



HILLSDALE COLLEGE

PURSUING TRUTH · DEFENDING LIBERTY SINCE 1844

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 16, 2025

CONTACT:

Emily Stack Davis

517-803-3745

PR@hillsdale.edu

Hillsdale College Hosts Staged Readings of Finalists in Inaugural Playwriting Competition

Emily Griffith '25 was declared the winner for her play 'I'm Not a Mourning Person.'

HILLSDALE, Mich. — Hillsdale College held its first biennial playwriting competition this year. Hillsdale students wrote one-act plays based on a quote from Frederick Douglass in his address to Hillsdale College in 1863: “There is no such thing as new truth; error might be old or new, but truth is as old as the universe.” On April 26, the college hosted staged readings of plays by the three finalists: Grace Bryant, Moira Kate Forrester, and Emily Griffith.

“Hillsdale College students study the greatest works of literature and drama,” said Christopher Matsos, chairman and associate professor of theatre. “It seemed natural that this would prepare them to be great playwrights as well, so we launched this competition to give them an opportunity.”

In Bryant’s play, “Pebble Cove, Maine,” Frederick, a young boy in mid-20th-century Maine, is devastated by his stepfather William’s decision to uproot their family for a prestigious job in Boston. Bound to the memories of his late father and the beach cliffs that shaped his childhood, Frederick secretly forges a letter to sabotage the move but ultimately discards it, overwhelmed by guilt. When the deception is discovered, tensions erupt between Frederick and William, leading to an emotional confrontation. However, through shared stories and a heartfelt exchange, Frederick and William find common ground, prompting William to reconsider his decision. In a poignant conclusion, Frederick bids farewell to his late father, embracing his stepfather as they chart a new path forward together.

Forrester’s Play, “Dear Foreigner,” follows two parallel lives — Sam, an American traveler, and Naomi, a Japanese local — who share a fleeting but powerful connection in Japan. As they separately recount their experience through a series of hilarious, overlapping observations about cultural differences, both wonder about the missed opportunity. Encouraged by his best friend

Marcus, Sam returns to Japan, determined to find Naomi despite the unlikely odds. Fate reunites them at the same bar where their story began, and as their eyes meet, the play ends with the hopeful promise of what comes next.

Griffith's play, "I'm Not a Mourning Person," follows Penny Knox as she navigates grief over several decades, shaped by the loss of pets, friends and family members, and eventually her mother. Throughout the play, Penny encounters Don, the personification of death, who reminds her of the inevitability of loss and invites her to confront her feelings. As Penny matures, she learns to accept grief rather than fight it, ultimately finding solace in shared memories and the connections she builds with those still in her life. The play blends humor with emotional depth, offering a poignant exploration of how people process loss in different ways.

"All of the entries were very good," Matsos said. "I think the finalists reflect what we hope the ethos of this competition will be in the years to come."

Griffith won a \$1,000 prize for her play, which will be performed by the Hillsdale College Tower Players next academic year.

For photos from Hillsdale College Tower Players productions, click [here](#). For photos of Hillsdale College, click [here](#). For a high-resolution copy of the Hillsdale College clocktower logo, click [here](#).

About Hillsdale College

Hillsdale College is an independent, nonsectarian, Christian liberal arts college located in southern Michigan. Founded in 1844, the College has built a national reputation through its classical liberal arts core curriculum and its principled refusal to accept federal or state taxpayer subsidies, even indirectly in the form of student grants or loans. It also conducts an outreach effort promoting civil and religious liberty, including a free monthly speech digest, Imprimis, with a circulation of more than 6.8 million. For more information, visit hillsdale.edu.

###