

March 25-April 29, 2026

Arabic Short Story Contest Guidelines

Introduction

Qatar Foundation International, LLC (“QFI”) invites students to showcase their creativity and Arabic language skills by taking part in the 2026 Arabic Short Story Contest. Students will author a short story in Arabic, in response to the prompt listed below. The prompt is intentionally open-ended to give students creative freedom and accommodate different language levels. Winners will be selected based on their language level and language background. Arabic students from countries with QFI operations (see Eligibility) are invited to participate.

Eligibility

To participate, you must be a current Arabic language student in the US, UK, Canada, Ireland, Italy, Sweden, or Spain. Students should be in 6-12th grade (US), year 7-13 (UK), or the equivalent (secondary school, ages approx. 11-18). Students who are homeschooled or working with a tutor are eligible to participate.

Contest Information & Prompt

Students must write an Arabic short story (200-250 words) about a talking animal that takes you on a journey. What happens on your adventure?

You are free to take this story in any direction you wish, but here are some extra suggestions that may help you brainstorm.

- Where does the animal take you? Is it somewhere familiar, in the past or future, or a fantastical destination?
- Does the animal teach you a lesson?
- Who else is on the adventure?

You are encouraged to address this prompt with creativity, and we invite you to think about different time periods and settings (is your story set in a world with magic? Does it take place on Earth?)

Story Guidelines

Failure to adhere to any of these guidelines is grounds for disqualification from the contest:

- Submissions must be in Arabic but can be typed or handwritten. Handwritten submissions are only acceptable if legible. All stories should be submitted as PDFs.
- Submissions should be written in Modern Standard Arabic, but dialect usage will not be penalized.
- Submissions must be 200-250 words. Any submissions outside this range will not be considered.

- Student must provide a word count, especially for handwritten submissions.
- Students may not submit more than one story.
- Submissions must be accompanied by a completed Entry Form and a completed Contest Consent Form. Entries without these forms are incomplete and will not be considered.

We want to read and celebrate a unique story that you wrote yourself! The following guidelines are therefore also in place:

- Submissions must be the work of one individual student, though students may ask for assistance from their teachers.
- **All work must be original. Copying, plagiarizing, machine translation (i.e. Google Translate), and the use of AI for any reason in connection with your submission is strictly prohibited.**

Judging Criteria and Prizes

Short stories will be evaluated based primarily on their clarity, organization, description, and creativity. Proper grammar, vocabulary, and spelling will be taken into consideration. Your story should have a clear beginning, middle, and end. Particularly strong entries may use literary techniques such as personification, conflict, humor, or other imaginative elements.

Judges will take the students' language level into account. Participants will be asked to enter as intermediate or advanced learners, but final category placement is at the judges' discretion.

Winners will receive a \$100 gift card (or equivalent based on the student's location). All submissions may be shared on QFI platforms at QFI's discretion.

How to Enter

1. Teachers should submit students' stories on their behalf through SM Apply [link]. All entries must go through a teacher, tutor, or administrator; no student should submit their own entry.
2. The deadline for submissions is **April 29, 2026, at 11:59pm Eastern Time**. Winners will be notified by email to the coordinating teacher.

Resources

- [The Arabic GCSE: A Guide to the Writing Component](#) (QFI Blog, Fauzia Saeed)
- Hear from last year's winners: [Ikram](#), [Eythar](#), and [Najib](#)

Please contact Abby at contests@qfi.org with any questions.

Extra Information for Teachers

1. What is the goal of the Arabic Short Story Contest?

The Short Story Contest is intended to be a motivation tool that engages students and encourages them to practice writing Arabic in a creative context. We hope that students feel included in a community of global Arabic learners and have the chance to create something fun/silly/creative with the Arabic language.

2. How is the Short Story Contest useful in a classroom context?

It is completely up to you how you use the Short Story Contest in your classroom. The SSC could be incorporated into your regular classroom as a writing activity or assignment, offered as extra credit, or an activity in an Arabic Club meeting.

3. How is the Short Story Contest useful beyond the classroom?

We hope that the SSC can be a useful preparation tool for proficiency assessments. Most proficiency tests ask students to write a response to a prompt, and this prompt could be introduced as an exercise to prepare for proficiency testing and to gauge your students' proficiency in writing. The prompt encourages students to practice skills that help them reach more advanced proficiency levels, such as narrating in different tenses and describing characters and settings.

Although most prompts are more non-fiction/biographical in nature, practicing creative writing skills in a more informal environment may help students feel more confident in writing to demonstrate their best language skills.

4. What kind of language output is appropriate by level?

Adapted from the 2024 ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines and 2020 CEFR Companion Volume, particularly p.66-68.

Novice High/A1 – Students can write a series of short sentences about a topic they have studied. Students at this level are able to talk about a memory and provide basic details and descriptions using familiar grammatical structures. Students may struggle to create a clear storyline and would benefit from a word bank or list of sentence starters.

Intermediate Low/A2 – Students can write a few short paragraphs about familiar topics. Students at this level can describe a series of events and begin to integrate more complex descriptions and details. Students may attempt to integrate different tenses but struggle with execution.

Intermediate Mid/B1.1 – Students can write a few paragraphs about familiar topics. Students at this level can narrate in multiple tenses using highly familiar sentence structures and more complex descriptions and details. Students may struggle to organize their sentences and accurately use tenses in more complicated structures.

Intermediate High/B1.2 – Students can comfortably write a few paragraphs about familiar topics. Students at this level can narrate in multiple time frames using familiar sentence

structures and begin to incorporate connective language. Students may struggle to smoothly connect their ideas and maintain more complicated structures.

Advanced Low/B2.1 – Students can write multiple paragraphs about somewhat familiar topics. Students at this level can narrate in all major time frames in longer contexts and use connective language to organize the flow of their ideas. Students may struggle with redundancy/repetition in both their vocabulary and structures.

Advanced Mid/B2.2 – Students can comfortably write multiple paragraphs in connected, organized discourse. Students at this level can narrate using established storytelling conventions and integrate connective language with ease. Students may struggle to incorporate humor, idioms, metaphor, and other advanced storytelling techniques.

Advanced High/C1 – Students can comfortably write a clear, detailed, and structured narrative. Students at this level can adapt their writing style to the intended audience and incorporate advanced storytelling techniques such as idioms and metaphors naturally.

Terms and Conditions for Entering the Contest

General Terms and Conditions

Eligibility

Schools are responsible for checking the eligibility of all students. The supervising teacher also agrees that to the best of their knowledge, the category placement questions are answered truthfully. If it transpires that inaccurate information has been provided that changes a student's eligibility, then said student may be disqualified. QFI reserves the right to make further inquiries into the language experience/background of the candidate if questions arise regarding their eligibility or placement.

Entry Deadline

Entries must be submitted by 11:59 PM Eastern Time on April 29, 2026. Entries that are made after this deadline will not be accepted.

Originality

By entering the Competition, the supervising teacher confirms that the work is that of the student(s). Stories must be original and should not include any elements of AI or machine translation. Plagiarism will not be accepted.

Incomplete or Incorrect Entries

Entries must include the Student Entry Form, Short Story, and signed Contest Consent Form. Entries that are incomplete, submitted incorrectly, corrupted, or otherwise not fully received within the deadlines listed above will not be accepted.

Privacy Notice and Consent

QFI is organizing and conducting the Short Story Contest event and will process your information, including that of the participant, their parent/guardian/representative, judges and coordinating teachers. The legal basis for processing your personal data will either be consent or performance of a contractual consent.

Any personal data (including your name, location, school, age/grade level, and language background) that you provide to QFI in connection with the Short Story Contest will be processed by QFI as a data controller and in accordance with its privacy policy which is available on its website or [here](#). Before you get involved with the Short Story Contest and provide us with your data, we strongly recommend you review our privacy policy.

QFI complies with the EU's and UK's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the UK Data Protection Act 2018, the US's Children's Online Privacy Protection Rule (COPPA), and individual US state data privacy laws. Short Story Contest participants can exercise their rights over their personal data held by QFI, ask us to correct any inaccuracies in that information or withdraw their consent to the processing of their personal data by referring to QFI's privacy policy referred to above or by calling us at 001-888-400-4904, emailing us at privacy@qfi.org or by mail at Qatar Foundation International, LLC, 1225 New York Ave NW, Washington, DC 20005. If you have concerns about how we have used your personal information, you also have the right to complain to a privacy regulator. We will keep your information for a period of 2 years from the time of collection.

If you do not agree to the intended use of personal data you are free to decide not to participate. If you are not a US resident and under 18 years of age, your parents or other legal guardians must agree to your participation. If you are a US resident and under 13 years of age, your parents or other legal guardians must agree to your participation. QFI will not accept any submissions without the required consent form.

If you wish to participate in the Short Story Contest;

- a. You must confirm that you have read and understood the contents of [QFI's privacy policy](#); and
- b. You must complete and **deliver** the attached Contest Consent Form to QFI by submitting it at <https://form.jotform.com/qfi/short-story-2026>. Printable copies are available upon request to contests@qfi.org.

You can withdraw your consent at any time. Please note that the withdrawal is only effective for the future and you may not be able to continue with your participation in the Short Story Contest.