap for how to live a principled life. The contest is approved by the Mississippi Private School Association. It fits into the existing curriculum for statewide writing skills and gives students the opportunity to work on their critical writing skills.

ELIGIBILITY

This contest is open to students who meet the following criteria:

- currently enrolled in a private high school in the state of Mississippi
- currently enrolled as a high school student in grades 9-12
- plan to attend a Mississippi state-funded college or university
- legal resident of the United States

ESSAY TOPICS

All students are required to read the book *Promises I Made My Mother* to participate in the contest. Essay topics for each division are listed below:

9th Grade (500 words or less)

Sam’s mother was his role model. Write about a role model who has influenced your life in positive ways. Include the values this person instilled to help you lead a successful life.

10th/11th Grade (1000 words or less)

1. After reading the memoir, choose three life lessons that Sam Haskell learned from his mother and discuss how you can apply those same lessons to your life.
- or**
2. “You are what you do” according to Sam Haskell. Choose two or more of the ideals that Sam used to prepare him for success. How can you use these in your preparation for the future?

12th Grade (1200 words or less)

1. In the memoir, Sam states: “Each of us has our own goals and dreams, and our visions of what we want to achieve in life.” He then poses the question, “How do we make those dreams come true?” Write about a difficult goal that you have set for the future. How can being “thoughtfully political” help you achieve it?
- or**
2. Sam Haskell said, “Character is all you have in the dark.” College life offers many new freedoms. How will your character survive? Write about how you can use the principles that Sam Haskell used as his guide for living to have academic, spiritual, and social success in college.

REQUIREMENTS

- Students must include at least two quotations from the book. These must be relevant to the essay and clearly identified.
- On a separate sheet of paper, students must include a list of **ten promises** they plan to keep for future success. Attach these to the back of the essay.
- Essays must be typed in 12 pt. and double-spaced on white paper.
- No identifying information may be included on the essay. All identifying information will be included on the entry form, which must be stapled to the front of the essay.
- Essays must be the original work of the student.
- Students and parents must sign the entry form stating that he/she has read the entire book.
- Essays will be judged on both style and content. Judges will look for writing that is clear, articulate and logically organized. Essays must demonstrate both recognition and understanding of the philosophies expressed in the book.

SUBMISSION

- Fill out the entry form and staple to the front of the essay.
- School competitions must be completed by February 15th. Each school will select administrators or counselors who will form a panel of judges for the local school competition. They will send the names of the first place winners in each category to the assigned Rotary contact person for each of the three Rotary districts (to be named in the next couple of weeks). The Rotary panel will choose first place winners (in each category) for the district and submit those names to the MPSA office for the state competition. State winners will be announced sometime in May by the MPSA office. Author Sam Haskell will present the awards.

Source material: *Promises I Made My Mother* is available through school libraries, public libraries, local bookstores and Amazon.Com.

PRIZES AWARDED

Local first place winners will be recognized by those schools that have been sponsored by local Rotary Clubs or by participating PTO organizations. Winning students must use their scholarship award at a state-funded college or university. Scholarship earnings will be sent directly to the college once the student is enrolled.

STATE LEVEL AWARDS

9th grade

First \$400
Second \$200
Third \$100
Total: \$700

10th/11th grade

first \$1000
second \$ 500

third \$250
Total: \$1750

12th Grade

First \$1500
Second \$ 750
Third \$300
Total: \$2550

Total: \$5000

We hope your school will join us in this year's contest. For more information, contact Beth Kellogg at bwkellogg@comcast.net or Nancy Perkins at nwperkins@comcast.net.