

Tacitus Essay Competition 2026

The World Traders' Tacitus Essay Prize is an essay competition held by The World Traders to encourage young people to think about the issues raised in this year's Tacitus Lecture.

The competition is aimed at encouraging Year 12 pupils to think analytically and critically beyond the confines of their school curriculum about economic and geopolitical ideas. Entries from different perspectives are welcome.

This Year's Lecture

The World Traders' 39th Annual Tacitus Lecture [was given by Dr Fiona Hill](#).

The lecture was entitled *Peril and Possibility; Collapsing Old Order, Emerging Disorder or New Order?*

It is available [here](#) to watch online.

Essay Titles

1. In her lecture, Dr Hill argued that the rules-based order that has endured for the past 80 years is in peril but then drew on history to show how new orders can emerge from disorder. What do you see as the main threats and opportunities in the challenges to world order today?
2. Drawing on Dr Hill's lecture, discuss whether we are witnessing a gradual but growing movement from free market capitalism back to merchantilism / protectionism or whether this is a temporary trend likely to be followed by a readjustment.
3. The global tectonic plates are moving. Globalisation underpinned by free trade is being challenged by protectionism. Major economies, particularly China and the US, are seeking primacy. How can the UK navigate these turbulent times and seek to derive advantage from the change?

Eligibility

- To enter, you must be studying in the UK in Year 12 (in England or Wales, or equivalent in Northern Ireland or Scotland).
- All entries must be submitted by 30th May 2026.
- Entrants do not need to have attended the Tacitus Lecture, nor do they need to be studying Economics, Geopolitics, Social Affairs or History. However, they must be able to demonstrate that they have accessed the lecture online.

Entry Format

- Your essay must be no longer than 1,000 words and should be typed in Size 12 font directly into the Word Document entry form
- The use of graphs, diagrams or images are welcome if they add value to your argument and should be referred to within the essay.
- The content of your essay should be original and must be your own work.
- All sources of information (data, quotes, graphs, diagrams, images etc) should be acknowledged and referenced at the end of your essay (this is not included in the word count).

Judging Criteria

Your essay will be judged on the structure of your argument, clarity of communication, choice and validity of supporting evidence (such as data, other views or research conclusions), originality of your ideas, effectiveness of your evaluations and quality of your conclusions.

Your essay must be written by you and we may disqualify any essays that are revealed as AI generated.

A panel of judges will read and mark your entry before the winning entries are announced

Dr Fiona Hill, advised by two members of the Durham University executive team, has been directly involved in the determination of the essay titles and will also be involved in the judging panel.

It is expected that the results will be announced on 30 June 2026.

The winner and runners-up will each receive a monetary prize and be invited to receive their awards at a World Traders function in the Autumn.

How to Apply

Please complete the essay submission form [downloadable here](#) which includes your details along with your essay and send this document to education@world-traders.org by 30 May 2026.

If you would like to read these instructions in a different format, [click here](#).