

## **2026 Northern Narratives Rules, Information, and FAQs**

The Fargo Public Library is excited to announce that its regional writing project *Northern Narratives* is celebrating its tenth year!

If you're interested in submitting your writing to *Northern Narratives*, thank you! **Please read the rules, information, and frequently asked questions thoroughly before sending your work, as not adhering to the guidelines may disqualify you.** If you have any further questions or concerns that are not answered below, you can reach the *Northern Narratives* team by emailing us at [NorthernNarratives@fargolibrary.org](mailto:NorthernNarratives@fargolibrary.org).

### **The Rules**

- This project is for writers from the surrounding area. Submissions are open to:
  - North Dakota residents
  - Residents of the Fargo Public Library's reciprocal service area in the Lake Agassiz Regional Library System in western Minnesota. The reciprocal counties are Polk, Clearwater, Norman, Mahnomen, Clay, Becker, and Wilkin. Citizens of Rothsay are also eligible as part of the LARL System.
  - Students currently attending college in ND or the reciprocal counties of MN
- Participants must be 13 years of age or older.
- Submissions are open from **Feb 1, 2026 through March 31, 2026**. All entries must be uploaded as a Word document (.doc or .docx) to [our online submission form](#).
- Materials submitted to *Northern Narratives* may not be submitted to any other publication until after selections are announced.
- Authors may submit no more than **two pieces total**. Those two pieces can be any combination of fiction, nonfiction, or poetry, including two of the same category. For details on submission categories, including word count, see below. Please make it clear in the submission form which category each piece belongs to.
- Submitted work must be original and previously unpublished, either in print or online. By submitting to the project, you certify that you are the author and copyright holder of each piece you enter. You also certify that you did not use any type of AI software/program to generate part or all of the work for you.

- All submitted pieces must be complete on their own, not part of a larger work.
- All submissions must be edited and ready to print. Selections will not be edited by staff. Unedited works will be disqualified from the judging process.

## **Submission Categories**

*Northern Narratives* accepts writing in the forms of fiction, nonfiction, and poetry. An author may submit up to two pieces total per year, but they can be any combination including two of the same category. Each piece must be complete within the required word count.

### **Fiction**

- *Fiction* is a form of writing that tells an imaginary story. Some or all of the events, places, people, and their actions within the story are made up. This includes very many styles, such as drama, comedy, romance, western, mystery, thriller, science fiction, fantasy, and so on.
- Fiction submissions should be in prose--in other words, your story must have fully formed paragraphs that flow together.
- We are accepting pieces of fiction **between 1,000 and 6,000 words**.

### **Nonfiction**

- *Nonfiction* is a form of writing that aims to tell the truth regarding events, places, people, and their actions. This can include writing about your own life (autobiography or memoir), someone else's life (biography), travel, history, science, true crime, etc.
- Nonfiction submissions should be in prose--in other words, your piece must have fully formed paragraphs that flow together.
- We are accepting pieces of nonfiction **between 1,000 and 6,000 words**.

### **Poetry**

- *Poetry* is a form of writing that uses various artistic tools to create strong impressions of a moment or an emotion. Tools may include rhyme, rhythm, line breaks, word placement, and many other kinds of wordplay.
- We are accepting poems that are **1,000 words or less**.

## **FAQs**

### **Q. What is *Northern Narratives*?**

A. *Northern Narratives* is a book published by the Fargo Public Library to highlight and preserve the writing of local and regional authors. This project aims to promote the sharing of our stories and the creation of content that is meaningful to our community.

### **Q. How will submissions be selected for publication?**

A. Submissions will be judged by a selection committee based on both creativity and technical skill. View the rubrics on [our website](#). Submissions are anonymized and judges do not receive writers' names or personal info of any kind. The selection committee reserves the right to withhold publication at their discretion. All decisions are final.

### **Q. What is the deadline for submissions?**

A. All submissions must be received by March 31, 2026.

### **Q. How should submissions be made?**

A. Submissions must be uploaded to [our online submission form](#) as a Word document (.doc or .docx). Fiction, nonfiction, and poetry can be submitted at the same time in the form, but must be uploaded as separate files. Each work must be fully edited. Please read the rules thoroughly before submitting to avoid disqualification.

### **Q. May I submit my work as a .pdf, .pages, or other file type instead of a Word doc?**

A. No, we accept .doc or .docx only. We need the ability to easily modify the text to anonymize for judging and, if published, put into a book draft.

### **Q. Since submitting, I have revised and updated my piece. May I resubmit it?**

A. No. As stated in the rules, "All submissions must be edited and ready to print." Also upon submitting through our online form you are required to check a box indicating "Yes, everything is perfect." Therefore when we receive submissions we take you at your word that you are happy with your work. Please do not submit your writing if it is not ready because subsequent changes cannot be made.

### **Q. Not all my work is ready. May I submit one piece now and another piece later?**

A. No, the submission form allows for up to two pieces to be submitted at a time. Please submit all your entries together in one form so we can better keep track of your work.

**Q. Will staff work with me to edit my work before publication?**

A. No, the *Northern Narratives* team is not editing at this time. Published pieces will be cosmetically adjusted to fit our style standards and book layout, however.

**Q. Should I include a works cited or bibliography for my nonfiction writing?**

A. If your piece includes research and/or quotes that necessitate having a bibliography or works cited, yes, please include it as part of your submission. You must follow a widely accepted citation method, such as MLA. If you need help or reminders on how this is done, a good resource is the Purdue Online Writing Lab. See their MLA guide and citation examples [on their website](#).

**Q. May I include epigraphs and/or direct quotes from other works in my piece?**

A. If the quotes you are using for an epigraph or within the body of your work are from properties that are still under copyright, no you may not include them. If they are from properties no longer subject to copyright, that is fine.

Pieces including epigraphs or other direct quotes from copyrighted properties will either have those quotes removed before judging, or be disqualified entirely depending how much would have to be excised from the work.

**Q. May I submit fanfiction?**

A. If your piece includes characters or settings from properties still under copyright, no you may not submit it. If your piece includes characters or settings from properties no longer subject to copyright, that is fine.

To put it another way, we can't accept *Harry Potter* fanfiction. But if you decide to write a new twist on *Romeo and Juliet*, go for it.

**Q. May I use a large language model or other "AI," such as ChatGPT?**

A. No, at no point in the process. This project is to celebrate the work of writers.

**Q. May I submit a chapter or excerpt from a novel or other larger work?**

A. No, pieces must be complete within the set word limit of each category.

**Q. May I submit a play or script?**

A. No.

**Q. Does my writing have to be on a certain theme?**

A. No. Write about whatever moves you!

**Q. What if I'm under 13 and want to submit my writing anyway?**

A. The Fargo Public Library children's department periodically runs its own writing project for those 12 and under, *Northern Narratives Jr.* Check out [the website](#) or call 701-241-1495 for more information.

**Q. When will I know if my piece has been selected for publication?**

A. Authors will be notified in late spring or early summer. We promise you as soon as we know, you will know. This communication happens via email. Please make sure [northernnarratives@fargolibrary.org](mailto:northernnarratives@fargolibrary.org) is set as a trusted sender in your email inbox.

To that end, if your contact information changes after submitting please tell us as soon as possible so we can reach you when necessary.

**Q. If published, who owns the copyright to my work?**

A. After selected works are announced, all rights revert to the author. Materials may be submitted to other publishers at that time.

Selected submissions will be subject to "first rights" copyright. Any future publication will require the attribution: "First published in Northern Narratives – Fargo Public Library."

**Q. Will I get a royalty check if my work is published?**

A. No. The Fargo Public Library is a non-profit organization and will not make any money off the sale of *Northern Narratives*. Likewise, the Friends of the Fargo Public Library will not make a profit as the books will be sold at cost.

**Q. How will *Northern Narratives* be distributed?**

A. A full .pdf of the book can be found online for free once printing is completed. See previous editions [on our website](#). In addition, bound copies of *Northern Narratives* 2026 will be available for purchase through the Friends of the Fargo Public Library.

Authors published in the journal will be gifted a free bound copy of *Northern Narratives* 2026 at a reception event in the fall. The event date will be announced after selections are made. If it is not possible to hold or attend the event, authors will be contacted about how to receive them instead.

There will also be bound copies of *Northern Narratives* entered into the Fargo Public Library's collection, which library patrons can borrow.