



Sample Scoring for Teen Stories

To score stories submitted in the teen category, we recommend averaging a variety of criteria, including engagement, characters, chain of events, sentence structure and more. The rubric below describes each of these criteria in greater detail. The last page has a tracking sheet to help you calculate the final score.

Engagement

The reader is drawn into the story and is entertained. The reader wants to cheer for the hero and warn the victim because the story deals with real emotions to which the reader reacts. Also, the writing shows personality and “voice” – the author comes through, and the work does not sound like an impersonal report.

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10

My emotional engagement with this story is irritation. I read it because I had to. The author didn't put enough effort into this task.

The writing is acceptable; it may be stiff in places, and it may not be a topic or subject I care about and have not been drawn in, but it's not poorly written.

The story is appealing and engages the reader compellingly. It brings us along on the character's journey.

Notes:

Characters

No matter whether they are human, animal or alien, the characters should be important to the story. Their traits, both physical and personal, should have a purpose in the story. They should add emotional depth.



Characters are undeveloped puppets going through the motions, and either do not change or change without motivation. Some may be stereotypes and are either all good or all bad.

Characters are not deeply developed through detail or dialogue. At times the author reverts to “telling” you about the character as opposed to “showing” the character through detail, action and dialogue.

The main characters are well-named and clearly described. A variety of techniques are used, such as dialogue, internal thinking, physical gestures and interactions, different kinds of movement and dress that fit both the setting and the status of the character, etc. The reader is shown this, not told about it.

Chain of Events

There should be an initial event or conflict that causes the story to take place, and every action or character’s decision should come directly and logically from the preceding, not just in time, but as cause and effect. The reader may not expect the sequence, but can understand it. All the events in the story should be leading to one purpose. Is the conflict solved?



Ideas and scenes seem to be randomly arranged and have no solid purpose in the story. Characters pop up anywhere. No evidence of planning or purpose.

The story is fairly well organized; one idea or scene may feel out of place. Transitions are used, but not quite often enough. The actions may be repetitive.

The story is well organized; ideas are told well, and one scene follows another in a logical sequence. There are clear transitions. Tension can build as problems mount. The events are creative!

Notes:

Writing Quality — Sentence Structure

Writing should flow, ideally with sentences of varying length and different beginnings.

1

The story primarily uses simple, choppy sentences or run-ons that actually impede the reader's enjoyment of the ideas in the story. There is little or no variety.

2

4

There is good craftsmanship in the sentences, but the easy flow may be missing due to a predominance of short or overly long sentences. The writer may rely on one style or type of sentence more than others, but the story still works.

5

6

7

8

9

10

The author uses a large variety of sentences, including simple, compound, complex and compound-complex structures. Sentences show that the writer knows when to make short, abrupt statements and when to make long, flowing ones.

Writing Quality — Word Choice

The author uses a broad range of creative and accurate terms. The verbs are active, precise and not overly repetitive. Keep in mind that teen writers may have smaller vocabularies than adults.

1

Words are simple, used incorrectly or they do not vary. Sing-song.

2

3

4

Language is acceptable and effective but does not dazzle. Characters fall, not plummet. Verbs repeat.

5

6

7

8

9

10

There is a great variety in descriptive words and in active verbs. Mood and color words are evocative and action words are precise and accurate. Little repetition. The writer employs an unexpectedly good vocabulary.

Notes:

Point, Purpose or Theme

Ideally, the story has something to say besides having lots of action or adventure.



1

There is no real point or purpose to the story. There is no meaning for the reader to remember.



2



3



4

The point is dealt with in a heavy-handed way. Or, like the moral at the end of a fable, it is tacked on at the end.



5



6



7



8



9



10

The story has something to say about important personal qualities or issues, and this message comes out in the characters and the situation. It may be the entire thrust of the story, or more subtle, but it gives the story some depth of meaning.

Mechanics or Conventions

Not every student has been taught how to format dialogue or where to break into paragraphs. Therefore, format is the least important convention. Of more importance is tense, changes in point of view (like switching from the character's voice to the author's voice to give information), and serious errors of punctuation and spelling that make the story hard to understand. Vocabulary is separate from mechanics.



1

Many errors, few capitals, and poor punctuation. The lack of mechanics—or their incorrect use—are actively impeding understanding.



2



3



4



5

There might be a slip-up in spelling or tense, but it does not impede understanding. However, if the piece is only one paragraph, yet is over 200 words, it should not receive higher than a 5.



6



7



8



9



10

The format is close to perfect. The story is told in a consistent tense. The point of view is constant. Dialogue is clear. Grammar is consistent with the characters and the story. Errors may be present but are not bothersome.

Notes:

Setting and Atmosphere

The writer uses strong visual descriptive details for the important scenes and characters. The words should enhance the reader's understanding of the characters and the mood.



1

There are very few descriptive details so that the reader has little sense of time and place. Conversely, the author gives too many descriptions of unimportant things that mislead the reader.



2



3



4

The story conveys an adequate sense of place, but the setting is not an integral part of the story. The setting could be changed without changing the story.



5



6



7



8



9



10

There are sensory images (touch, sound, sight, taste, and smell) and descriptions that enhance the mood of the setting and the characters. The writer chooses to share what is important to describe, not simply everything.

Title: _____

Notes: _____

- 1. Engagement _____
- 2. Characters _____
- 3. Chain of Events _____
- 4. Writing Quality – Sentence Structure .. _____
- 5. Writing Quality – Word Choice _____
- 6. Mechanics or Convention _____
- 7. Point, Purpose or Theme _____
- 8. Setting and Atmosphere _____

Total = _____

Average (divide by 8) _____

Title: _____

Notes: _____

- 1.Engagement _____
 - 2.Characters _____
 - 3.Chain of Events _____
 - 4.Writing Quality – Sentence Structure .. _____
 - 5.Writing Quality – Word Choice _____
 - 6.Mechanics or Convention _____
 - 7.Point, Purpose or Theme _____
 - 8.Setting and Atmosphere _____
- Total = _____
- Average (divide by 8) _____

Title: _____

Notes: _____

- 1.Engagement _____
 - 2.Characters _____
 - 3.Chain of Events _____
 - 4.Writing Quality – Sentence Structure .. _____
 - 5.Writing Quality – Word Choice _____
 - 6.Mechanics or Convention _____
 - 7.Point, Purpose or Theme _____
 - 8.Setting and Atmosphere _____
- Total = _____
- Average (divide by 8) _____