

Judging Criteria for Creative Writing Contest

Short Story Criteria

- **Characterization:** believable and well rounded, realistic dialogue (if used), actions and interactions, details, strong protagonist
- **Plot:** clear convincing storyline with a clear conflict that increases tension and resolution; creative and innovative
- **Theme:** clear strong message, comes through characters and their actions
- **Style:** creative and free of clichés, shows viewpoint, and smooth movement
- **Setting/Atmosphere:** details of place and time accurately developed to give a realistic setting; strong description that pulls readers into the story; well developed and contributes to the mood and emotions of the story
- **Overall Quality of Story:** Consistency of form and structure; original and creative; language appropriateness shows very little errors of spelling, punctuation, grammar and/or syntax, and word choice.
- ****Adheres to Contest Guidelines****

Poetry Criteria

- **Form:** rhymed, metered, or free verse, natural and consistent with the characteristics of the poem; patterns in sounds (not necessarily rhyming sounds)
- **Style:** strongly and effectively reflects the writer's intent; use punctuation and words effectively to show understanding of the poem; line endings/break use to create emphasis or longer pauses
- **Theme:** effectively explores and relates to the theme
- **Mood/Imagery:** illustrates its message through feelings and/or images; concrete images and figurative language; concise and precise language; strong use of imagery; not overly sentimental
- **Overall Quality:** meaningful, has a purpose, leads to a natural conclusion, free of spelling errors; evokes an emotional response from the reader
- ****Adheres to Contest Guidelines****

One-Act Play Criteria

- **Theme:** clear use of theme—thought provoking and relevant; original and interesting
- **Plot:** complicated and paced well to reach a dramatic climax
- **Characterization:** features intriguing relatable characters, compelling and credible. The protagonist confronts a conflict and shows growth
- **Dialogue:** distinct characters' voices, natural and appropriate for the plot
- **Staging:** effective and creatively enhances the plot; shows clear stage directions
- **Overall Effect:** fulfilling and memorable; very little errors of spelling, punctuation, grammar and/or syntax, and word choice.
- ****Adheres to Contest Guidelines****

Songwriting Criteria

- **Uniqueness:** creative and original
- **Lyrics:** effective and appropriate to theme; imaginative and inspirational
- **Emotional Impact:** evoke a feeling; compelling
- **Melody:** Pitch, rhythm, consistent and tone
- **Overall Composition:** structure of the song, not a poem set to music; relates to the theme
- **Recording quality:** clear and understandable
- ****Adheres to Contest Guidelines****

***Note:** The songwriting is the focus, but the overall delivery of the song is also important.