

Writing Requirements

CSSSA Writing Required Assignments - 2026

The Writing Department welcomes all eligible applicants who are interested in writing creatively in an inspiring and supportive environment. All classes are accessible to all skill levels.

We want to hear your voice. We are not looking for perfection. We want to read your writing in your language about your world, not a vocab list arranged in a way that mimics another writer. More important than grammar and spelling is your own unique relationship to language and the courage to be yourself on the page.

That said, prepare your application with thoughtful attention. Take your time. Be certain that what we see on the page is what you want us to see.

ASSIGNMENTS

All assignments must be typed or neatly hand-written, and on separate pages. All entries must be typed in 12 pt. font, with 1-inch margins. No fancy fonts. Assignments must be uploaded to submit the application. Save your assignments with your first initial and last name followed by the appropriate letter for each of the submissions. For example, John Smith would save his work as follows:

jsmith_A
jsmith_B
jsmith_C

A. Who are you? Upload a video recording of yourself addressing the following questions: Why do you write? As you answer the question, let us know some writers, books, short stories, or poems that inspire you. (Limit: 2 minutes.)

B. Original Writing: Choose one, and only one, of the following prompts:

1. Prose Fiction: Think about a moment in your life when you felt something intensely: happiness, sadness, joy, anger. Imagine a fictional character who feels the same feeling, but for different reasons. Write a story about this character as they change from that feeling to a completely different, just as intense feeling. (Limit: 2 pages, double-spaced.)
2. Dramatic Writing (screenplay, play, comic book script): Think of someone in your life who you have a hard time relating to. Imagine a character based on that person. Write a scene in which you and this imagined character must work together to solve a problem. (Limit: 3 pages, single-spaced)
3. Spoken Word Poetry: Record the performance of a spoken word piece that responds to the prompt: What I Left Behind. (Limit: 3 minutes)

4. Poetry: Imagine each room of your home and the details that make the rooms unique: the way they smell, memories, how the rooms look at a certain time of day. Write a poem that uses these rooms to express how you feel about your family. (Limit: 2 pages, single-spaced)

C. Writing Sample: Share a piece you wrote on your own. The work can be fiction, dramatic writing (play, screenplay, or comic book script), spoken word poetry, or poetry. Excerpts from longer works are acceptable. Do not include school assignments. (Limit: 2 double-spaced pages for prose, 2 single-spaced pages for poetry, or 3 pages in screenplay/play format.)

D. Focus Class: To help us create the most engaging writing curriculum for CSSSA 2026, we want to understand your interests. We'll be offering a selection of Focus Classes during the 2026 session. Your input will help determine which classes we'll offer. Your response does not affect whether or not you will be accepted into CSSSA.

Please rank all eight options below. 1 = most preferred, 8 = least preferred.

Short stories: realism / literary fiction

Memoir

Novel-in-a-month

Scripts for comic book & graphic novels

Screenwriting

Poetry

Playwriting

TV writing

Genre fiction: speculative, science fiction, fantasy, horror

RETURNING STUDENTS

E. **Returning Students Only:** We expect that returning students have continued writing after leaving CSSSA and can show their development as writers. If you previously attended CSSSA, please write a statement that responds to the following questions: What did you learn from your time at CSSSA? How and in what ways has your writing grown since leaving CSSSA? What do you plan to do with your four weeks if you return? (Limit: 500 words/double-spaced.)

ALL STUDENTS, PLEASE NOTE

Parents and teachers are not to edit or collaborate with the writer.