



Dear Principal or Language Arts Chair,

Please allow me to introduce myself: my name is Elise Klein and I am the president of **TAP**, Teachers Against Prejudice. We are a grassroots non-profit organization composed of educators, parents, and concerned citizens whose mission is to increase awareness and examine the causes and roots of prejudice and discrimination; open dialogue with students and teachers from elementary school through college; and promote understanding and respect for all through the critical exploration and analysis of films, television, and other media.

We are conducting our **Ninth** Annual International Essay and Media Contest to commence on **October 1, 2008**; the deadline is **December 15, 2008**. The winners will be notified by March 1, 2009 and, with permission, winning entries will be posted on our website on April 15, 2009. This contest is open to all students enrolled in grades 5 through 12 in public and independent schools. We will have two separate categories, one for middle school students (grades 5–8) and one for high school students (grades 9–12). The essay questions, judging criteria, and prizes are listed below. Winning entries from previous years can be viewed at: www.teachersagainstprejudice.org

We hope your teachers will work with their students on this important theme. We welcome and encourage their participation in this contest. We trust it will help to hone students' critical thinking skills as well as provide a forum for their creativity. In addition, if you have any teachers on your staff who are interested in helping us judge the entries we receive, please have them contact us.

Middle School Question

Reality shows have become commonplace on television. There is not a channel out there which does not feature a reality show. As with other programs, reality shows can either create prejudice and reinforce stereotypes towards people based solely on their race, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, body image, gender, or disability *or* can potentially serve to open our minds and hearts to others.

There are many so-called reality TV shows now on the air throughout the world such as *Big Brother*, *Survivor*, *The Real World*, *Big World*, *Little People*, *John and Kate Plus 8*, *The Mole*, *The World's Biggest Loser*, *American Idol*, *Dancing with the Stars*, *Project Runway*, and many others. Write an essay addressing the following questions: What is your opinion about these shows? Do they portray reality and/or do they perpetuate stereotypes? Which show changed your mind or can serve to change other people's minds, either positively or negatively, about a specific group of people? Would you recommend that others see this show? Why or why not? Please include the title of the show and give concrete examples to illustrate your opinion.

Essays must not exceed 750 words, and must be typed or neatly written, clearly organized and answer all parts of the question.

High School Question

The media are composed of many different parts: movies, television, radio, newspapers, the Internet and magazines. All of these media elements can serve to influence and give voice on a wide variety of issues to a wide range of people.

As young people mature and are required to make tough decisions, sometimes those decisions include matters involving race, gender, religion, and sexual orientation. Do you think that the media focuses enough attention on giving young people a voice on the issues of prejudice and discrimination which confront them? What medium do you think might best provide a platform for the challenges that young people face on matters of race, gender, religion and sexual orientation? For your essay, please create a program that addresses one of these challenges. What issue have you chosen? What would the program's goals be? Why do you believe the media platform you've chosen is the most effective one?

Essays must not exceed 1000 words, must be typed or neatly written, clearly organized, and must address all parts of the question.

Criteria: For contact purposes only, all students **must** include their name, home address, contact phone number, school name, school phone number and grade. Also include an e-mail address, if available.

Entries will not be returned and become the property of TAP.
All entries must be postmarked by December 15, 2008.

Send entries to:

Teachers Against Prejudice
58 Pine Street
New Canaan, CT 06840
contest@teachersagainstprejudice.org

Prizes: First, second, and third place prizes will be awarded separately for middle school and high school students.

First place: \$300 U.S. Savings Bond
Second place: \$200 U.S. Savings Bond
Third place: \$100 U.S. Savings Bond

Prizes of comparable value will be awarded for those who reside outside of the United States

Based on previous results, we anticipate a good response and want to make sure that your students are included in this timely, relevant discussion.

Sincerely,

Elise Klein

President