

Gateway to the Best Contest Official Rules, 2016

The Gateway to the Best Contest (Gateway Contest) is an all-electronic contest. Entries will only be accepted via the Missouri Romance Writers of America (MORWA) Gateway Contest website entry form. The Gateway Contest website entry form will not be accepted via postal service or email. Score sheets and comments will be returned via e-mail. All correspondence will be via e-mail (unless otherwise noted).

The first 150 entries are guaranteed entrance into the Gateway Contest. Judge availability and coordinator sanity will be used to determine whether any additional entries will be accepted, even if those entries are received prior to the day and time the Gateway Contest is scheduled to close.

SCORE SHEET:

A sample first-round score sheet is provided at for your consideration on the Gateway Contest's website pages.

ELIGIBILITY:

Only authors and entries meeting ALL of the following requirements may enter the Gateway Contest:

Author Eligibility:

- (a) **All** authors of the entry are unpublished and not contracted in novel-length fiction (over 40,000 words) within the last 3 years from July 30, 2016;
- (b) **Self-published** authors are eligible to enter the Gateway Contest with any **unpublished** work (see below); and
- (c) All authors of the entry agree to all parts of the release of liability. Acknowledgement of the release of liability constitutes the entrant's electronic mark of agreement to the release.

Entry Eligibility:

- (a) The entry, whether revised in whole or in part, has not previously won the Grand Prize or First Place in any category of the Gateway Contest;
- (b) The entry is only entered once in the Gateway Contest. No alternate versions of the same manuscript may be entered in the same or different categories;
- (c) Any work available for purchase online or in print **at any time** is published and is ineligible, even if revised in whole or in part and even if removed from POD or online purchase prior to the last 3 years;
- (d) The entry complies with the submission format described below;

Important Note: An entrant may enter any number of different qualifying entries in any number of categories but may not be named a finalist with more than two entries in any one category to avoid a circumstance where one entrant wins all three awards in the same category.

CATEGORY DESCRIPTIONS:

While not all entries will fit neatly into only one of the following categories, the descriptions of each category should be followed when deciding into which category to enter a manuscript.

Contemporary Single Title / Contemporary Series Romance. A novel set between 1950 and the present that primarily focuses on a romantic relationship overcoming conflicts to reach a satisfying romantic conclusion. A contemporary single title romance generally exceeds 70,000 words and is targeted for release as a stand-alone novel. A contemporary series romance generally has between 40,000 and 70,000 words and meets the requirements of existing publisher series, like the many Harlequin series lines.

Historical Romance. A novel set in any time period prior to 1950 wherein the historically appropriate conflicts result in a satisfying resolution of the romance. Historical romances may use real historic locations or completely imaginary historic locations (for example, a fictional island kingdom off England's coast), but they use minimal (if any) magical, paranormal, fantastic, or fictional scientific elements. For example, a ghost story set in an otherwise historically and scientifically accurate Victorian England would be classified as an historical romance but a steampunk romance would not.

Paranormal, Futuristic, and Fantasy Romance. A novel (taking place in an alternate reality present or past, fantasy, or futuristic setting) in which magical, paranormal, fantastical, or science fiction elements (such as preternatural characters, imaginary creatures, magic powers, and fictional technology) create or contribute to the main conflicts to be overcome in the satisfying resolution of the romance.

Romantic Suspense. A novel in which mystery, suspense, thriller, or action and adventure elements create or contribute to the main conflicts to be overcome in the satisfying resolution of the romance.

Women's Fiction with strong romantic elements. A novel (in any tone, style, or time period) told mostly, if not completely, from a female's point of view in which a woman's journey to understand her life or rediscover herself is the primary plot but where overcoming or dealing with a romantic conflict is integral to the story's satisfying resolution.

Young Adult Romance / New Adult Romance. A young adult novel has at least one main romantic character under the age of 18 and includes conflicts common in young adult life that must be overcome before the story can reach a satisfying romantic conclusion. A new adult romance has at least one main romantic character of traditional college age or just graduated from college age, usually between 18 and 25 years old, and includes conflicts common to the lives of new adults that must be overcome before the story can reach a satisfying romantic conclusion.

Important Note: If insufficient entries are received in any category, entries will be placed in the second choice category chosen on the entry form.

SUBMISSION CRITERIA:

Author must submit **up to** the first 7000 words of manuscript in the following format:

- (a) 12pt Courier or Times New Roman;
- (b) Black font color;
- (c) Double-spaced;
- (d) 1" margins;
- (e) Header must include:
 - a. Title of entry;
 - b. First-choice category (Entries in Contemporary should specify whether they are Contemporary Single Title or Contemporary Series.); and
 - c. Page numbers;
- (f) Word (.doc or .docx) or rich text (.rtf) format; and
- (g) Author's name may NOT be anywhere on manuscript.

JUDGING and SCORING:

First-Round Judges:

- (a) First-round judges are both MORWA members and non-MORWA members who are either published authors or are experienced or trained in judging writing contests and critiquing manuscripts.
- (b) Every effort is made to ensure that only non-MORWA judges will judge entries by MORWA members.
- (c) Judges are not assigned to judge categories they have not said they are qualified and interested in judging.
- (d) Judges are not allowed to judge entries from any category they entered in the Gateway Contest.

First-Round Scoring:

- (a) Three (3) judges will score each entry. In each category, the sum of the top two scores from the three judges will be used to determine the finalists. The lowest score is dropped.
- (b) The dropped score may be used as a tie-breaker. (Not all of our final judges have agreed to judge more than the top three entries.)

Grand Prize Scoring:

- (a) The Grand Prize will be awarded to the entry that earns the highest sum of **all three (3) scores** in the first round of judging;
- (b) In the event of a tie, the Grand Prize will be awarded to the entry with the highest score in Opening/Hook. If there is still a tie, the Grand Prize will be awarded to the entry with the highest score in the following elements (in order listed below until there is no tie): Opening/Hook, Characters, Conflict, Dialogue, Plotting, Writing, Voice, Pacing, Description, and Mechanics;
- (c) Should there still be a tie, published authors on MORWA's present or past Board of Directors will judge the tied entries to break the tie, in the discretion of the Gateway Coordinator.

Final Judges:

- Contemporary Single Title or Contemporary Series—Diana Steger, Acquiring Editor, Evernight Publishing
- Historical—Kathryn Cheshire, Assistant Editor, Harlequin Historical / Mills & Boon Historical Romance
- Paranormal—Stephanie Doig, Assistant Editor, Carina Press
- Romantic Suspense—Tera Cuskaden, Editorial Director, Entangled Publishing
- Women's Fiction (with strong romantic elements)—Kristine Swartz, Assistant Editor, Berkley
- Young Adult or New Adult—Megha Parekh, Editor, Grand Central Publishing

Final Judges Scoring:

- (a) The final judges are asked to rank order the entries they receive based on how ready the entry is for submission to an industry professional.
- (b) Although they are also asked to provide some feedback to the entrant on which manuscript elements that worked well and which could be improved, not all final judges choose to do so.
- (c) The final judges this year are all editors at publishing houses who are willing to volunteer their time to judge our contest. In the rare circumstance where a final judge has to cancel after the contest closes, the contest coordinator would try to locate a replacement final judge from the

same or similar publishing house. However, judge availability is limited, and there is no guarantee.

ENTRY FEES and DISCOUNTS:

Non-MORWA members:

\$30 USD for first manuscript, and
\$15 USD for each additional manuscript.

MORWA members:

\$20 USD for first manuscript, and
\$10 USD for each additional manuscript.

To be eligible for MORWA fee, ALL authors of the manuscript must be MORWA members by the opening date of the contest – August 1, 2016.

To be eligible for half-priced additional manuscripts, ALL authors on first manuscript and additional manuscripts must be the same.

PAYMENT:

- (a) Entrants may pay with PayPal, personal check, or money order in **U.S. currency only**. Personal checks and money orders must be **received** no later than September 9, 2016.
- (b) Entrants from outside the U.S. or Canada are urged to e-mail the contest coordinator at gatewaycontest@morwa.org prior to the deadline to notify her of your entry if you are not paying via PayPal.
- (c) Entrants must fill out SEPARATE entry forms for each manuscript entered but may pay for all entries with one check, money order, or PayPal transaction.
- (d) When paying with PayPal, if the author of the manuscript is different than the name on the PayPal account, add the author's name and manuscript title or titles into the memo to seller box.
- (e) Checks and money orders should be made payable to "MORWA", with "Gateway" in the memo line. If the author of the manuscript is different than the name on the check, add the author and the title of the manuscript to the memo line, too.
- (f) Checks and money orders should be sent to:
Gateway to the Best Contest
Pam Trader, MORWA Gateway Coordinator
2611 Pipers Court
Belleville, IL 62221

DEADLINES:

ENTRY and PAYMENT must be received no later than 11:59 p.m. CDT on Saturday, September 9, 2016.

Please realize it may take several minutes (or longer) for your entry to be received through electronic means, and any entry date stamped after the cut-off will **not** be accepted. To ensure your entry is received on time, please submit early.

DISQUALIFICATION:

The failure (a) to meet all the author and entry requirements, (b) to meet the entry or payment deadlines, or (c) of the entrant's check to clear on the first attempt will result in the automatic forfeit of any monies paid. Payments will not be returned, refunded, or rolled over to subsequent years' contests. Entries will

not be judged, critiqued, or returned.

PRIZES:

The Grand Prize Winner will receive:

- A personal 2-hour coaching session with writing coach Michael Hauge (valued at \$700),
- A Gateway Best of the Best certificate of achievement, and
- The Gateway charm.

The First-Place and Second-Place Winners in each category will receive:

- A certificate of achievement, and
- A one-year membership to MORWA, which includes an e-newsletter among other perks.

The Third-Place Winner in each category will receive a certificate of achievement.

TIMELINE:

Submissions and payment must be received by 11:59 p.m., CST, September 9, 2016.

First-round finalists and the Grand Prize Winner will be notified by approximately October 31, 2016.

Non-winning entrants should receive their entries and score sheets back by approximately November 15, 2016.

Category winners will be notified by approximately November 30, 2016.

MISCELLANEOUS:

In the event that a situation not covered by these Official Rules or MORWA's PPM arises, either the Gateway coordinator or MORWA's Board of Directors will make the final decision regarding the resolution of the situation.

SUBMISSION CHECKLIST:

A complete submission package includes:

_____ One completed electronic entry form with all blanks filled in for each entry;

_____ One completed electronic release of liability for each entry;

_____ Manuscript satisfying all the submission criteria uploaded at the time the entry form is completed;

_____ Payment:

- Completed PayPal electronic payment. (If the name of the author is different than the name on the PayPal account, please type the author and title of entry or entries in the memo to seller box); **or**
- Check or money order received prior to deadline for the correct fee. (If the name of the author is different than the name on check, please write the author and entry title or titles on the memo line.)

_____ Receipt of one automated response email for each entry that confirms the receipt of the manuscript and entry form; **and**

_____ Receipt of one payment email: either PayPal's automated email confirming payment to MORWA **or** an email from MORWA confirming receipt of your check or money order.