



## **The Council of Irish Associations of Greater Bergen County, Inc.**

Post Office Box 5113  
Bergenfield, New Jersey 07621

March 1, 2025

To: High School Guidance Counselors:

The Council of Irish Associations of Greater Bergen County, Inc., a tax-exempt educational and charitable organization, announces the 2025 Kevin J. Duffy Memorial Scholarship Essay Contest. Named in memory of a past council member and president who upheld an inspiring vision of promoting Irish culture and heritage, each year the Council awards a scholarship of a thousand dollars to the winner and five hundred dollars to the second-place winner.

Open to all graduating high school seniors in Bergen County planning to attend an institution of higher learning, the essay contest is for the purpose of promoting awareness and knowledge of Irish and Irish-American culture.

Three topics in Irish and Irish-American studies are provided. The applicant may select one topic for the essay. The winner will receive a thousand dollar scholarship, and the second-place winner will receive a five hundred dollar scholarship. The panel of judges is composed of educators and members of the Council.

Essay winners are encouraged to participate, if possible, in the Council's annual Great Hunger Commemoration at the Bergen County Courthouse, attending the event to accept their scholarships and read their essays. This year's Great Hunger Commemoration is scheduled for May 4, the first Saturday of May.

If there are any questions, please email: [EssayContest@BergenCountyIrish.org](mailto:EssayContest@BergenCountyIrish.org).

Respectfully yours,

Deirdre Spollen-LaRaia, Ed.D.  
President



## The Council of Irish Associations of Greater Bergen County, Inc.

### 2025 Kevin J. Duffy Memorial Scholarship Essay Contest

In the interests of increasing awareness of Irish culture, the Council of Irish Associations of Greater Bergen County, Inc., would like to announce an essay contest for high school seniors. Since 2016, which was the centenary of the 1916 Easter Rising, each annual essay contest has related to events that took place in Ireland a century prior to the contest year. The year 1924 was the year after the end of the Irish Civil War, a time when Ireland (under the government of the Irish Free State) was seeking peace and healing within its borders, and in recognition of that, this year's questions explore aspects of Irish culture that may have helped unify the country and promote a shared Irish identity. Select ONE of the following Essay Prompts:

- *In 1924, Eoin McNeill, the Minister of Education, announced that the teaching of the Irish language would become mandatory in all schools in Ireland. Research the history of the Irish language and the importance attached to it over the centuries. Why would this decision have been made by the Irish Free State? What is the status of the Irish language today? How is it viewed by the people of Ireland, a predominantly English-speaking country?*
- *After the war ended in 1923, the GAA (Gaelic Athletic Association) had make-up finals for Irish sporting events that had been postponed due to recent wars, holding the championships for 1921, 1922, and 1923 all within a single year, rather than letting the 1921 and 1922 championships go undecided, which shows the level of Irish commitment to sport. Research the history of the GAA and its role in Irish life up to the present. What is the role of sports in Ireland? How does the position of sports in Ireland compare to the position of sports in other countries?*
- *The 1920s were a tremendous decade for Irish literature, with both William Butler Yeats and George Bernard Shaw winning Nobel prizes, the playwright Sean O'Casey staging his Dublin trilogy at the Abbey Theatre, and James Joyce publishing his masterpiece, Ulysses. However, for many centuries, poetry and storytelling were mostly oral arts in Ireland, and the role of a seanchaí (often written and pronounced "shanachie"), a traditional storyteller, was an important one in Irish culture. Research the history of the seanchaí in Irish culture. What did a seanchaí offer to the people of Ireland? What factors led to the loss of the seanchaí? What attempts are being made today to revive this art form?*

The winner will receive a \$1,000 scholarship, while the second place-winner will receive a \$500 scholarship.

**Eligibility**

All high school seniors residing in Bergen County, New Jersey, who intend to enter college.

**Rules**

The essay must be no fewer than 600 and no more than 1,250 words in length, and must be typewritten and double-spaced. Since information is so readily available on the Internet, the student must show insight and understanding of the selected topic, with necessary attributions to sources. Works that show signs of AI use will be disqualified. An attached cover sheet must include the following:

Your name and address and telephone number	Your selected college
Name and address of your high school	Topic selected (#1, 2 or 3 from list above)
Your counselor's name & telephone number	References and/or sources used

One entry per student, please. All entries must be made electronically no later than **Thursday, April 17, 2025**. The essay must be solely the work of the entrant. The entry must include a completed cover sheet (available on the next page), as well as the essay itself, and should be sent to [EssayContest@BergenCountyIrish.org](mailto:EssayContest@BergenCountyIrish.org).

**Judging**

Essays will be judged on both style and content. Judges will look for writing that is clear, factual, articulate, and logically organized. The winning essay must demonstrate an understanding of the topic. The decision of the judges will be final.



**The Council of Irish Associations of  
Greater Bergen County, Inc.**

**2024 Kevin J. Duffy Memorial Scholarship Essay Contest**

Contestant's Name, Address, & Telephone  
Number:

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Contestant's High School – Name & Address:

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Contestant's High School Counselor – Name &  
Telephone Number:

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Contestant's Selected College:

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Topic Selected:

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References and/or Sources:

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