



Published January 29th, 2014

The Sound of Writing

Youth Ink 2014 contest deadline is Feb. 18

By Laurie Snyder

"The word 'listen' contains the same letters as the word 'silent.'" - Alfred Brendel

The incomparable Alfred Brendel gave fellow pianists and future authors a tremendous gift when he uttered those words - the reminder that silence can be more important than sound, and that great artistry most often comes not from nose-to-the-grindstone drudgery, but from a place of mindful stillness.

It's also a lesson that Orinda's budding writers are currently learning as they engage in Youth Ink 2014. Sponsored by the Orinda Junior Women's Club, the increasingly popular writing competition is open to all students who attend grades six to eight in Orinda, or live in the city. Winners will be eligible for cash and other prizes once again thanks to the Orinda Juniors and their co-sponsors - the Friends of the Orinda Library, Orinda Association, and Orinda Community Foundation.

For the next few weeks, students will be scattered across town, sizing up their surroundings for humans haranguing, warblers warbling, and other sounds subtle or obnoxious as they prepare to peck away at laptops and produce poetry, fiction or non-fiction to address this year's Youth Ink theme - Listen. "This prompt was chosen because it encourages young writers to personalize their piece and lends well to an open style choice," explained Orinda Juniors president, Tracy Cummings.

The individual works of 750 words or less created must be new - written for this contest and without help from parents or teachers. Only one entry per student will be accepted, and must be typed and double-spaced. (Additional formatting criteria are available via the Orinda Juniors: info@orindajuniors.org.)

Submissions will be accepted until Friday, Feb. 18 via in-person delivery to the student's designated school representative or by mail to: Orinda Junior Women's Club, P.O. Box 40, Orinda, CA 94563. Entry forms are available through the Orinda Library, Orinda Books, Loard's Ice Cream, and The Storyteller, as well as the English departments or administrative offices at the Orinda Intermediate School, Orinda Academy, Athenian School, School for Girls, Smart Lounge, and the orthodontics office of John Ogro, DDS.

A panel of best-selling novelists, reporters and other local professional writers will then judge the clarity, originality, content, and structure of each submission. The winners will be announced and honored at a public awards ceremony at the Orinda Library, beginning at 6 p.m. on Thursday, April 24.

So be forewarned. Like Madeleine L'Engle, Orinda's students "are listening. To the sun. To the stars. To the wind." And to you.

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