

Competition Topics & Criteria For 2026

Website Link: www.nzchristianwriters.org/competitions/

COMPETITION COORDINATOR – DEBBIE McDERMOTT

JUDGES

LEVEL 1



**Debbie
McDermott**

LEVEL 2



**Shirley
Jamieson**

LEVEL 3



**Julia
Martin**

Which Level Do I enter?

- Level 1:** For new members and all other members who haven't competed enough to be promoted to Level 2. Age limit: 16 years old or over.
- Level 2:** For members who have been promoted from Level 1 by the judges. Age limit: 16 years old or over.
- Level 3:** For members who have been promoted from Level 2 by the judges, plus members on the Honours List. Age limit: 16 years old or over.

Entries are to be the sole work of the writer and no collaboration is allowed.

If you're not sure what Level you are on, please contact the Competition Coordinator, Debbie McDermott, at level1@nzchristianwriters.org

Formatting and Entry Guidelines and Criteria

Font: Arial, 10 pt **Heading:** Bold Title Case, 18 pt **Line spacing:** Multiple 1.2

Paragraph Spacing: 6 pt **Indentation:** None **Alignment:** Justified

Wordcount: Do NOT include titles, footnotes or bibliographies in the wordcount (unless informed otherwise) and ensure main content is no more than 5% above or below the wordcount. Maximum wordcounts must not be exceeded at all.

Send a photo of yourself for publishing purposes.

EMAILING YOUR ENTRY

Your entry should be emailed to the competition judge as a Microsoft or Open Office Word document attachment, complete with word count, your name and your locality, by the 1st of the month prior to the magazine's publication date. Only one entry per entrant is allowed in any given issue of the magazine.

Prizes and Promotion Criteria

Level 1 contestants who achieve overall 1st, 2nd or 3rd places in the first three competitions of the year will be promoted to Level 2. Level 2 contestants who achieve overall 1st or 2nd places in the first three competitions of the year will be promoted to Level 3. Level 3 contestants who achieve overall 1st, 2nd or 3rd places at least three times across two consecutive years or six-month periods will be promoted to the Honours List. At the end of the first three competitions of the year, all contestants go back to zero points for the final three competitions of the year and the process of working towards being promoted to the next level begins again. There will be a mid-year and end-of-year awarding of certificates and prizes in the form of gift vouchers to overall Level 1, Level 2 and Level 3 winners. To be promoted to Level 2 or 3, contestants must receive points at least three times on their current Level. The judges also require regular entries plus improved writing.

Topics

LEVEL ONE Judge – Debbie McDermott

FEBRUARY – due 1 January

It is New Year's Eve and the clock is about to strike midnight when something unexpected happens. Writing in the first person point of view, describe the event in detail and in a manner that keeps the reader in suspense until the end of the story. (500 words)

Email entry to Debbie McDermott at level1@nzchristianwriters.org

APRIL – due 1 March

After Jesus died on the cross, we are told that 'the earth shook, the rocks split... The bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life' (Matthew 27:51-52 NIV). Pretend you are one of these resurrected ones—who may or may not have met Jesus—and describe this experience and the impact it has on you. (450 words maximum)

Email entry to Debbie McDermott at level1@nzchristianwriters.org

JUNE – due 1 May

Research and write a mini biography on the life and death of a Christian who was martyred during the Renaissance period (15th and 16th centuries AD). Include a brief bibliography comprising only three references. At least 80% of the biography must be in your own words, so ensure you keep citations to a minimum. (500 words, excluding the bibliography)

Email entry to Debbie McDermott at level1@nzchristianwriters.org

AUGUST – due 1 July

Write a positive review of your favourite book or movie, detailing how it impacted you and why you recommend it to others. The title of your review should read: 'Review of [Name of Book or Movie]' and the subtitle should read: 'Written or Produced by [Name of Author or Producer] in [Year]'. (400 words, excluding the title and subtitle)

Email entry to Debbie McDermott at level1@nzchristianwriters.org

OCTOBER – due 1 September

Using non-rhyming, free verse techniques and contemporary language, write a modern psalm that focuses on the goodness and majesty of God. Make sure you give your psalm an appropriate title. (35 lines maximum)

Email entry to Debbie McDermott at level1@nzchristianwriters.org

DECEMBER – due 1 November

Beginning with a Bible verse, write a Christmas devotion. Include a short testimony (yours or someone else's), showing how this scripture can be applied to our lives. Conclude with a brief two-line prayer, which may be written in prose or as a poem. (350 words)

Email entry to Debbie McDermott at level1@nzchristianwriters.org

LEVEL TWO – Shirley Jamieson

FEBRUARY – due 1 January

Tell a story about a pet you have or have had. Include humour. (450 words)

Email entry to Shirley Jamieson at level2@nzchristianwriters.org

APRIL – due 1 March

Psalm 16:10-11 is a prophecy of Jesus' resurrection. Write an email to a non-believing friend who is grieving the loss of a Christian loved one. Quoting parts of the verses, explain how Jesus' resurrection fulfils them. Shows sympathy and understanding, and avoiding preaching, tell from personal experience that Jesus is the path to life. (500 words)

Email entry to Shirley Jamieson at level2@nzchristianwriters.org

JUNE – due 1 May

Write a letter to the editor of a secular newspaper regarding a current issue. Use a Biblical perspective. (250 words)

Email entry to Shirley Jamieson at level2@nzchristianwriters.org

AUGUST – due 1 July

Choose a well-known nursery rhyme and write a modern 21st century version of it, choosing an inventive title. Quote the original rhyme underneath your own version. (maximum of 25 lines total)

Email entry to Shirley Jamieson at level2@nzchristianwriters.org

OCTOBER – due 1 September

Research and write an essay on why you believe the creation account in the Bible and not in evolution. (500 words)

Email entry to Shirley Jamieson at level2@nzchristianwriters.org

DECEMBER – due 1 November

What is your favourite well-known Christmas carol? Explain why it is meaningful to you. (300 words)

Email entry to Shirley Jamieson at level2@nzchristianwriters.org

LEVEL 3 Judge – Julia Martin

FEBRUARY – due 1 January

Write an opinion piece for your local secular newspaper on a current social or moral issue, giving a Christian perspective on the topic without preaching. (300 words maximum)

Email entry to Julia Martin at level3@nzchristianwriters.org

APRIL – due 1 March

You have been asked to present a tribute at a funeral service. Write out your speech about the deceased who may have been known to you or be entirely fictional. Use humour if appropriate. (350 words)

Email entry to Julia Martin at level3@nzchristianwriters.org

JUNE – due 1 May

Choose an Old Testament character who you either admire or despise. Write a character study of this person and explain why you feel this way, and what lessons can be learned from their example. Back up your reasons with scripture. (400 words)

Email entry to Julia Martin at level3@nzchristianwriters.org

AUGUST – due 1 July

A young friend or relative has decided to abandon the Christian faith. Write a sensitive letter outlining reasons why you believe this is an unwise thing to do. (300 words)

Email entry to Julia Martin at level3@nzchristianwriters.org

OCTOBER – due 1 September

Write the script for a children's picture book (suitable for 5-9 years old), outlining God's design for human beings, marriage and sexuality to counter unbiblical literature creeping into our schools and libraries. Maximum of 24 pages and 400 words or less. Insert a line space where each page ends. Some pages may have illustrations only.

Email entry to Julia Martin at level3@nzchristianwriters.org

DECEMBER – due 1 November

Beginning with the statement: 'A car pulled up outside. There was a loud knock on the front door. "Oh no...who could it be at this time of night?"', write a thrilling short story that ends with a twist. (400 words maximum)

Email entry to Julia Martin at level3@nzchristianwriters.org