

12th ANNUAL PHARR FROM NORMAL WRITING CONTEST

OFFICIAL RULES & SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

Writing Theme: Paranormal, Supernatural, and/or Death/Mortality (Día de los Muertos)

Contest Dates: September 20, 2026 – October 23, 2026

Winners Announced: Friday, October 30, 2026

Winner Event: Saturday, October 31, 2026 | 2:00–4:00 PM

ELIGIBILITY

Open to Hidalgo, Cameron and Starr County residents only:

- Teens: Ages 13–17
- Adults: Ages 18+

SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

- Each writer may submit ONE entry only.
- The writer's legal name, age, email address, and phone number must appear at the top of the first page. Two forms of contact are preferred.
- Stories must be typed in Arial, 12-point font, and double-spaced.
- Stories must be 1,000 words or fewer. Writers are responsible for verifying their word count. Entries exceeding the limit may be disqualified.
- Digital submissions must be submitted as a PDF. Printed submissions may be delivered in person.
- Late submissions will not be accepted.

Deadline: Friday, October 23, 2026

In Person: By 5:30 PM

Email: By 11:59 PM

ORIGINAL WORK & AI POLICY

Submissions must be the writer's original and unpublished work. A work is considered published if it has previously been made publicly available in any format, including books, magazines, websites, blogs, Wattpad or similar platforms, social media, or public online forums.

AI assistance is NOT permitted at any stage of the writing process. Contestants may not use AI tools, including ChatGPT, Microsoft Copilot, Google Gemini, or similar programs, for brainstorming, generating ideas, writing, rewriting, editing, proofreading, correcting grammar or spelling, creating titles, translating, or otherwise creating or preparing the submission.

Evidence of plagiarism or AI use may result in disqualification.

CONTENT GUIDELINES

Stories may explore mature themes related to the contest theme; however, submissions must not contain excessive violence, graphic descriptions of violence, or excessive foul/profane language. The Pharr Memorial Library reserves the right to disqualify submissions that do not meet these guidelines.

Images, illustrations, photographs, or other visual elements may be included but will NOT be considered when judging the quality of the writing.

JUDGING

A panel of selected Library staff will judge eligible submissions based on:

Story Elements | Imagery | Creativity | Grammar | Organization | Language Use

Prizes will be awarded separately in the Teen and Adult categories. The Top Three entries in each category will be recognized.

WINNER EVENT

Winners will be announced Friday, October 30. A public winner/author event will be held Saturday, October 31, from 2:00–4:00 PM.

The Top-three winners will be asked to either attend the event and share their work and/or discuss their inspiration and writing process, OR provide the Pharr Memorial Library with written permission to share their winning work publicly at the event.

Light refreshments will be provided.

PRIZE PICK-UP

Winners attending the October 31 event will receive their prizes that day.

Winners unable to attend must pick up their prize IN PERSON at the 2nd Floor Reference Desk between Monday, November 2 and Saturday, November 7, 2026. A valid photo ID is required.

Prizes not claimed by November 7th will be forfeited. Any forfeited cash prize will be awarded to the 4th-place contestant in the applicable category.

SUBMISSION CHECKLIST

- ☐ Legal name, age, email, and phone included
- ☐ One entry only
- ☐ 1,000 words or fewer
- ☐ Arial, 12-point font, double-spaced
- ☐ PDF format for digital submissions
- ☐ Original and unpublished work
- ☐ No AI assistance at any stage
- ☐ Submitted by October 23 deadline

By submitting an entry, the writer confirms that they have read and agree to follow all contest rules.