



Together with our partner



Proudly presents the

Literary Festival

2026 SYLLABUS

ENTRIES CLOSE: Wednesday 22nd July 2026
Entry forms AND submissions must be submitted
(Office will remain open until 4pm on this day)

NO LATE ENTRIES WILL BE ACCEPTED

AWARDS CEREMONY: Saturday 10 October 2026 (by invitation ONLY)

ENTRY FEES: USD 8 per entry

PAYMENTS
National Institute of Allied Arts - CABS
CABS USD NOSTRO 1146616996
CABS ZWL 1002617219
Ecocash Merchant Number 314843
No ZWL payments accepted before 20 July
Send POP; state school name as reference/depositor)
Swipe available at NIAA office

NIAA Office: Flat A5 Northern Heights, 5 J Tongogara Avenue, Harare

Office hours: 9am - 12:30pm Mon-Fri (during term time)

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Website: www.niaazim.co.zw Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/NationalInstituteofAlliedArts>

Instagram: [niaazimbabwe](https://www.instagram.com/niaazimbabwe)

Welcome to the 2026 NIAA Literary Festival.

The 2025 Literary festival was a successful year, with a total of 69 schools, with total entries increased by about 100 over the previous year.

Workshops in 2025 were well attended, including the Gweru workshop. It's been gratifying to see such a large increase in interest and participation. Workshops are important not only for learning and understanding new genres, but for feedback on festival entries and clarification and discussion on the new syllabus.

We have made some small tweaks to the syllabus again this year, removing Concrete Poetry and Dramatic Excerpts, neither of which has been well subscribed.

In 2025 we introduced an "experimental" Journal group project at Grade 7 level. Five schools participated in this, and their presentations were of an extremely high standard. This year we are opening this up to more junior schools at Grade 7 level, and hopefully, depending upon interest, we will open this up to Form 1.

We still receive over-large numbers of entries in narrative genres (about 90%), in both prose and poetry. This year we are limiting narrative genres to 2 per set in both prose and poetry to encourage pupils to explore different forms of writing styles and genres. Please be aware of this important change, and plan your entries carefully!

Read instructions carefully – the bulk of U and DQ grades are the result of instructions not being followed, and / or inappropriate content.

AI generated pieces are still commonplace, as are entries that reflect an overabundance of teacher input, plagiarism and group co-operation. Please note that the festival is about creativity and originality and teachers should ensure that all entries are original. It is important that we maintain the integrity of this festival.

Enjoy your creative journey and encourage your pupils to explore the world of words and imagination.

Quotes for fun

On reading: "The more that you read, the more things you will know. The more that you learn, the more places you'll go." Dr Seuss

On the writing process: "The first draft is just you telling yourself the story." Terry Pratchett.

On poetry: "Poetry, I feel, is a tyrannical discipline. You've got to go so far so fast in such a small space; you've got to burn away all the peripherals." Sylvia Plath

Thank you for supporting *the National Institute of Allied Arts!*



JACQUI GRIERSON
Literary Festival Director

LITERARY FESTIVAL GENERAL RULES

Please read these rules carefully - they apply to all entries.

It is the responsibility of Heads of Schools to ensure that they and their teachers have read and complied with the Literary Festival regulations.

ENTRIES:

- **CLOSING DATE FOR ENTRIES AND SCRIPT SUBMISSION IS 4PM, WEDNESDAY 22 JULY**
- Only **five** entries per grade/form per school are permitted.
- If your school has multiple classes per grade/form, you may send per class, with a maximum of 15 entries being acceptable, but please indicate this on email when you submit your entry form.
Please do not exceed the maximum number of permitted entries.
- All entries should have been written under teacher supervision in the classroom to ensure originality. **This rule applies to all grades/forms except 6th Form & open category.**
- 6th Form students may submit pieces written under “teacher guidance”
- All work submitted must be hand-written. Typeset work will **NOT** be accepted.
- Teachers should not mark pupils’ work but may give them guidance by pointing out spelling and punctuation mistakes, encouraging the use of dictionaries, and getting them to re-write and improve **on their own**, work which the teacher considers of Festival standard.
- **NO candidate may enter more than ONE PROSE and ONE POETRY piece.**
A second entry, in either prose or poetry, will not be graded.
- **NO SCANNED** entry forms or scripts will be accepted. Please deliver to the NIAA offices yourself, or via courier. Entry forms **MUST** be emailed in excel format **AS WELL**.

Sufficient time for posting and/or delivery must be allowed for.

Under no circumstances will late entries be accepted after 4pm on Wednesday 22 July.

ENTRY FORMS:

- Please **ONLY** use this year’s excel entry form—one sheet for PROSE, one for POETRY and one for JOURNALISTIC PROJECT (for those accepted for the project)
- Please leave a line between each Grade/Form
- No other entry forms will be accepted. Incorrect entry forms will be returned and resubmission required
- Submit on email to **niaa@yoafrica.com** in **excel format**
- Submit a hard copy with your entries
- Please ensure that the Title code is entered on the entry form in the designated column, and is the same as on the scripts submitted.

ENTRY FEE PAYMENTS:

- Please note that all entries and payments must come through the school. We are unable to accept individual payments.
- **Fee per entry will be USD \$8.00** – please call the office cell on the day of payment for the NIAA rate.
- We will only be accepting payments from 20th July 2026

PEN NAMES:

- Schools' and pupils' names must **NOT** appear on the actual entries, only grades/forms and pen names
- Pen names **MUST** be used and should not exceed 12 characters
- They should be **ONE WORD ONLY**
- Choose simple pen names
- Please do not use the same pen names for different pupils, even in the same school
- Put the following information in the top left-hand corner of each script (not on a separate page):

PROSE/POETRY/JOURNAL PROJECT (whichever is applicable)
GRADE/Form
TITLE CODE
GENRE
TITLE
PEN NAME

ENTRIES FROM DYSLEXIC CHILDREN:

- Provided that an entry is not entirely unintelligible, we will accept entries from children who are dyslexic.
- However, we will require evidence that these are genuine cases. Entries will need to be accompanied by
 - o a formal letter from the school on letterhead and signed by the head of school, and
 - o photocopy of a summary from the educational psychologist's assessment. NOTE: We do not require a full assessment, only the summary that confirms the assessment.
- We would like to encourage children with learning disabilities to enter and to have their creative skills acknowledged.
- Should you have any queries please email the office on niaa@yoafrica.com

Please remember that your stories and poetry must be ORIGINAL, they must not be copied from anyone or anywhere else.

Suspected plagiarism will be checked and result in automatic disqualification.

GRADES:

- Awards will be made to the following standards:

<i>Honours</i>	<i>90% or more</i>
<i>1st Grade Plus</i>	<i>85% - 90%</i>
<i>1st Grade</i>	<i>80% - 84%</i>
<i>2nd Grade Plus</i>	<i>75% - 79%</i>
<i>2nd Grade</i>	<i>70% - 74%</i>
<i>3rd Grade Plus</i>	<i>65% - 69%</i>
<i>3rd Grade</i>	<i>60% - 64%</i>
<i>Ungraded</i>	<i>Less than 60%</i>

INDEMNITY & DISCLAIMER:

- All entries and submissions that are accepted may be uploaded to the NIAA Facebook page
- Teachers should get permission/acceptance from parents and their school head that they are aware of this exposure on social media.
- **Please submit the attached indemnity with your entries**
- NIAA will presume that this has been received for all candidates which they receive entries/submissions for.

Please feel free to email us with any concerns you may have.

Please state when submitting entries if the return of certificates and markers' reports are required by a specific date.

We will try and accommodate such requests where possible

If you require the office to send to you by courier, please supply name of courier, account name and number for "carriage forward option"

Please remember that our Festival involves candidates and audiences of all ages, backgrounds, religions and cultures, so care should be taken that any material submitted should not cause offense or is discriminatory in any way.

Offensive or discriminatory content may include religion, sex, drugs, and racial bias.

Any submission deemed to be discriminatory will be automatically disqualified.

All submissions should be age appropriate.

Section A: Primary School Prose

THERE IS NO THEME FOR JUNIOR SCHOOL PROSE

Length: Minimum – 1 ½ sides

Maximum – 2 sides

SECTION RULES:

- Select a title and write a **Narrative, Descriptive, or Fantasy piece**; or a **Persuasive essay**; or a **Newspaper Report**.
- **MAXIMUM** of **TWO** Narrative pieces per grade/set
- PLEASE NOTE: There is no Flash Fiction on the Junior School syllabus
- Please ensure that length requirements are followed - Do not exceed the maximum length

PROSE GUIDELINES (ALL CLASSES):

- The piece should have a title.
- **Clearly indicate the chosen genre next to the PROSE TITLE CODE.** Please note that incorrect title code allocation may lead to disqualification.
- The piece should be written in English. Any use of non-English words or phrases (if absolutely necessary) should be underlined. A glossary will not be necessary.
- Normal grammar, spelling and punctuation conventions should be applied.
- All submissions should be original work. Submissions deemed to be AI generated, copied from other sources, or involving co-operative efforts between pupils will be disqualified.
- All submissions should be written under teacher supervision.
- **Overlong submissions will be disqualified.**
- Only 2 narrative submissions in each set.

Grade 2

Title Code

121	Narrative OR Fantasy OR Newspaper Report	There's a dragon in my garden!
122	Descriptive	Create a new ice-cream flavour. Describe its taste, colour, texture, appearance, and add some yummy toppings!

Grade 3

Title Code

131	Narrative OR Fantasy OR Newspaper Report	Write a narrative or fantasy story about a talking animal that goes on an adventure
132	Descriptive	You wake up morning to find that you can fly. Describe how it feels and what you can see and hear during your flying adventure.
133	Persuasive	Write a persuasive essay: "Every child should be allowed to have a pet of their choice."

THERE IS NO THEME FOR JUNIOR SCHOOL PROSE

Length: Minimum – 1 ½ sides;

Maximum – 2 sides

Grade 4

Title Code

141	Narrative OR Fantasy OR Newspaper Report	Imagine you have a time travelling backpack. Write about where you would go and what you would bring back.
142	Descriptive	Write a descriptive story starting with, "I dare you to press that big red button," my brother challenged. Describe what you see, hear, smell, what you do, and how you feel.
143	Persuasive	Write a persuasive essay: "I should be allowed to choose my own bedtime."

Grade 5

Title Code

151	Narrative OR Fantasy OR Newspaper Report	Write about a magical creature that helps people solve their problems.
152	Descriptive	A friendly alien visits Earth for the first time. Describe what he sees, hears, smells, what the food tastes like and what he thinks about the people on Earth.
153	Persuasive	Write a persuasive essay titled: "Every child should learn to play a musical instrument."

Grade 6

Title Code

161	Narrative OR Fantasy OR Newspaper Report	Write a story ending with, "and that's why I'll never climb a tree again."
162	Descriptive	Describe your dream vacation. Write about the location, scenery, your impressions, etc and why it would be your dream place to visit.
163	Persuasive	Write a persuasive essay titled, "Everyone should learn a foreign language."

Grade 7

Title Code

171	Narrative OR Fantasy OR Newspaper Report	Write a story ending, "and that's why I will never lend anything to a friend again."
172	Descriptive	Describe your favourite season and why you like it. Write about what you can see, hear, feel, smell. Think about colours, temperatures, time of day, etc., and how you respond.
173	Persuasive	Write a persuasive essay titled, "Every class should go on at least three field trips a term."

Section B: Primary School Poetry

Grades 4 – 7 only

THEME: Journeys

Length: 15 – 25 lines

SECTION RULES:

- Based on this year's theme, write a poem about the subject of your choice in any of the following genres:
 - Formal/Traditional Poetry: Narrative/Ballad
 - Informal/Modern Poetry: Free Verse, Rap, Haiku
- **Haiku Submissions:** 4 haiku must be submitted, relating to the theme and linked by topic to each other
- **MAXIMUM** of **TWO** Formal/Traditional poems **per grade/set**) will be accepted.
- Informal/Modern poems are unlimited.
- Please ensure that poetry genres are correctly chosen and age appropriate.
- Please ensure that length requirements are followed - Do not exceed the maximum length

POETRY GUIDELINES (ALL GRADES)

- The piece should have a title.
- **Clearly indicate the chosen genre next to the POETRY TITLE CODE.** Please note that incorrect title code allocation may lead to disqualification.
- The piece should be written in English. Any use of non-English words or phrases (if absolutely necessary) should be underlined. A glossary will not be necessary.
- All submissions should be original work. Submissions deemed to be AI generated, copied from other sources, or involving co-operative efforts between pupils will be disqualified. All submissions should be written under teacher supervision.
- **Overlong submissions will be disqualified.**

Poetry Title
Codes

Grade 4	144
Grade 5	154
Grade 6	164
Grade 7	174

Section E: Mini-Journal & Journal Project

Mini-Journal Project: Grades 3 – 6 only

Journal Project: Grade 7 only

THEME: Journeys

SECTION RULES:

- One entry per school per grade – **please apply by 10th May 2026 to be considered for submission**
- Must complete **BOTH** the Journal and Mini-Journal Project
- **ATTENDANCE** at the Journal project Workshops through 2nd Term 2026 is **IMPORTANT**
- Based on this year's theme, produce a journal / magazine that includes one of each of the specified genres

	Title Code	Advert	News Report	Opinion Piece	Analytical Essay	Artistic Journalistic Essay
Grade 3	403	1	1			
Grade 4	404	1	1	1		
Grade 5	405	1	1	1	1	
Grade 6	406	1	1	1	1	1
Grade 7	407	COMPLETE JOURNAL, BOUND TOGETHER e.g. spiral bind or in a folder				

COMPLETE JOURNAL:

- It is a **group project** for 5 pupils.
- The main part of the project consists of 5 journalistic genres: informational report, editorial, opinion piece, artistic journalistic essay, and analytical essay. These genres are NOT as intimidating as they look!
- In addition: an advert, editorial list, table of contents, cover page, an illustration, and page numbering.

JOURNAL PROJECT FURTHER INFORMATION:

It has many elements of the Cambridge exam syllabus, introduces different journalistic literary genres, and can be a gateway into improving understanding of language and literature at senior school level.

We recommend that 2 teachers (possibly 3) be involved in the project. We are mindful that grade 7 teachers are pressured with various grade 7 exams, so the lead teacher does not have to be the Grade 7 teacher. Any teacher who has an interest in this type of literary genre (i.e.: journals, magazines, newspapers) can be involved. Workshop participants are NOT limited to only one teacher per school.

Please note that schools that enter this section of the syllabus should be prepared to attend **all** Journal Project workshops. Some genres will be covered in the main workshops.

This type of project has never before been offered in the NIAA Literary Festival, so we are limiting entries for 2026 (but will increase entries in 2027). If you're keen to join us on this journey, please bear in mind that your school should have a good record of high grades (Hon, 1+, 1). However, we're enthusiastically hopeful that schools will be as eager we are to help grow and develop it.

Please remember that our Festival involves candidates and audiences of all ages, backgrounds, religions and cultures, so care should be taken that any material submitted should not cause offense or is discriminatory in any way.

Offensive or discriminatory content may include religion, sex, drugs, and racial bias.

Any submission deemed to be discriminatory will be automatically disqualified.

All submissions should be age appropriate.

Section C: Senior School/Open Prose

THEME: Journeys

Length – Form specific

SECTION RULES:

- Forms 1 – 4
 - Based on the Theme, write a Narrative, Descriptive, Fantasy, Factual News Report or persuasive essay.
 - Length: Minimum – 1 ½ sides
 Maximum – 3 sides
 - **MAXIMUM** of **TWO** narrative pieces per form/set
- Form 6 and Open
 - Write a Narrative, Descriptive, Fantasy, Journalistic Factual Report or Persuasive Essay.
 - Length: Minimum – 2 ½ sides
 Maximum – 4 sides
 - **MAXIMUM** of **TWO** narrative pieces per form/set
- Flash Fiction – Forms 3, 4, 6 and Open
 - Length: Minimum - ¾ of a side
 Maximum – 1 side
- Please ensure that length requirements are followed - Do not exceed the maximum length

PROSE GUIDELINES (ALL FORMS)

- The piece should have a title.
- **Clearly indicate the chosen genre next to the PROSE TITLE CODE.** Please note that incorrect title code allocation may lead to disqualification.
- The piece should be written in English. Any use of non-English words or phrases (if absolutely necessary) should be underlined. A glossary will not be necessary.
- Normal grammar, spelling and punctuation conventions should be applied.
- All submissions should be original work. Submissions deemed to be AI generated, copied from other sources, or involving co-operative efforts between pupils will be disqualified.
- All submissions should be written under teacher supervision.
- **Overlong submissions will be disqualified.**

	News Report	Descriptive	Narrative	Fantasy	Persuasive Essay	Flash Fiction Forms 3, 4, 6/Open
Form 1	211	212	213	214	215	
Form 2	221	222	223	224	225	
Form 3	231	232	233	234	235	232
Form 4	241	242	243	244	245	242
F 6/Open	261	262	263	264	265	262

Section D: Senior School/Open Poetry

Forms 1 – 6 & Open

THEME: Journeys

Minimum Length: 15 lines

Maximum Length: 40 lines

SECTION RULES:

- Based on the theme, write a poem in any of the stated genres:
 - Formal/Traditional Poetry
 - Narrative
 - Sonnet
 - Blank verse
 - Informal/Contemporary Poetry
 - Rap
 - Free verse
- MAXIMUM of TWO narrative pieces per form/set
- Please ensure that length requirements are followed - Do not exceed the maximum length

POETRY GUIDELINES (ALL FORMS)

- The piece should have a title.
- **Clearly indicate the chosen genre next to the POETRY TITLE CODE.** Please note that incorrect title code allocation may lead to disqualification.
- The piece should be written in English. Any use of non-English words or phrases (if absolutely necessary) should be underlined. A glossary will not be necessary.
- All submissions should be original work. Submissions deemed to be AI generated, copied from other sources, or involving co-operative efforts between pupils will be disqualified.
- All submissions should be written under teacher supervision.
- **Overlong submissions will be disqualified.**

	Narrative	Sonnet	Blank Verse
Form 1	311	312	313
Form 2	321	322	323
Form 3	331	332	333
Form 4	341	342	343
Form 6/Open	361	362	363

	Rap	Free Verse
Form 1	314	315
Form 2	324	325
Form 3	334	335
Form 4	344	345
Form 6/Open	364	365



AXCENTIUM

The idea is to write it so that people hear it and it slides through the brain and goes straight to the heart.

Maya Angelou