

Creative Writing Audition Packet

The Creative Writing department at the Barbara Ingram School for the Arts offers a comprehensive curriculum in poetry, fiction, creative nonfiction, and scriptwriting. The program provides young writers with the opportunity to study the styles and voices of contemporary writers in various genres, develop their own literary talents, and facilitate their command of the writer's craft. The program will nurture and challenge students in developing the writing and workshop skills necessary to further their voices, and foster future success – whether pursuing writing, literature, or an unrelated field.

Creative Writing Department Auditions

The Creative Writing audition is a multi-step process beginning with the submissions of a digital writing portfolio, a performance recording, a literature analysis, and a letter of recommendation—which serve as the initial audition. Portfolios that meet the criteria for the second round will be offered an in-person or virtual interview. Acceptance will be based upon the merit of the portfolio, the performance, the literature analysis, *and* the interview.

Creative Writing Department Required Portfolio

All Creative Writing applicants must submit a digital writing portfolio that demonstrates both artistic and technical skills. This portfolio should be submitted via [Jotform](#). After submitting, applicants will then be redirected to a “Thank You!” page – this will serve as confirmation that the portfolio was received.

Your portfolio requires the following:

- ☐ The portfolio file should be named as “Your Last Name-PORTFOLIO” (ex. LEE-PORTFOLIO)
- ☐ A title page including your name, your grade, and your current school
- ☐ A personal statement of no more than one page answering the question, “Why do you want to be a Creative Writer at BISFA?”
- ☐ 1 piece of fiction – Should be a full story with a beginning, middle, and end (not to exceed 2 pages single-spaced)
- ☐ 2-3 pieces of poetry

Creative Writing Department Required Performance

In addition to a Creative Writing Portfolio, all Creative Writing applicants must submit a recorded performance. This recording should be submitted via [Jotform](#) with your other audition materials. While video recordings are preferred, audio recordings will be accepted.

Your performance requires the following:

- ☐ The performance file should be named as “Your Last Name-PERFORMANCE” (ex. LEE-PERFORMANCE)
- ☐ Your performance should be of a piece provided in your portfolio
- ☐ Should be a minimum of one minute (not to exceed three minutes long)
- ☐ While videos are preferred, audio recordings are accepted.

Creative Writing Department Required Literature Analysis

Located below under “Excerpts for Literature Analysis,” you will find three pieces. Choose one of the three options and write a one-paragraph analysis. This analysis should be submitted via [Jotform](#) with your other audition materials.

Your analysis requires the following:

- ☐ The literature analysis file should be named as “Your Last Name-LITERATURE ANALYSIS” (ex. LEE-LITERATURE ANALYSIS)
- ☐ Should demonstrate your ability as a reader, as well as your ability as a writer
- ☐ Should be one paragraph minimum, two paragraphs maximum

Creative Writing Department Required Recommendation Letters

All auditioning students are required to have two recommendation letters submitted via [Google Form](#). Recommendation letters must be written and submitted by current teachers, with one recommendation letter being submitted by a current English teacher.

Submission Scoring

A copy of the Submission Score Sheet is included in this packet. All pieces of writing will be assessed using the included rubric, as well as a plagiarism checker and Artificial Intelligence (AI) detector. Due to the number of applicants, feedback will not be given on submitted portfolios or performances. Portfolios, performance-recordings, and score sheets will not be returned to the applicant.

The Creative Writing panel will evaluate portfolios/writing prompts with the following questions in mind:

- ☐ Does this portfolio demonstrate writing skill and technique?
- ☐ Does this portfolio demonstrate creative and artist merit?
- ☐ Does this portfolio demonstrate critical awareness of content, organization, audience grammar, and mechanics?
- ☐ Does this portfolio demonstrate potential for trainable growth?
- ☐ Does this portfolio demonstrate serious commitment to the study of writing?
- ☐ Does this portfolio demonstrate passion for the craft of writing?

Important Things to Know

- Portfolios & performances must include all required elements in order to be considered.
- Proofreading is necessary: scores will be greatly reduced for significant errors in spelling, punctuation, grammar, and usage. Have someone read your portfolio and give you feedback. All writers revise. All writers edit.
- Make sure that your portfolio shows a range of your writing.
- The application process is incredibly competitive. If this is truly your passion, and you are not accepted into the program this year, please apply again next year.
- For questions regarding portfolio submission requirements, please email the department at bisfacreativewriting@gmail.com.

Excerpts for Analysis: Option #1

Humid Haibun

by Katie Licari

Fireflies dance delicately and bounce in between the grass; a glowing peep here and there. My summer dress shifts slightly in the breeze, the sun setting makes the hot pink fabric radiate. My cousin's screeching insults to each other overtake my tranquility. When they stop their game of manhunter, they turn to the fireflies. They look like a new, helpless creature to ravage. My pleading to leave them be doesn't work, and they take their clammy hands, swipe the dry grass and smash whatever they find on their arm. Guts and liquid smear across their skin and hair until it illuminates. Their height precedes mine as I jump to their fist. I claw at their grip, and whichever bug I can free, I hold tight.

My feet patter up the stairs and I beg my family for an old box. They give me a take-out soup container with pre-made air holes. I lower the firefly, watching it crawl with a limp. When I step back outside the wind has settled, creating a sweltering sphere that my sundress only worsens. Down the yard's hill, my cousins have moved on to shooting each other with toy guns. Each plastic bead indents their skin, but they brush the pain off with laughter. Their giggling echoes around the empty neighborhood while I wait for the bug to recover.

I want to say my hands stayed soft,
But saving callouses.

Excerpts for Analysis: Option #2

Despite Everything

by Emilee Droneburg

Leave your house in the late afternoon. Shrug on a warm jacket before you step out the front door to fight the frigid wind. Hurry to the car as swiftly as possible and buckle up in the backseat. Wait for the heater to warm up as your parents situate themselves up front. Get your parents to switch on the radio. Pray they put on anything but Christmas music. Thankfully, they bypass those stations and instead play some classic rock. Soft currents of toasty air flow out the vents, as the prickling of your icy nose begins to ease. Gaze out at barren trees adorning the neighboring houses' front yards as your dad backs out of the driveway. Pass the Dunkin' Donuts and the gas station: get on the highway. Drive I-70 East for forty-five minutes.

Arrive at your grandparents' house. Park in the driveway behind the house and step back into the chill. Try to yank open the rusted metal gate that's in desperate need of oil. Fail and ask your dad to do it. Once they open the gate, make your way into the bit-too-small backyard and trudge up the beige brick sidewalk and back staircase. Get to the top of the steps and peer through the storm door into the kitchen. Your grandfather sits watching TV at the kitchen counter, walker at his side. Head inside and greet him, give a gentle hug and ask what he's watching. Pretend to be interested for his sake, even though you've never seen the movie.

Don't forget to embrace your grandmother as she emerges from the hallway connecting the rest of the house. Gravitate towards the dining room table as your parents and grandparents greet each other. Start conversation and grow hungry. Get out paper menus from the kitchen drawer and decide on dinner. Wait a little longer than you should for your grandfather to make up his mind, then sit in silence as your grandmother calls and orders the food. Wait with your dad and granddad as the others go pick up the food.

Set the table: remove the lazy Susan and long fabric tablecloth. Hold the door open for your mom and grandmother as they return with arms full of white plastic bags reading "Thank You" in red block letters. Set the bags on the counter and distribute clear containers of various Italian foods: pastas and salads and sandwiches, some onion rings too for unknown reasons. Say a prayer. Amen. Dine-- not to sustain, but to savor. Soak in the joy of your family's playful banter, relish in the slight ache of your laughter-filled stomach. Crack jokes and poke fun at those who deserve it until platters are empty, glasses are drained, and utensils are retired to the edge of plates. Clean up. Your grandmother is enthusiastic about not having to wash dirty dishes.

File out onto the back porch as your grandmother lights a cigarette. Watch the sun as it falls through the sky. Continue your conversation as you wait for her to finish her smoke.

Return inside --don't leave your grandfather alone at the kitchen counter for too long. Sprawl across the living room armchair's scratchy baby pink and grey fabric, ensuring that you face the dining room table where your family still sits. Listen to the rest of the family reminisce about past Christmas Eves. *Do you remember when we had to have fried chicken for Christmas dinner one year because my sister didn't show up when she was supposed to?* Pretend that the tree is set up next to you instead of in the attic. Pretend that your grandfather still has enough strength to set it up. *Don't forget when dad had to work and we opened Christmas presents at his job.* Pretend the train set he always loved is still running in roundabouts underneath the tree. *How about when you hid my Christmas present in the tree and had me look for it?* Pretend he can still

maneuver from the kitchen to the back porch without his walker. Shift your focus back to the conversation.

Smile as your grandmother hands you an envelope. The rest of your family doesn't exchange gifts, but your grandparents still insist on getting you something. You open it, read the card, ignore the money, slip the card back inside. Put it on the coffee table and say thank you, then continue to enjoy your time with your loved ones. Hope it never ends.

Go back outside with your parents and grandmother. Survey the now onyx sky and the driveway illuminated by a single streetlamp. Ask if the foxes you had seen that summer have come around recently. They have and you hope to see them. Head inside after your grandmother finishes her cigarette.

Talk a little while later before you have to get ready to head home. Give both grandparents an extra tight hug and kiss on the cheek. Wish them a Merry Christmas and always tell them you love them. Make your way back down the steps and stride across the brick sidewalk, out the rickety gate and into the car. Put your window down as you start up the driveway and wave to your grandmother. Put your window back up to prevent the chilly air's bite from flowing in.

As you drive home, your mother requests to ride around some neighborhoods so you can all see some Christmas lights. We drive aimlessly down streets, observing the flashy shows and their neon hues of blue, red, and green. Bright candy canes and blow-up characters and faux icicles that look like they're dripping. You admire every house from the most extravagant setups to the gorgeously simplistic designs. Though they're beautiful, you can't help but wonder all the effort that goes into such elaborate scenes. You enjoy them nonetheless.

When you get home you know you must get ready to sleep, so you shower and climb into bed, anticipating the presents you would receive in the morning. With your restless mind, your thoughts wander to the night you've had. Though it had its setbacks, you couldn't have imagined a better way to spend your Christmas Eve than surrounded by those you care about and laughing until your lungs ache. You know that this day cannot change the state of your grandfather or the world. Laughter cannot mend your grandfather's back or heart, or the people lying in hospital beds, but it can hold so much hope – no matter how temporary. It cannot hold a candle to a miracle cure, yet the laughter allows a bit of light to filter in, coating your skin and holding within its embrace a warmth that can reach your essence and, for a while, make it seem like everything will be alright.

Excerpts for Analysis: Option #3

Dollie

by Charlie Massey

Recess is almost over when Claire splits her head open. She kneels in the shadow of the playset, frozen where she tripped, prodding at the cut with her hands. Mom would fuss at her for it, but she can stick her finger right in there, and feel her brain. It's soft and dry, and kind of fluffy. She pulls out a small piece of it, just because Mom isn't here to tell her not to, and it doesn't hurt. It's just stuffing. A teacher takes her to the nurse's office, where a woman with cold hands stitches Claire's head back together. Claire keeps the loose piece of stuffing in her pocket all day.

In the grocery store, Claire stands on her tiptoes to look at all of the different kinds of apples. She has an arm wrapped around her stuffed penguin, Penny, and raises that arm so Penny can look, too. She explains to Penny that these are apples, and that some are red, and some are green. But when Claire glances back over to where Mom was a second ago, she finds no one there. The only person she can see in the vegetables section is an old man in a blue sweater, and Mom always says not to talk to strangers. Claire holds Penny tight, and tells herself that they can figure this out together.

Mom has decided to measure Claire again. She pulls Claire into the kitchen and has her stand against the door frame. Mom puts a thick book on top of Claire's head, and this close, Claire can tell that her breath smells like bad fruit. Mom nudges her out of the way, and marks where the bottom cover of the book meets the frame with thick, black marker. Claire fidgets with her hands. She must've grown a whole inch since her birthday, but Mom looks sad. Claire fidgets with her hands, and feels a seam running all along her fingers.

When Claire kneels down to hide the jewelry box under her bed, the carpet feels rough against her palms and knees. She pushes it into the shadows, where the loose piece of stuffing from her brain will be safely hidden. She gets up, wiping her hands on her knees, and then clambers into bed. She snuggles close with Penny, and then Mom comes in and snuggles close with her. As Mom reads from her well-worn copy of *The Velveteen Rabbit*, Claire wonders how she can feel the carpet, or even be real, if she's made of stuffing.

Penny has a big hole in her neck. This isn't the end of the world, Claire's mom reassures her, because stuffed penguins don't need to breathe, or eat, or use their necks at all. Claire feels bad for Penny, especially because it's kind of Claire's fault for letting her get this worn out. She pulls the jewelry box out from under her bed, and puts the bit of stuffing into Penny's throat. When Mom sews her back up, Claire stares at her, waiting for her to move. Penny just lays there, and for some reason, Claire is a little relieved.

Claire skins her knee at the park, and this time it bleeds. She picks herself up and brushes the bits of mulch from her knees. When she looks up, she sees Mom rushing over from the park bench where she'd been watching. It's not that bad, and she's barely even bleeding, but Mom kneels down and insists on putting a bandaid on it. Claire tries to push her away, but Mom is persistent. "Look, it's a princess bandaid. You love princesses," Mom says, even though Claire hasn't cared about princesses since she was three. Claire just sighs and lets Mom put the bandaid on, but when Mom goes to do it, Claire's knee isn't leaking blood, but stuffing.

Claire sits on her bedroom floor with Penny in one hand and the Dog in the other. Currently, the Dog is growling at Penny, and Penny is growling back. They chase each other

across the floor, and then Claire gets up so they can chase each other across her bed. Finally, Dog jumps on Penny, and howls in victory before gnawing on her face. Claire lets go of Penny to smack him on the face. “Bad dog,” she says, and then sets him down to pick up Penny. “You’ve gotta start kicking Dog’s butt, Penny, I’m not always gonna be here to stop him.” She holds Penny close, like Mom holds her sometimes, and wishes she could always be there for Penny.

Submission Score Sheet

Name:

Personal Statement

Statement demonstrates significant passion and interest in the writing craft.	3	2	1
Statement is thoughtful, coherent, and well-written.	3	2	1

Fiction

Story demonstrates knowledge of technical skills.	3	2	1
Story attempts to speak to a deeper meaning.	3	2	1
Story is creative and thought provoking.	3	2	1
Story demonstrates strong writing potential.	3	2	1

Poetry

Language is purposeful and evocative.	3	2	1
Poems attempt to speak to a deeper meaning.	3	2	1
Poems demonstrate strong writing potential.	3	2	1

Excerpt Analysis

Analysis demonstrates strong technical writing skills.	3	2	1
Analysis shows proficiency in understanding and analyzing literature.	3	2	1

Performance

Performance is purposeful and evocative.	3	2	1
Performance attempts to speak to a deeper meaning.	3	2	1
Performance demonstrates strong performance potential.	3	2	1
Performance sound quality is clear & audible.	3	2	1

Overall Portfolio

Portfolio includes ALL necessary requirements.	3	2	1
Portfolio is strong representation of writing potential.	3	2	1