



Jefferson County
PUBLIC LIBRARY

TEEN WRITING CONTEST

RULES & RUBRIC



CONTEST 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.



TEEN WRITING CONTEST

JUDGING RUBRIC

ENTRY NUMBER: _____

	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) _____

	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 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.

TOTAL PLOT STRUCTURE SCORE (16-4 POINTS) _____

	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) _____

	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 and powerful action verbs.	Some use of creative, concrete language and effective word choices, language is accurate but not powerful, literary devices are functional but not descriptive and some sensory detail.	Little use of concrete language, lack of varied vocabulary and sensory details. Few effective word choices.
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 mostly in sequence, transitions are rarely used.	No opening hook and direction in writing ideas are not connected.

TOTAL LANGUAGE SCORE (8-2 POINTS) _____

	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) _____

ELEMENT	SCORE
Addresses Theme	
Plot Structure	
Character Development	
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.

COMMENTS: