

# Let Grow's 'Think for Yourself' High School Essay Contest Returns with Bigger Prizes

*Will Award \$14,000 in Scholarships to Spunky U.S. High School Seniors*

NEW YORK, NY, UNITED STATES, February 6, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Every year, [Let Grow](#), the nonprofit promoting childhood independence, asks U.S. high school seniors to think about ways they've gone against the grain or outside their comfort zone – and learned something important from that uncomfortable experience.

It isn't easy to think and do new things in a culture that often underestimates and overprotects its youth. So this year, Let Grow's [Think for Yourself essay contest](#) is increasing its prize money.

It will award an \$8,000 scholarship to the contest's Grand Prize Winner, and \$2,000 each to three Runners-Up.



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*Andrea Keith, Let Grow  
Executive Director*

This is the simplest scholarship anyone can apply for, and the scholarship money can be used for traditional university, community college, or trade school.

Since launching in 2018, Let Grow has received over 33,000 entries and awarded \$57,000 in college scholarships.

"Our essay questions hope to get high school seniors thinking about what they've learned by being independent thinkers, or even by being thrust into a new situation where they had to sink or swim," says Andrea Keith, Let Grow's Executive Director.

The essays must be 600-800 words, and all tell a personal story. For instance, last year's Grand Prize winner, David Iglesias, wrote of overhearing his parents discussing money troubles and



Elande Abate, former Let Grow "Think for Yourself" Scholarship winner

deciding to get a job at the local deli: “I was handed an enormous mountain of solid ham and directed toward an industry-grade meat slicer as big as my sixteen-year-old self. I was told to portion slices into wax paper. I was subsequently told to ‘have at it and was left to complete my task. I will be the first to admit it: I am terrified of cutting myself. However, my desire to appear competent before the lead cook trumped my fear of circular spinning blades. Twenty minutes later, I had reduced a mountain of ham into hundreds of neat little wax packages. I had little time to admire my handiwork as I was subsequently handed more and more tasks.”

In past years, other students have written about raising their hand to express disagreement with the class, befriending someone with a very different political outlook, and even looking up a bully and going to talk to him.

Many of the winners’ essays have been published in newspapers and magazines across the country, including USA Today, The New York Post, The [San Francisco Chronicle](#), EdWeek and The Virginian Pilot.

“Our winners come from every strata of America and demonstrate how much more exciting and enlightening the world becomes when, by choice or circumstance, you do something truly new, including trying to understand other people,” says Let Grow President Lenore Skenazy.

This year’s essay prompts are:

- Write about a time you unexpectedly had to deal with an adult situation on your own. What independent skills or experiences did you draw from? What did you learn about yourself?
- Write about a time someone changed your mind about an idea or belief you strongly held. How did this change happen and what did you learn from the process? Is there anything you’ll do differently from now on?
- What is your favorite memory from real life and favorite one from time online? How would you compare the experiences?



**Eilise McLaughlin**  
**Think For Yourself Contest Winner**

Eilise McLaughlin, former Let Grow "Think for Yourself" Scholarship Winner



Let Grow

- Write about a time you didn't speak up — or almost didn't — for fear your idea or viewpoint might be unpopular. Was this the right decision and would you do the same thing again?

The essays, which run 600-800 words, are due by April 30, though the contest will close as soon as 5000 are received. Winners will be announced in August.

Teachers can, of course, assign the contest to their classes, as can college counselors. As Let Grow's Skenazy says, "The more that young people realize the value of independence, the better off we'll all be!"

Andrea Keith

Let Grow

+1 309-310-7542

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