



The Woolf Essay Prize 2021-22

The Woolf Essay Prize is open to all **female students currently in Year 12** (Lower Sixth) at a **UK state school**. It is designed to give students the opportunity to think and write about women in literature, history, society and culture, while developing their independent study and writing skills. Through exposure to the type of work they might be expected to do at Cambridge, we hope high flying students will be encouraged to consider applying to the University – and hopefully to Newnham, where women’s history and educational excellence are, of course, central.

This prize may be of particular interest to those studying English Literature, History, Politics, Philosophy or Sociology; but we welcome entries from interested students studying any combination of subjects. Entrants are invited to submit a response to any **one** of the questions overleaf, which should be between 1,500 and 2,500 words (including footnotes and captions). All sources must be appropriately acknowledged and cited, and a bibliography – including websites consulted – should be attached (though excluded from the word count). Up to **four** entries may be submitted per school.

The winning entries from previous competitions may be found on the Newnham College website and may be useful to you as you decide how to answer your chosen question. However, it is to be noted that there are many angles from which to approach each question and those available on the website are only a limited sample. Good essays will present a clear argument using specific examples, but outside of this many different approaches are welcome.

Newnham will be running a programme of essay writing skills advice and guidance webinars in the new year. Dates and information can be found [here](#).

Each of the Newnham Essay Prizes have a first prize of £400, a second prize of £200 and a third prize of £100. Prize money is split 50:50 between the Essay Prize winner and the funding of resources for their school.

The [completed cover sheet](#) must also be submitted. Please ensure that a school/college representative has completed the appropriate section before submission. Entries without an appropriately completed coversheet will be invalid.

Entrants should submit their entry to the webform, found here:
https://cambridge.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_cHgegVW9EBBIKTpY

The deadline for submission is **12pm on Friday 11 March 2022**. For any queries not answered here, please contact essayprizes@newn.cam.ac.uk.



The Woolf Essay Prize 2021-22 Questions

1. *'Only the Fellows and Scholars are allowed here; the gravel is the place for me.'*

How have female writers been inspired by limitations placed on their educational experiences? You may discuss historical or modern-day examples.

2. *'A woman might write letters while she was sitting by her father's sick-bed. She might write them by the fire whilst the men talked without disturbing them'.*

How might letters add to our understanding of female writers and their work? You may discuss the letters of any female author, poet or playwright.

3. *'Anonymity runs in their blood. [...] they are not even now as concerned about the health of their fame as men are, and speaking generally, will pass a tombstone or a signpost without feeling an irresistible desire to cut their names into it'.*

Should the women of the past be commemorated in a different manner to their male counterparts? Explain.