

April 10 – May 11, 2025

# Arabic Short Story Contest

## Call for Submissions

The Qatar Foundation International (QFI) is pleased to relaunch the 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. Four winners will be selected based on their language level and whether the student is a heritage/native learner\* or a world language learner. Arabic students from countries with QFI operations (see Eligibility) are invited to participate.

## Contest Information & Prompt

Students must write an Arabic short story (200-250 words) about a box found in an attic (can be your attic or someone else's). What's in the box?

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

- contain clues to a family secret.
- serve as a “window in time” and give you a glimpse of the past or the future.
- have items used to celebrate a holiday or important tradition.

You are encouraged to address this prompt with creativity, and we invite you to think about different time periods and settings (is your box 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.
- 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.
- Students must provide a word count, especially for handwritten submissions.
- 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 is strictly prohibited.

## 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 6-12<sup>th</sup> grade (US), year 7-13 (UK), or the equivalent (secondary school).

## 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.

Four winners will be selected, one from each category: early heritage/native learner, advanced heritage/native learner, early world language learner, and advanced world language learner. Winners will receive a \$100 gift card (or equivalent based on the student's location), and their submissions may be shared online on QFI platforms at QFI's discretion.

## How to Enter

Teachers should submit students' stories on their behalf through SM Apply. All entries must go through a teacher, tutor, or administrator; no student should submit their own entry.

1. Log in or create an account through SM Apply ([qfi.smapply.org/prog/short\\_story\\_contest](http://qfi.smapply.org/prog/short_story_contest)) and click "apply".
2. Name your application with the name of the student.
3. Fill out the "School Profile" section with your contact information.
4. Complete the student information task. There are two choices to complete this section:
  1. Fill out the form through SM Apply (like you would a Google Form). Only the coordinating teacher can fill out this form.
  2. Fill out this PDF: [Student Information Form \(Blank\)](#). Either the student or the teacher can fill out the PDF version. It can be filled digitally or printed and scanned.
5. Upload an image or PDF of the student's story.
6. Submit the application.
7. If you are submitting applications for multiple students, start a new application for each student. To begin a new application, select "Programs" from the top menu bar. Then, scroll down to the "Short Story Contest" tile and select "more". You will have the option to see your existing applications or create a new one by choosing "apply". Follow the same submission process for all applications. The "School Profile" section should remember your responses, so you should only complete it once.

The deadline for submissions is **May 11, 2025**. Winners will be notified by email to the coordinating teacher.

*\*Students will be placed into heritage/world language learner categories based on their responses to a few short questions on the entrance form.*

Please contact [arabichonorsociety@qfi.org](mailto:arabichonorsociety@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 Arabic.

### 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. 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.

Teachers preparing for the GCSE Arabic exam may be interested in this QFI blog post from 2024: <https://www.qfi.org/blog/the-arabic-gcse-a-guide-to-the-writing-component/>

### 4. What kind of output is appropriate by level?<sup>1</sup>

**Novice High/A1** – Students can write a series of short sentences about a topic they have studied. Students at this level can 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

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<sup>1</sup> Based on the [2024 ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines](#) and [2020 CEFR Companion Volume](#), particularly p.66-68.

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.