



WRITING COMPETITION STUDENT GUIDEBOOK

**PRESENTED BY THE
JR BLACK ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS SOCIETY**

STUDENT
GUIDEBOOK

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A person with short dark hair, wearing an orange shirt with white polka dots, is shown from the side, writing on a white sheet of paper with a blue pen. In the background, a computer monitor is visible, displaying a blue screen with some text. The scene is set in a well-lit office or study environment.

INTRODUCTION

This rulebook contains essential reference material needed to compete in the annual JrBAA Essay and Creative Writing Competition. The competition rules, eligibility requirements, scoring information, application form, and judging rubric are included. This rulebook will help you be as prepared as possible to participate successfully in the competition. Information on each year's essay topic is available four (4) months before the submission deadline on our website at www.jrbaa.org/writing-competition.

**INFORMATION ON EACH YEAR'S TOPIC IS
AVAILABLE ON OUR WEBSITE AT
WWW.JRBAA.ORG/WRITING-COMPETITION**

THE JRBA WRITING COMPETITION

The Jr Black Achievement Awards Society (JrBAA) proudly presents our annual Writing Competition. Its primary purpose is to promote effective communication and confidence in students within British Columbia's Black Community.

The top prize for essay writing is a \$1,000 academic scholarship to aid students in accessing further

education. We have several additional RESP awards for creative writing entries totalling \$1,500. This contest is sponsored and funded by generous donations to the JrBAA and corporate sponsors.

The Essay competition allows youth in grades eleven and twelve to research and write an original piece based on a yearly theme based on topics relevant to the Black Community.

Our Creative Writing competition provides an incentive to develop written communication skills and confidence. These proficiencies are vital to preparing our youth to enter the workforce and participate in society.

The JrBAA is committed to furthering the accessibility of post-secondary education to BC youth. We do this by fostering confidence, providing education, and assisting with access to funding. We sincerely invite you to participate in our programs. To learn more, please visit our website at www.jrbaa.org.



ABOUT THE JRBA

The Jr Black Achievement Awards Society (JrBAA) strives to empower Black Youth and their families through training, recognition, and access to education. We are working towards a community that celebrates the success, culture, and heritage of the Black Community in BC.

OUR VALUES:

We believe in building the health and wellness of members of the Black Community in BC.

We believe in improving the financial well-being of members of the Black Community in BC.

We believe in supporting the growth and development of the Black Community in BC.

We believe in increasing access to education for the youth of the Black Community of BC.

We believe that the Black community should be part of the decision-making processes and policy creation in society. Our work will make that possible.

The Writing Competition is one of the many scholarship opportunities offered by the JrBAA. These programs help youth develop and practice the essential skills to prepare them for their bright futures.

COMPETITION OBJECTIVE

The JrBAA recognizes the importance of clear and effective written communication in education and society. With the JrBAA Writing Competition and its supplementary workshops and educations, we reaffirm our commitment to building these skills in a safe and welcoming environment.

Thanks to the continued support of donors, we can pursue this goal and award the winner of the annual competition with an academic scholarship. These accolades will help break down barriers and assist in accessing post-secondary education.



STUDENT ELIGIBILITY

Participants must have attended at least one JrBAA Education Session prior to applying to the JrBAA Writing Competition. Attendance applies to any of our workshops and events held throughout the year. For a list of the upcoming schedule and information on how you can attend, please check our website at jrbaa.org/news.

The JrBAA is committed to empowering the Black Community in BC. All contestants must identify as being of Black African descent and enrolled in a BC educational program. We ask that you include a copy of your most recent report card as proof of enrollment.

Students shall only submit one entry per competition. Students may only apply to the competitions corresponding with their age group.

AGE GROUPINGS ARE AS FOLLOWS:

- Essay Writing Competition - Ages 16 - 19. Grades 11 & 12 or equivalent
- Creative Writing Competition:
 - Grades 5 -7: Poetry
 - Grades 8 - 10: Poetry
 - Grades 5 - 7: Short Stories - Fiction
 - Grades 8 - 10: Short Stories - Fiction
 - Grades 5 - 7: Short Stories - Non-Fiction
 - Grades 8 - 10 Short Stories - Non-Fiction



SCHOLARSHIP INFORMATION

The scholarship winners will be formally recognized at our Fall Awards Ceremony and Gala held annually in October. Attendance at this event is encouraged but not mandatory. If the winner is already enrolled in a post-secondary institution, the scholarship can be paid directly to the student to be used for other academic or living expenses.

If the winner is not yet enrolled in a post-secondary institution, the scholarship is held for up to 12 months from your Grade 12 graduation date. Proof of acceptance and enrollment is required for all payments to educational programs.

Awards for students in grades five through ten will be deposited into an RESP for the student or held for 12 months post graduation. We hope these awards will promote financial literacy by encouraging our youth to start growing their education fund early. We hope this award will also encourage students to continue to fall in love with learning and develop the skills they need to excel.

COMPETITION COSTS

In an effort to increase accessibility, there are no entry fees associated with any stages of the writing competition. We do this to ensure that students have equal access to compete with no extraneous financial burden.



ESSAY COMPETITION PREPARATION RULES

1. Contestants must be between the ages of 16 and 19 and in grades 11 & 12 or equivalent.
2. All entries be a minimum of 1,000 words to a maximum of 1,500 words.
3. One (1) point will be deducted per 100 words over or under the word limit.
4. All submissions shall be typed in 12-point Arial font, 1.5 spacing with 2.5 cm margins.
5. All submissions shall be submitted with a Title page, with the category and title of the essay.
6. The Title Page shall contain no indication of the identity of the author. If the entry is forwarded electronically, no author identification shall be included in any part of the entry. The identity of the author shall be indicated only on the application form.
7. All submissions shall be appropriately cited in APA 6th edition with a reference page.
8. The Title and reference pages do not count toward the word limit.
9. Topics will be made available four (4) months prior to the date of submission. Topics will be posted on the writing competition page of the JrBAA website at www.jrbaa.org/writing-competition.
10. Topics will change yearly.
 - a. An example is "What are some of the challenges of Being Black In BC?"
11. All essays must be submitted as a Word .doc or .docx document with a completed application form available upon registration.
12. The submission shall not be a narrative story.
13. Essays shall be designated under one of the following categories.
 - a. Expository,
 - b. Persuasive,
 - c. Argumentative,
 - d. Critical,
 - e. Compare and contrast.
14. Selection of the essay category shall be included in the application.
15. No emphasis will be given to one type of essay over another.
16. All essays must adhere to the topics assigned by the JrBAA.
17. Essays must be original pieces of work researched and written by the student submitting them.

ESSAY COMPETITION PREPARATION RULES

18. Essays written as a part of regular coursework are eligible for entry in this competition if they adhere to the topic chosen by the JrBAA.
19. Essays shall not contain any unnecessarily explicit or vulgar language.
20. Contestants shall not identify themselves, their city, or their school in the context of their essay.
21. Charts, diagrams, tables, and other visual aids may be included in the essay. They must be properly cited if necessary, and their captions will not contribute toward the word total.
22. Plagiarism is a severe offence and will not be tolerated. The use of plagiarized material or quotations and other referenced material without proper credit to the original source will result in disqualification.
23. The use of AI writing software or any third-party services is strictly prohibited. Submitting essays written using these means will be considered plagiarism and result in disqualification.
24. An entry plus the cover page must be emailed or postmarked to JrBAA by July 15th of each year.



CREATIVE WRITING COMPETITION PREPARATION RULES

1. Contestants must be between the ages of 10 and 16 and in grades 5 through 10 or equivalent.
2. Fiction and non-fiction entries be a minimum of 500 words to a maximum of 1,500 words.
3. One (1) point will be deducted per 100 words over or under the word limit.
4. Poetry shall not be fewer than three (3) lines or more than 32 lines.
5. All submissions shall be typed in 12-point Arial font, 1.5 spacing with 2.5 cm margins.
6. All submissions shall be submitted with a Title page, with the category and title, for the entry.
7. The Title page shall contain no indication of the identity of the author. If the entry is forwarded electronically, no identification of the author shall be included in any part of the entry. The identity of the author shall be indicated on the application form only.
8. One email entry, with one cover page, shall be provided for each category.
9. Contestants shall be acknowledged of receipt for each entry by email.
10. Title and reference pages do not count toward the word limit.
11. All essays must be submitted as a Word .doc or .docx document with a completed application form, available on the JrBAA website.
12. All entries shall be designated under one of the following categories:
 - a. Fiction - Short Stories
 - b. Non-Fiction - A feature article: structured expository prose on a topic, issue or event
 - c. Poetry - Metrical and Free Verse
13. If poetry, indicate the type of poetry on the application form and cover pages; haiku, limerick, rhyme, sonnet, free verse, etc.
14. Selection of the category shall be included in the application.
15. The topic of the piece may be of the student's choosing.
16. Entries must be original pieces of work written by the student submitting them.
17. The entry shall be unpublished and not previously entered in any writing competition.
18. Entries shall not contain any unnecessarily explicit or vulgar language.

CREATIVE WRITING COMPETITION PREPARATION RULES

19. Contestants shall not identify themselves, their city, or their school in the context of their piece of writing.
20. Plagiarism is a severe offence and will not be tolerated. The use of plagiarized material or quotations and other referenced material without proper credit to the original source will result in disqualification.
21. The use of AI writing software or any third-party services is strictly prohibited. Submitting essays written using these means will be considered plagiarism and result in disqualification.
22. All submissions shall be properly cited in APA 6 edition with a reference page if required.
23. Judging of the competition shall be separated by category and age group as follows:
 - a. Grades 5 -7: Poetry - \$250.00
 - b. Grades 8 – 10: Poetry - \$250.00
 - c. Grades 5 – 7: Short Stories - Fiction - \$250.00
 - d. Grades 8 – 10: Short Stories – Fiction - \$250.00
 - e. Grades 5 – 7: Short Stories - Non-Fiction - \$250.00
 - f. Grades 8 – 10 Short Stories - Non-Fiction - \$250.00
24. Judging will be based on the Creative Writing Competition Judging Rubric available in this rulebook under “Judging Criteria and Evaluation Forms.”
25. Winners for each category will be decided by the judges from all nominations within the category and age group received by the deadline date.
26. Failure to comply with all established deadlines will immediately disqualify a contestant.
27. All entries must be emailed or postmarked to JrBAA by July 15th.

TOPICS FOR CONSIDERATION

The topic for the essay writing competition will be announced by the JrBAA annually, (4) four months prior to July 15th. The topic will be displayed on the JrBAA website until the deadline for the competition.

Compositions for the essay competition must fall under one of the following categories:

- expository,
- persuasive,
- argumentative,
- critical,
- compare and contrast.

Essays shall not be in the format of a narrative story. During judging, no emphasis or preference shall be given to one type of essay over another. Charts, diagrams, tables, and other visual aids may be included in the essay. They must be properly cited if necessary, and their captions will not contribute toward the word total.

Compositions for the creative writing portion of the competition are distributed between the following categories:

- Fiction - Short Stories
- Non-Fiction - A feature article: structured expository prose on a topic, issue or event
- Poetry - Metrical and Free Verse

Each category shall be judged separately. Entries will be further divided into age groups. All contestants must be between the ages of 10 and 16 and in grades 5 through 10 or equivalent.

- Grades 5 through 7
- Grades 8 through 10

Students may create a piece on the topic of their choosing for the creative writing competition. During judging, no emphasis or preference shall be given to one type of writing tone over another. This means that a humorous story shall hold no more weight than a serious story.

COMPETING

1. Contestants in the essay competition must be between 16 and 19 years of age and in grades 11, 12, or equivalent.
2. Contestants in the creative writing competition must be between the ages of 10 and 16 and in grades 5 through 10 or equivalent.
3. No prior competition experience is necessary.
4. Contestants shall complete and submit an application form and original piece of writing in accordance with the due dates and rules announced in the competing year.
5. All contestants must identify as of Black African descent.
6. If a contestant has not attended a JrBAA event within the previous 12 months of the application due date, they shall not be eligible to compete until they do so.
7. Contestants must be legal residents of British Columbia, Canada, and enrolled in a BC educational program. Homeschooled students are permitted to compete as long as they meet all eligibility requirements.
8. Contestants shall be respectful to all other contestants at all times. They shall conduct themselves professionally and ethically.



DOCUMENTATION

1. The Essay topic will be made available four (4) months prior to the date of submission. Students must visit www.jrbaa.org/writing-competition to receive the essay topic and application form.
2. Creative writing submissions have no specified topic. Students may compose a piece of the topic of their choosing.
3. Both competitions use the same Student Application Form.
4. Each contestant shall complete the Student Application Form and submit it with their original work.
5. Any applications arriving after the due date established by the JrBAA may be ruled ineligible for the competition.



JUDGING

1. A minimum of two judges shall be used, with an additional Alternate Judge whose rubric will be counted only if a tie occurs.
2. Each Judge shall receive a copy of the Judging Criteria, a Judges Information Sheet, and a Judges Rubric.
3. Scores and rankings shall not be revealed.
4. If a tie occurs for first place between two contestants in the points awarded, an Alternate Judge shall also judge each piece of writing and complete a Judges Rubric.
5. All Judges will evaluate this competition based on the same Judging Rubric.
6. If the tie-breaker also results in a tie, the Judges will deliberate to determine a winner.
7. The contestants may request individual Rubric tabulations from the JrBAA after completing the competition.

GENERAL

1. The JrBAA shall have the right to edit and/or publish any of the pieces submitted.
2. The listed Essay Preparation Rules are also part of the Competition Rules.
3. The listed Creative Writing Preparation Rules are also part of the Competition Rules
4. If any competition rules are broken, the contestant shall be disqualified.
5. Any protest shall be made in writing and emailed to info@jrbaa.org before the announcement of the winner. These will be investigated and reviewed with the contest judges to ensure a fair evaluation.
6. Applications will be accepted in the order in which they are received.
7. The JrBAA reserves the right to limit the number of applicants competing in any event.

COMPETITION SCHEDULING

1. The Writing Competition will be announced annually in the Spring.
2. Additional communication and educational workshops and educations shall be scheduled throughout the year to prepare and train contestants.
3. Attending at least one workshop or education in the previous 12-month period is mandatory to participate in the Writing Competition.

COMPETITION FORMS

1. The contestant shall complete the Student Application Form to compete in the Writing Competition.
2. Forms require the student's signature and a parent or legal guardian's signature for contestants under the age of 19.
3. These forms must be completed and emailed to info@jrbaa.org before July 15th.





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Writing Competition Application Form

All eligibility statements must be completed and submitted on our website or emailed to info@jrbaa.org no later than **July 15th**.

Eligibility: Students must meet these criteria to be eligible. Please initial:

- _____ Have you attended at least one JrBAA Education Session? If so, Date: _____
- _____ Do you identify as Black African descent?
- _____ What grade will you be in as of September of this year?
- _____ What is your current age?
- _____ Have you included a copy of your previous year's report card for proof of enrollment in a BC education program?
- _____ Will you be available to attend the JrBAA Awards Ceremony?
(Not a requirement)

This application form must be submitted by email, with your original work:

Creative Writing

- Poetry
- Sort story - Fiction
- Short story - non fiction

Essay Writing:

- expository,
- persuasive,
- argumentative,
- critical,
- compare and contrast.

Title: _____

First name:		Last name:	
Mailing address:			
Street address:		Province:	
City:		Postal Code:	
Phone number:			
E-mail:			
Date of birth: Month:		Year:	
Day:			
Name of school attending:			
Street address:		Province:	
City:		Postal Code:	
Parent or legal guardian name:			
Relationship:		Signature:	
Phone number:			
E-mail:			
Street address:		Province:	
City:		Postal Code:	



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Writing Competition Feedback Form

In order to continually improve the JrBAA Writing Competition, we'd like to know how the experience was for you. Please take a few minutes to share your input.

How did you hear about the JrBAA Writing Competition?

How do you feel this experience benefited you?

How do you feel the competition was conducted?

How can we improve in the future?

Thank you for taking the time to complete these questions. Please return this form by email to info@jrbaa.org

JUDGING CRITERIA AND EVALUATION FORMS

JUDGING CRITERIA FOR ESSAYS

Topic & Category

The thesis of the essay is clearly communicated and well-focused. The essay is structured around its category, and stays on topic with a consistent, appropriate, and compelling tone.

Opening

The opening of the essay should be clear and relevant. Good communicators will strive to craft an attention-grabbing or captivating opening to entice the reader. The opening should complement the topic and category of the essay and should be well focused. A good essay immediately engages the reader. An imaginative or unique approach is an asset to crafting a successful essay.

Introduction

The introduction of an essay sets the stage. It outlines the main ideas to support your thesis and complement your category. A successful essay will clearly outline these main ideas. Delivery of these main points should be organized, focused and relevant to the topic.

Body

The body of the essay will discuss the supporting information for each main idea. Each should be clearly addressed with a logical flow of information. Successful essays will be captivating throughout, with supporting evidence presented and properly referencing to any source material.

Conclusion

A good conclusion will review and summarize all the main ideas presented. All questions posed should be answered in a well-focused and organized manner. Successful students will employ effective concluding techniques ensuring that the category objective is clearly achieved.

Grammar, structure, and spelling

Effective use of grammar, structure, and spelling is crucial for in an essay as it enhances the readability and credibility of the writer. Proper grammar usage ensures that the sentences are well-constructed and convey the intended message accurately. A well-structured essay provides a logical flow of ideas and a clear understanding of the main topic. It enables the reader to follow the writer's thoughts and arguments seamlessly. Spelling errors can lead to misunderstandings and distract the reader from the content. Therefore, proofreading and editing for correct spelling and punctuation are essential for an error-free essay.

JUDGING CRITERIA

1. Judges will not consider any contestants' age, sex, race, creed, national origin, profession, or political beliefs.
2. They shall demonstrate the utmost objectivity.
3. Judges will support and uphold the contest rules and judging standards.
4. Judges will refrain from public criticism of any contestants or revealing scores and ranking.
5. To ensure objectivity, Judges will not be provided any identifying information for student submissions. Writers will remain anonymous to evaluators until all entries have been marked and the rubrics calculated.



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Judges Rubric

Essay Topic:

Essay Title:

Essay Category (circle one): Expository, Persuasive, Argumentative, Critical, Compare and Contrast.

Mark scores for each contestant on each of the items listed below:

	0	1	2	3	4	5
Thesis & Category	Thesis & category are missing or unidentifiable.	Searching for a thesis. Limited information. Vague details. Random thoughts.	Hints at thesis. Reader left with many unanswered questions. Sporadic details.	Thesis is defined. Reasonably clear ideas. Details present but no precise.	Thesis fairly narrow. New ways of thinking about topic attempted. Creditable details with some support. Writer understands topic.	Narrow and manageable thesis. Clear, focused, and answers all questions. Relevant, accurate details. Shows insights into topic.
Organization	No clear separation between introduction, body, and conclusion paragraphs.	Introduction or Conclusion unclear. No awareness of pacing. Hard to follow.	Ineffective introduction or conclusion. Pacing awkward. some attempt at structure.	Routine introduction and conclusion. Mostly logical flow. Pacing generally under control. Structured.	Effective introduction and conclusion. Logical flow. Pacing is well controlled. Structured appropriately.	Innovating introduction and satisfying conclusion. Masterful flow. Artful use of pacing and stylistic effects. Exceptional structure.
Voice	Unreadable	No concern for the audience. Lifeless or mechanical tone. Flat or inappropriate. Purpose not present.	Occasionally aware of audience. General statements require reader interpretation. Tries to engage reader. Hints at purpose.	Occasionally intrigues reader. Pleasing, yet "safe." Connection with reader fades in and out. Purpose inconsistent.	Interesting and informative. Pleasing, takes risks. Engages reader most of the time. Purpose consistent.	Compelling and engaging. Takes effective risks. Reflects interest in, and commitment to topic. Purpose clear and powerful.



Score out of 30: _____

Word count _____

(-) word penalties: _____

adjusted total: _____

Judges Rubric

Essay Title: _____

Mark scores for each contestant on each of the items listed below:

	0	1	2	3	4	5
Word choice	Unnecessarily inappropriate or explicit language is used.	Vocabulary is limited. Simple words used incorrectly. No figurative language. Words do not convey meaning.	Generally correct words. Language is functional. Attempts at interesting words. Words convey general meaning.	Some active verbs and precise nouns. A moment or two of sparkle. Experiments with figurative language. Words begin to enhance meaning.	Effective and creative verbs and nouns. Wording mostly correct. Figurative language is effective. Words and phrases work well.	Powerful and engaging words. Wording is accurate and precise. Artful use of figurative language. Words create meaningful pictures.
Fluency	Incoherent.	Choppy rambling or incomplete. No "sentence sense." Oral reading not possible. Repetitive beginnings.	Some simple sentences. Occasional connecting word use. Oral reading difficult. Attempts variation in sentence beginnings.	Attempts compound and complex sentences. Sentences usually connect. Parts invite oral reading. Sentences begin in different ways.	Begins to have easy flow and rhythm. Strong and varied structure. Oral reading encourages expression in places. Sentences well crafted.	Polished rhythm, cadence, and flow. Creative use of sentence length and structure. Invites expressive reading. Sentences enhance meaning.
Grammar & spelling	Spelling errors impede readability	Incorrect punctuation and capitalization prevalent. Many grammar errors. Lack of paragraphing.	Spelling errors on easy words. Errors on basic punctuation and capitalization. Some usage and grammar errors. Occasional use of paragraphing	Spelling generally correct on. Routine punctuation and capitalization. Grammar errors infrequent. Consistent paragraphs.	Few spelling errors. Consistent use of punctuation and capitalization. Grammar and usage correct. Paragraphing stylistically effective.	Flawless spelling. Accurate use of punctuation and capitalization. Grammar and usage contribute to clarity and style. Sound and creative paragraphing.



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Judges Rubric for Short Stories

Topic:

Title:

Category (circle one): Short Stories - Fiction, Short Stories - Non-Fiction

Student grade (circle one): 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10

Mark scores for each contestant on each of the items listed below:

	1	2	3
Story	The situation and/or conflict may be vague. Characters and narrator need further revision to develop them.	The text sets up the situation. The plot contains a conflict. The characters ring true, but they may not be fully developed. The narrative voice may also not be fully developed.	The text engages the reader and sets up the situation. The conflict is intriguing; the characters are complex and well rounded, and the narrator has a realistic voice.
Structure	The story needs some revision in terms of structure to gain cohesion. The story feels disjointed, as if the parts don't fit together well and distract from the overall message.	The story builds with a distinct beginning, middle, and end that work together.	The story builds effectively to carry the reader and highlight the themes. The writer may use techniques such as foreshadowing or flashback.
Writing techniques	The text needs more or more effective writing techniques to enhance the narrative.	The text shows the use of writing techniques such as specific details, description, dialogue, or figurative language. These sometimes enhance the writing.	The text shows the effective use of writing techniques such as specific details, description, dialogue, or figurative language. or the use of multiple plot lines.
Spelling & grammar	The text contains distracting errors.	The text contains some errors.	The text contains few, if any, errors.



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Judges Rubric for Poetry

Topic:

Title:

Category: Poetry

Student grade (circle one): 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10

Mark scores for each contestant on each of the items listed below:

	1	2	3
Cohesiveness	The poem does not go together. The poem's lines and stanzas stray away from the topic.	The poem somewhat goes together but needs more cohesiveness. The poem's lines and stanzas sometimes stray from topic.	The poem goes perfectly together. There is unity between lines and stanzas, which connect with the topic.
Use of poetic elements	The poem uses no poetic elements	The poem uses 1 or 2 poetic elements. They sometimes distract the reader.	The poem uses 3 or more poetic elements to enhance the poem and the readers emotions.
Rhythm	The poem does not have any noticeable rhythm	The poem sometimes uses rhythm but may waiver in a way that distracts the reader and negatively affects the tone.	The poem uses rhythm throughout, which benefits the poetic tone.
Creativity	The poem does not use any unique metaphors or similes	The poem uses 1 or 2 unique metaphors or similes to describe situations, objects, and people.	The poem uses 3 or more unique metaphors or similes to describe situations, objects, and people.

The JrBAA Writing Competition Student Guidebook

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www.jrbaa.org

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