

Some **guidelines for judging** are charted here to help give you an idea of our expectations. Primary is not listed however, could possibly be discerned as a more elementary accomplishment within the same areas of interest.

Short Story Judging Expectations			
Division	Junior	Intermediate	Senior
Word count	300-800 words	600-1600 words	900-2400 words
Originality	Does the story go beyond being predictable and trite at any point?	Is the story creative in its introduction of characters and themes? Does the story go beyond being predictable and trite in general?	Is it true to life and to the experience of the writer, or has there been enough research for it to be true to life?
Development	Does the story “go anywhere” with the conflict?	Does the conflict become intensified by complications before being resolved?	Does the story flow together in such a way that the reader can follow the development? Can the theme be seen, and is it developed in such a way that the reader knows that there is one but that it’s not obtrusive?
Logical, believable plot	Although there may be many elements of fantasy or unlikely coincidence, does the essence of the action seem plausible?	Although there may be many element of fantasy or unlikely coincidence, does the essence of the action and character’ motivations seem plausible? Are the primary concepts, communicated through characters’ thought, speech, and actions rather than through exposition?	The same as for intermediate. Stories should communicate their main ideas by showing rather than telling.
Character Development	Does any character stand out as an individual in any way?	For any character, do clearly developed character traits affect the person’s actions and conversations?	Are the characters dynamic? Does each character stand out as an individual? Strive to use round characters instead of flat characters. The same as for intermediate. Plus: Are the sub-characters developed in such a way that they have individuality as well as support the main characters?
Conflict Resolution	Is there a central conflict? Identify type of conflict, such as, internal vs. external conflict. Does the ending of the story bring some kind of closure to the conflict?	Is there a central conflict? Does the ending of the story bring satisfying closure to the conflict?	Is there a central conflict? Is there a clear purpose to the end of the story?
Setting	Is the setting clearly established? Does the setting fit the story?	Does the setting add something to the story? Is the setting consistent in regards to general place and time?	Has the setting been clearly created so that the reader has a vivid mental picture? Is it realistic according to the characters and the time?
Dialogue	Is there inclusion of dialogue?	Is the dialogue realistic?	Is the dialogue realistic? Plus: Is the dialogue engaging?

Poetry – Rhymed Verse and Free Verse Judging Expectations			
Division	Junior	Intermediate	Senior
Word Count	25-150 words	25-300 words	25-600 words
Rhyme	The poem should achieve most of the rhymes with words that fit the meaning of the sentences.	Does the poem achieve consistent rhyme without forcing or sacrificing meaning?	If rhyme is used, is it an intentionally effective pattern? If it's free verse, is it effective? Does it create an internal sense in the reader that this is poetry?
Meter	Do the lines move relatively smoothly?	Do the lines flow smoothly without inappropriate awkwardness?	Is it consistently used? If free verse, is the pattern broken intentionally and not sloppily?
Literary Devices	The poem should create a word picture through vivid description, simile, metaphor, or other device.	Are simile, metaphor, or other devices used to communicate meaning effectively?	Do they add to the quality of the poem, or are they just tricks to fill in space?
Creativity	Does the poem go beyond the ordinary at any point?	Although it may be generally adolescent in topic and treatment, does the poem treat its topic in a fresh way?	Is it something coming out of the writer's heart – something he or she is thinking about or feeling?
Theme	The entire poem should have a theme though the theme may be simple.	Is there an underlying idea that becomes evident but is not expressly stated?	Does the poem consistently point to the theme, or are there too many scattered images?
Poetic Feel	Does the poem do anything that could not be achieved just as well in prose?	Is there depth to the poem that makes the reader realize that it means more than it says?	Does it reach the heart of the reader? Does it evoke a response in the reader?

Essay Judging Expectations			
Division	Junior	Intermediate	Senior
Word Count	300-800 words	600-1600 words	900-2400 words
Concepts	Is there one main idea that controls the essay?	Is there one main idea that each paragraph addresses and develops/	Is the main idea developed and does it flow from paragraph to paragraph? Do each of the paragraphs pick up the main idea and use supportive statements to keep the idea going? Is it built in an organized fashion?
Creative	At any point, is something freshly expressed about an idea?	Is the main idea fresh and significant?	Is the writer doing his or her own thinking? Has he or she digested it and rethought it? Is the writer giving the reader something new?
Introduction	Does the essay have a clear beginning?	Does the essay have a clear beginning point that lets the reader know the purpose and topic of the essay?	Same as intermediate. Plus: Is the thesis of the essay communicated effectively and in a concise manner?

Purpose	Is the writer's purpose detectable?	Is writer's purpose clear and accomplished?	The same as intermediate. Plus: Did the writer make his or her point? Does the reader begin to think in a new light because of information in the essay?
Organization	Is there a detectable flow of thought? Is there a detectable and effective flow of thought?	Is there a logical progression of ideas to support the main theme?	Is each paragraph important, or is it just filling? Is the excess cut out? Are there smooth transitions from one paragraph to the next?
Conclusion	Does the conclusion bring the idea to a close?	Does the conclusion enhance the essay?	Does it restate the purpose/theme? Is it similar to the introduction but rewritten with a catchy ending? Does it demand interaction with the theme? Will it encourage the reader to incorporate the writer's intent into the reader's world? Is there an application of the theme?
Argument	Are arguments logically sound? Are they rooted in observation? Are arguments clearly distinguishable from opinion?	Same as Junior. Plus: Do arguments reference a recognizable authority on the subject?	Same as intermediate. Plus: Do arguments incorporate outside authority pervasively?