

Teen “Color Our World” Writing Contest

HOW IT WORKS

Tweens and teens in Jeffco will have an opportunity to create vibrant stories, earn prizes and win a chance to have their work critiqued by local, published authors! This unique chance to grow your creativity (and your writing chops) lasts the length of the Library Summer Challenge, so start when you’re ready and get your submissions in before July 31.

The contest will have three categories:

- Middle School
- High School
- Spanish Middle and High School

Participants may submit a work of fiction based on the writing prompt:

Color Our World!

“You are all the colors in one, at full brightness.” *All the Bright Places* by Jennifer Niven

PRIZES

1st Place – iPad

2nd Place – Book-based Gift Box

3rd Place – Writing Gift Bag (Writing journals, writing prompt cards or book, pens)

SUBMISSIONS

Submissions will be sent to the library via the [submission form](#) on the [jeffcolibrary.org/teens](#) page or via email to the teen services email account.

JUDGING

Entries will be judged by library staff and qualified volunteers. Top 5 entries will be judged by celebrity authors. Judging will be partially based on a rubric with numbers 1-4 for the criteria listed below.

Submissions will be evaluated using the following criteria:

- Addresses theme—The piece reflects the stated theme of the contest, Color Our World! “You are all the colors in one, at full brightness.” *All the Bright Places* by Jennifer Niven. Prompt does not need to be used in the piece. Uses specific and relevant detail to engage the reader. The piece uses a highly engaging and personal style. The author finds fresh or interesting ways to convey ideas
- Plot structure – Enough information is provided to understand the story. Conflict emerges early and builds toward resolution. The sequence of events, dialog, and emotional movements are well crafted. Situations needing resolution are closed. Subtle undercurrents (if any) emerge during resolution.
- Character development and dialog – The reader can relate to the characters; they are able to hold the reader’s attention. Actions and interactions are consistent and well-motivated. Dialog shows the characters to the readers for who they really are.

- Language Use - The piece uses writing that reveals an awareness of audience and purpose through description, word choice, and variety of sentence structures.
- Organization & Structure—The piece is organized and well-structured. Author demonstrates command of grammar, spelling and mechanics. Sentence fluency is smooth and expressive.

ANNOUNCEMENT AND AWARDS CEREMONY

Winners will be announced in September.

- Winners will be contacted by email.
- Winners will be posted on the website in a news item and the teen channel with links to online access
- Winners will also be shared with Jeffco Public Schools through the Digital Teacher Librarian coordinator.

An award ceremony will be held at Belmar Library on September 13.

RULES

1. No entry fee is required, and all rights in the story remain the property of the author. All types of fiction are welcome.
2. By submitting to the Contest, the entrant agrees to abide by all Contest rules.
3. All entries must be original works by the entrant, in English or Spanish. Plagiarism, which includes the use of third-party poetry, song lyrics, characters or another person's universe, without written permission, will result in disqualification. Entries will be tested for AI content and if entries contain AI generated content in excess of 50% they will be disqualified. Excessive violence or sex, determined by the judges, will result in disqualification. Entries may not have been previously published in professional media.
4. To be eligible, entries must be works of prose, up to 5,000 words in length. We regret we cannot consider poetry or other formats at this time.
5. The Contest is open to Jefferson County residents or students enrolled in a Jefferson County school.
6. The Contest is open to middle school students in grades 6-8 and high school students in grades 9-12 for the 2025-26 school year.
7. The Contest is open only to those who have not professionally published a novel or short novel, or more than one novelette, or more than three short stories, in any medium. Professional publication is deemed to be payment of at least eight cents per word, and at least 5,000 copies, or 5,000 hits.
8. Entries must be submitted electronically via the library website. Acceptable formats are word documents, text files or PDF. Entries must be double-spaced and must include the title and page number on each page, but not the author's name. Author's names are excluded to facilitate fair, anonymous judging.
9. Each entrant may submit only one manuscript that has not been previously submitted to the contest.
10. After July 31st, all entries are final. No revisions are accepted.
11. Entries will be judged by library staff and other qualified individuals. Top five entries will be reviewed by professional authors. The decisions of the judges are entirely their own and are final and binding.

12. Each submission is read by at least two reviewers. Submissions will be evaluated using the following criteria:
- Addresses theme—The piece reflects the stated theme of the contest (Prompt does not need to be used in the piece), Color Our World! “You are all the colors in one, at full brightness.” *All the Bright Places* by Jennifer Niven. Uses specific and relevant detail to engage the reader. The piece uses a highly engaging and personal style. The author finds fresh or interesting ways to convey ideas
 - Plot structure – Enough information is provided to understand the story. Conflict emerges early and builds toward resolution. The sequence of events, dialog, and emotional movements are well crafted. Situations needing resolution are closed. Subtle undercurrents (if any) emerge during resolution.
 - Character development and dialog – The reader can relate to the characters; they are able to hold the reader’s attention. Actions and interactions are consistent and well-motivated. Dialog shows the characters to the readers for who they really are.
 - Language Use - The piece uses writing that reveals an awareness of audience and purpose through description, word choice, and variety of sentence structures.
 - Organization & Structure—The piece is organized and well-structured. Author demonstrates command of grammar, spelling and mechanics. Sentence fluency is smooth and expressive.
13. Winners will be individually notified of the results by phone, mail or e-mail.
14. This Contest is void where prohibited by law.

SUBMISSION FORM CRITERIA:

All submissions must include the following information:

- Name
- Pen name
- Address (to mail prizes if needed and also to verify they are a Jeffco Resident)
- Phone
- Email
- Grade
- School (to verify they are in a Jeffco Public School)
- Parent permission to participate
- I have read and agree to adhere to posted rules (link)
- Approximate word count

RUBRIC

Color Our World Writing Contest

Judging Rubric

Entry Number: _____

Element	Excellent – 4	Strong – 3	Fair – 2	Developing – 1
Addresses Theme: The extent to which the story and writing reflects the stated theme, “Color Our World.” Uses specific and relevant detail to engage the reader. The piece uses a highly engaging and personal style. The author finds fresh or interesting ways to convey ideas.				

Idea	Ideas are connected to the theme and are clear and focused, fresh and original, supported by specific relevant details	Ideas are clear and focused, supported by specific relevant details and connected to the theme	Ideas are somewhat clear and focused, vaguely supported by details and briefly connect with the theme	Ideas are incomplete and unfocused or undeveloped and not supported by details and do not connect to the theme
Voice	Writing shows a strong sense of personality, individuality, vivid expression, emotion, and has ability to evoke a strong reader response.	Writing shows occasional moments of personality, individuality, expression, emotion, and has ability to evoke some reader response.	Writing shows some but not all: sense of personality, individuality, expression, emotion, and has ability to evoke some reader response.	Writing is lifeless and flat, unable to evoke a reader response

Total Theme Score (8-2 points) _____

Element	Excellent – 4	Strong – 3	Fair – 2	Developing – 1
Plot Structure: Enough information is provided to understand the story. Conflict emerges early and builds towards a resolution. The sequence of events, dialog and emotions are well crafted. Situations needing resolution are closed. Subtle undercurrents, if any, emerge during resolution.				
Structure	Establishes strong plot/setting/characters/point of view	Establishes plot/setting/characters/point of view	Some elements of story structure, little blending of dialogue and narration	Few/no story structure elements present
Conflict	Clear, purposeful conflict that strongly builds readers' engagement, drives the plot and is well developed	Clear, purposeful conflict that drives the plot and is developed	Some conflict is used throughout the story to drive the plot	Minimal conflict used in the story
Sequencing	Clear, purposeful sequence of events that unfold naturally. Uses appropriate transitions	Clear sequence of events that unfold naturally with appropriate transitions	Attempts to sequence events. The plot is hard to follow in some places	Unclear sequence of events

Resolution	Situations needing resolution are closed and subtle undercurrents emerge during resolution	Situations needing resolution are closed	Most situations needing resolution are closed	Resolution is not achieved
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Total Plot Structure Score (16-4 points) _____

Element	Excellent – 4	Strong – 3	Fair – 2	Developing – 1
Character Development / Dialog: The reader can relate to the characters; they are able to hold the reader’s attention. Actions and interactions are consistent and well-motivated. Dialog shows the characters to the readers for who they really are.				
Characterization	Develops complex characters through dialogue / inner voice, narration and action	Develops characters through dialogue / inner voice, narration and action	Some character development	Characters are not developed
Actions	Actions and interactions are consistent and well-motivated.	Actions and interactions are consistent	Actions and interactions are mostly consistent	Actions and interactions are not consistent
Dialog / Inner Voice	Dialog or inner voice is presented in a clear manner and shows the characters for who they are.	Dialog or inner voice shows the characters for who they really are	Dialog or inner voice mostly shows the characters for who they really are	Dialog or inner voice is disjointed and does not reflect characters

Total Character Development / Dialog Score

(12-3 points) _____

Element	Excellent – 4	Strong – 3	Fair – 2	Developing – 1
Language: The piece uses writing that reveals an awareness of audience and purpose through description, word choice and variety of sentence structures.				
Description / Word Choice	Uses creative, concrete language; uses literary devices and rich sensory detail and precise nouns, descriptive adjectives, powerful action verbs	Uses mostly creative, concrete language and effective word choices, literary devices, sensory detail, precise nouns	Some use of creative, concrete language and effective word choices, language is accurate but not powerful, literary devices are	Little use of concrete language, lack of varied vocabulary and sensory details. Few effective word choices.

		and powerful action verbs	functional but not descriptive and some sensory detail	
Story flow	Opening that hooks the reader's attention, logical arrangement of ideas and smooth transitions between ideas and paragraphs, strong conclusion.	Opening is clear, logical arrangement of ideas, smooth transitions between ideas and conclusion is present	Opening and conclusion are present, arrangement of ideas is out of sequence, transitions are rarely used	No opening hook and direction in writing ideas are not connected

Total language Score (8-2 points) _____

Element	Excellent – 4	Strong – 3	Fair – 2	Developing – 1
Organization & Structure: The piece is organized and well-structured. Author demonstrates command of grammar, spelling and mechanics. Sentence fluency is smooth and expressive.				
Sentence Fluency	Writing flows smoothly due to a variety of sentence structures used throughout	Writing usually contains a variety of sentence lengths, structure and beginnings	Writing contains some use of sentence structure variety, sentence lengths and beginnings	Writing sounds unnatural, has little sentence structure variety, sentence lengths and beginnings
Grammar	Smooth, fluid error-free punctuation/grammar	Mostly correct grammar; errors do not interfere with communication	Errors occasionally interfere with communication; verb tense errors	Grammatical errors are awkward and interfere with communication
Spelling & Words	Writing shows consistent mastery of capitalization, punctuation, spelling, grammar, indentation and complete sentences and enhances the readability and meaning	Writing contains minor errors in of capitalization, punctuation, spelling, grammar, indentation and complete sentences but errors do not interfere with readability and meaning	Writing contains errors in capitalization, punctuation, spelling, grammar, indentation and complete sentences and enhances the readability and errors interfere with readability but not meaning	Writing contains numerous errors in capitalization, punctuation, spelling, grammar, indentation and complete sentences and enhances the readability and errors interfere with readability and meaning

Total Organization & Structure Score (12-3 points) _____

TOTAL SCORES

Element	Score
Addresses Theme	
Plot Structure	
Character Development / Dialog	
Language	
Organization & Structure	
Total Score	

RANKING: _____

Place all judged entries into order with 1 being assigned to the best entry. Ranking is used in conjunction with the rubric to place the entries in order to determine a clear winner.