

ADVICE FOR ORWELL YOUTH PRIZE 2023 ENTRANTS

By Elizabeth Ryan

Hi there!

I'm Elizabeth and this is the second time I will be shortlisting for the Orwell Youth Prize. But this year I will also be doing something for the first time.

I will be a reader who will be giving individualised feedback on draft entries.

Now this is what makes this competition unique. There are only a handful of competitions that give feedback on entries and that's always after the selection stage. **This competition is ahead of that.** You can submit the first draft of your entry and obtain honest and considered feedback, which you can then incorporate into your final entry submission.

Speaking as someone who has written for years I cannot emphasise enough how valuable this is. I have been to writers groups and classes where my pieces were read or performed in front of others who then went to give their comments on it.

Now this might throw up memories of having your school work marked or commented on by your teachers – never will I forget the time when I was in Year 5 and my then teacher raged in front of my classmates, "Elizabeth Ryan, the knight did not pull the sword from the compact," and the whole class exploded in laughter.

Fear not, there won't be any of that in any feedback we give you. What we will tell you is what is working in your piece and what isn't and all of that will be given a constructive and helpful manner.

And this brings me on to what's looked for in any entry we get, that is a **complete piece of work that has a beginning, middle and an end.** This applies to the games category as much as all the others – how your game begins, how it progresses and how is it won and lost. Also, don't forget what age group your game is aimed at and how many players can participate at any one time.

I've written an article from a previous Orwell Youth Prize which is still relevant to this competition and the link to that is here:

[Elizabeth-Ryan-reader-article.pdf \(orwellfoundation.com\)](#)

Above all, keep this year's theme in mind, "Who's In Control?" This is a really interesting area and throws up all sorts of possibilities. Remember that it doesn't have to be a person or group of people (though that's fine if it is). It could be a thing, or indeed a disease as Covid-19 has demonstrated.

As this is a competition for Year 8 and up, attention will be given to spelling, punctuation and presentation so use the spell/grammar tools on your computer and then proofread it again before submission as there are always some errors such checks don't pick up.

And the correct answer to that knight receptacle sentence was scabbard – compacts are make-up containers that hold blushers and eyeshadows, so I now understand what knights need to carry their swords about. And you'll need to know that if there are any knights in your piece. **GOOD LUCK!**