

## Mormon Lit Blitz Introduction

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Every Mormon writer has heard Orson F. Whitney's claim that "we will yet have Shakespeares and Miltons of our own." Mormon writers have been so excited, overwhelmed, and preoccupied by this statement that we still remember Whitney in the name of the biggest annual fiction awards for Mormon writers and in regular online arguments over the prospects for Mormon Literature.

More often than not, unfortunately, Elder Whitney's phrasing ends up being counter-productive. By evoking the literary grandeur associated with Shakespeare and Milton, Whitney overshadowed his own best idea: a literature that is distinctively and definitively our own.

The Mormon Lit Blitz and its two sister contests, Four Centuries of Mormon Stories and the Meeting of the Myths, began with a challenge: write something interesting for a faithful Mormon audience that is worth three minutes of their reading time. While flash fiction, short poems, and brief essays don't encourage works of *Hamlet's* proportions, we've been impressed by the intensity of the writers' works and the sophistication of their engagement with Mormons' rich heritage.

For the contests, we haven't worried about what genres pieces borrow from, whether they're original or previously published, or whether their writers have any established reputation. We've just looked for things that will engage readers and then linger with them. All of our finalists had something unique to offer in fewer than two thousand words, and we have been honored to share that.

People will, no doubt, continue to debate whether Mormons will be able to produce their own Shakespeares and Miltons. But we've found writers who are definitely good and unmistakably our own. And why shouldn't Mormons have their own stories and essays and poems with shades of Emily Dickinson, Madeleine l'Engle, David Sedaris, Cynthia Ozick, Vijay Tendulkar, or Jorge Luis Borges?

We are not worried about seeing a day when Mormon Literature is recognized for its greatness, but feel grateful to live in days when it is getting really interesting. Each of the authors we've featured brings his or her own voice to the work, and—through the humor, imagery, and wild speculations—his or her own declarations of a deeply personal faith.

We hope the following pieces help you see why we keep coming back to this project year after year, and invite you to join us this May in cyberspace for the fourth annual Mormon Lit Blitz.