



THE CITY OF HARLEM, GEORGIA PRESENTS



SATURDAY
OCTOBER 3, 2026
9AM-3PM
706-556-0401

WWW.HARLEMMUSEUMANDWELCOMECENTER.COM



HIGH SCHOOL ESSAY CONTEST **37th Annual Oliver Hardy Festival (2026)**

TOPIC / PROMPT

In *Swiss Miss*, a 1938 film produced by Hal Roach Studios, Stan Laurel and Oliver Hardy find themselves causing trouble in the Swiss Alps region of Switzerland!

Write an essay that explores how Laurel & Hardy helped shape American entertainment and why their movies continue to be enjoyed almost 100 years later. Although *Swiss Miss* takes place outside of the United States, Laurel and Hardy became two of America's most recognizable comedians. Use *Swiss Miss* as your example while discussing Laurel & Hardy's lasting influence of classic comedy on American Pop Culture.



Swiss Miss (1938) is free to watch on YouTube. You must include this movie as a primary source!



IMPORTANT INFORMATION AND RULES

I. Eligibility

One entry per student in grades 9–12 attending a public, private, or homeschool program in Columbia, Richmond, and McDuffie Counties.

II. Essay Length

500–1,000 words, double-spaced. Title page, bibliography, AI disclosure, and images do not count toward the word count.

III. Formatting

MLA format; 12-point Times New Roman; 1-inch margins; double-spaced; page numbers; separate title page.

IV. Sources

A minimum of three cited sources is required, including at least two primary sources. All sources must be cited in MLA or Turabian format. This information does *not* contribute to your word count.

V. Originality

Essays must represent the student's original work. Plagiarism, fabricated citations, or knowingly submitting another person's work (including work written by Artificial Intelligence) without proper citations will result in disqualification.

VI. Artificial Intelligence (AI)

AI tools may be used only for spelling, grammar, and locating potential research sources. AI may not generate, rewrite, summarize, organize, or substantially edit any portion of the essay. The student's ideas, analysis, and writing must remain their own.

VII. AI Disclosure

After the bibliography, include either:

- AI Tools Used: [tool(s)] and how they were used.

OR

- 'No AI tools were used in preparing this essay.'

VIII. Originality Certification

Include this statement:

"I certify that this essay is my original work. I have properly cited all sources. Any AI tools used were limited to those permitted by the contest rules and have been disclosed."

Note: This information does *not* contribute to your word count.



IX. Review Process

Essays may be reviewed using plagiarism-detection software and manual review. AI-detection tools may be used as one factor during evaluation.

X. Judging

Judges will evaluate originality & personal insight, historical accuracy, use of primary and secondary sources, organization, writing quality, and proper citations. Finalists may be asked brief questions about their essays if authenticity concerns arise.

XI. Author and Guardian Contact Information

We will need the following information on a separate page from the original essay and it does not contribute to your word count:

Student's first and last name, grade level, parent/guardian permission and signature to enter the contest, and contact information.

Prizes

One talented author will win the following:

1. 37th Annual Oliver Hardy Festival t-shirt
2. Their essay published in the 37th Annual Oliver Hardy Festival booklet that is handed out at the festival.

Prizes will be awarded at the 37th Annual Oliver Hardy Festival during the opening ceremony. The opening ceremony starts at 9 am. If you are unable to attend, the prizes can be picked up during the museum's opening hours after the festival has ended.

Only one winner per year.

DUE DATE: All essays will need to be emailed to the Harlem Museum and Welcome Center Director in a Word Document or PDF format and are **due Friday, September 18, 2026, by 11:59 pm.**

Museum Director's Point of Contact Information:

Email: mfoster@harlemga.org

Phone: (706) 556-0401



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Author and Guardian Contact Information Form

This page does *not* contribute to your essay's word count.

Writer's Name: _____

Writer's Grade Level: _____

Writer's School Name: _____

- If homeschooled, please write "home schooler."

Parent/Guardian's Name (Print): _____

Parent/Guardian's Name (Signature): _____

Parent/Guardian's Phone Number: _____

Parent/Guardian's Email Address: _____