

Girton College Humanities Writing Competition

Competition Rules

- 1) Submissions **must** relate to one or more of the following Lawrence Room Objects (full information overleaf).
 - a) LR 1110: Leigong figurine
 - b) LR 1060: Eye idol
 - c) LR 427: Apis Bull figurine
 - d) LR 450: Egyptian wooden funerary statue: seated man
 - e) LR 822A-C: Roman bronze casket fittings
- 2) Submissions must be the entrant's own work. Artificial intelligence must not be used. Any material taken directly from published or online sources must be properly referenced.
- 3) The word limit is 1800 words, including footnotes, but excluding the list of references. Creative writing in particular may be shorter. A word count must be included. Overlength submissions will not be considered.
- 4) There is a **limit of 3 entries per school**. If we receive more than 3 entries from the same school, the decision will be taken to admit the first 3 entries and not consider any more. Monitoring will be taking place and schools who reach this limit or get close will be informed as a priority.
- 5) Submissions should be typed in English in a standard font, lines 1.5 spaced, and every page should be marked with the entrant's name.
- 6) Submissions are made on a digital form found here:
https://cambridge.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_bauor0inizgSaHk.
- 7) Submissions made by email or post will not be considered.
- 8) Submissions accompanied by incomplete cover sheets will not be considered. Please check your submission carefully before sending. Cover sheets that have not been authenticated by the school will not be considered.
- 9) Submissions received after the deadline (5pm, 20 March 2026) will not be considered.
- 10) Entrants must be resident in the UK at the time of the award ceremony, on Thursday 7 May 2026.
- 11) Entrants must be in Year 12 or equivalent (Y13 NI / S5 Scotland).
- 12) Every entrant will receive a certificate of participation.
- 13) Feedback on individual essays will not be provided except for prize winners.
- 14) The judges reserve the right not to award prizes if there is no entry of sufficient merit.

2025-2026

This annual competition is an opportunity for students to research and write beyond the curriculum, using one or more of the Lawrence Room museum objects, as their focus. Essays or creative responses (such as dramatic monologues, short stories or poems) are equally welcome.

Focusing on Girton's museum collection in the Lawrence Room, the Humanities Writing Competition aims to use ancient objects as a starting point for thinking across curricular divides – about the varieties of human experience that these survivals from the past can embody and reflect and the trains of thought they can set off.

In factual essays, we are looking to encourage the ability to connect different areas of knowledge, to think about details and to communicate clearly. A winning entry will typically draw on some in-depth research on the artefacts being discussed, and introduce some ideas of the entrant's own: it is always fascinating for us to discover unexpected perspectives on the museum's contents.

In creative entries, we are looking for an imaginative response to the object(s) based on an understanding of relevant historical facts and contexts, and a precise and controlled use of language.

Factual entries must include a list of sources used, and entrants are encouraged to use footnotes or another standard referencing system.

In both factual and creative entries, clear and correct English and good presentation are expected. You may find it useful to work with a recognised style handbook like the MHRA Style Guide, available online: <https://www.mhra.org.uk/style/>.

Closing Date: 5pm on Thursday, 20 March 2026.

Prizes

The prize fund consists of £500 cash and books to the value of £400 from Cambridge University Press, the latter to be shared between the winning entrant/s and their school/s. The prize fund may be divided among winning entrants, typically a first, second, and third prize winner.

Funding is provided by the kind sponsorship of Cambridge University Press and Miss C. Anne Wilson, sponsor of the Wilson Bursary fund for Classics students at Girton.

The prizes will be presented by the Mistress at Girton College on Thursday 7 May 2026.

Competition Items

All entries must be related to at least one of the below items. To look up the full entries of these and other items in the Lawrence Room Catalogue online, see <http://www.lrc.girton.cam.ac.uk/>

You can navigate to the catalogue from the Girton College website, www.girton.cam.ac.uk, by clicking on 'About Girton', then on 'Art & Artefacts'. Scroll down to find the link to the 'Lawrence Room' webpage.

For further information about the Lawrence Room, with links to information leaflets, see
<https://www.girton.cam.ac.uk/lawrence-room>.

The following themes have been suggested by the competition committee, but entrants are welcome to devise their own:

- The magical power attributed to objects
- The divine, the animal and the human
- How should museums deal with unprovenanced, fragmentary or heavily reconstructed artefacts?
- Culture in times of chaos and transition
- The tension between museum displays and religious/cultural beliefs