Sample Scoring for Youth Stories

To score stories submitted in the youth category, we highly recommend using a weighted score, giving emphasis to criteria such as engagement, characters, chain of events and sentence structure. 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 using a weighted average.

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.

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

The story is unclear or hard to understand.

The story has interesting ideas, but it can be hard to follow or boring at times.

The story is appealing and engages the reader. Shows action, creation and focus.

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.

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

Characters are unclear or confusing. It is impossible to tell who they are, what they are doing or why they are in the story.

The characters are not clear individuals or are not important to the story. It might be hard at times to understand who is doing or saying what. The character is well known from other sources.

The main characters are interesting and important to the story. It is clear what they are doing and always saying. The character is created through imagination and originality.

Chain of Events ·····································

There should be an initial event that causes the story to take place, and every action or character's decision should come as a response to previous events. The story should lead to a conclusion.

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

Ideas and scenes seem to be randomly arranged and have no solid purpose in the story.

The story is well organized; one idea or scene may feel out of place.

The story is well organized; ideas are told well, and one scene follows another in a logical sequence. The story has a beginning, middle and end.

Writing Quality — Sentence Structure ·····················

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

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

Sentences are incomplete or confusing, making the story hard to understand.

Sentences are all a similar length and feel repetitive at times, but the story can still be followed.

Author uses an appropriate amount of sentence variety, including some longer and some shorter sentences.

Writing Quality — Word Choice ·························

The author uses a range of creative and accurate terms.

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

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

Language is acceptable and effective.

There is a wide variety of descriptive words and active verbs. Unexpectedly good vocabulary.

Point, Purpose or Theme •••

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

1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

There is no real point or purpose to the story.

The point of the story is unclear, and/or the story ends abruptly.

The point is clear and connected to the story. A theme is being applied and understood.

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   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

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

Some misspellings, incorrect word choices or confusing sentences. Despite those errors, the story is still easy to follow.

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 it is not bothersome.

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   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

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.

The story conveys an adequate sense of place, but the setting is not an integral part of the story.

There are sensory images (touch, sound, sight, taste, and smell) and descriptions that enhance the mood of the setting and the characters.

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 Score (1-4): ____ x2 = ____

Total Score (5-8): ____ x1 = ____

New Total = ____

Average (divide by 12) ____

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 Score (1-4): ____ x2 = ____

Total Score (5-8): ____ x1 = ____

New Total = ____

Average (divide by 12) ____