

NEWNHAM COLLEGE
CAMBRIDGE CB3 9DF

The Woolf Essay Prize 2017-18

The Woolf Essay Prize is open to all **girls currently in Year 12** (Lower Sixth) at a UK school. It is designed to give students the opportunity to think and write about women in literature, history, society and culture, while developing their independent study and writing skills. Through exposure to the type of work they might be expected to do at Cambridge, we hope highflying students will be encouraged to consider applying to the University – and hopefully to Newnham, where women’s history and educational excellence are, of course, central.

This prize may be of particular interest to those studying English Literature, History, Politics, Philosophy or Sociology; but we welcome entries from interested students studying any combination of subjects. Entrants are invited to submit a response to any **one** of the questions overleaf, which should be between 1,500 and 2,500 words (including footnotes and captions). All sources must be appropriately acknowledged and cited, and a bibliography – including websites consulted – should be attached (though excluded from the word count). Up to **five** entries may be submitted per school.

The winning entries from previous competitions may be found on the Newnham College website and may be useful to you as you decide how to answer your chosen question. However, it is to be noted that there are many angles from which to approach each question and those available on the website are only a limited sample. Good essays will present a clear argument using specific examples, but outside of this many different approaches are welcome.

Each of the Newnham Essay Prizes has a first prize of £400, a second prize of £200, and third prize of £100.

It is **strongly advised** that students read *A Room of One’s Own* before answering any of these questions. The quotations used are all taken from this text, and knowledge of their context will almost certainly be helpful (at least initially). An uncluttered, easily accessible and comparatively cheap edition of the text can be found in the Penguin ‘Great Ideas’ series, though it is by no means compulsory to use this version.

Entrants should upload their submissions to the webform, found here:
<http://www.newn.cam.ac.uk/admissions/undergraduates/newnham-essay-prizes/>

NEWNHAM COLLEGE
CAMBRIDGE CB3 9DF

The **cover sheet** should also be uploaded to this webform. Please ensure that a school/college representative has completed the appropriate section. Entries will not be valid without this information.

The deadline is **12pm on Friday 9th March 2018**. For any queries not answered here, please contact Sophie Parry (Schools Liaison & Outreach Officer) by email at slo@newn.cam.ac.uk or by telephone on 01223 330471.

The Woolf Essay Prize 2017-18 Questions:

1. *It was absurd to blame any class or any sex, as a whole. Great bodies of people are never responsible for what they do. They are driven by instincts which are not within their control.'*
To what extent do you agree with Woolf's assertion? Discuss with reference to two historical events.

2. *'Values are inevitably transferred from life to fiction... A scene in a battlefield is more important than a scene in a shop.'*
Are we free to decide what is of value when it comes to fiction?
Discuss from the point of view of either:
 - a) A writer
 - b) A reader

3. *I find myself saying briefly and prosaically that it is much more important to be oneself than anyone else. Do not dream of influencing other people.'*
To what extent was this possible for female writers pre-1928? Ninety years on, is the situation any different? You may refer to any one form of literature in your answer.