

A Celebration of Writing

Student Information Booklet
2018-2019- Grades 6 – 8
Alton District Young Authors' Conference

Criteria Checklist

1. The book must be original and must be the student's own work. For this project there should only be one author per book.
2. Books should contain:
 - A. **Covers on both front and back.** The front cover must include the title and the author's name. An illustration is a nice touch but is optional.
 - B. **Title Page:** Should include title of the book, the author's full name, the teacher's name, the student's grade, and the student's school.
 - C. **Dedication Page:** This is optional but is a nice touch.
 - D. **Table of content:** This is for longer chapter books.
 - E. **Text:** This is the student's story and may or may not include illustrations.
 - F. **About the Author Page:** This is information about the author and may include a picture.
3. Book length suggestions:
Grades 5-6: five or more pages.
Grades 7-8: seven or more pages.
4. A fictional story should have these things:
 - A. **Characters:** People, animals, or creatures involved in the story.
 - B. **Plot:** What happens? A situation or a problem to be solved.
 - C. **Setting:** Where and when the action happens.
 - D. **Climax:** The point of highest interest or emotion in the story.
 - E. **Resolution:** The part of the plot-representing the final outcome.
5. A nonfiction story should have accurate information relating to the topic.
6. Attention to details:
 - A. **Proofing:** Check spelling, punctuation and grammar.
 - B. **Neatness:** Check penmanship and quality of illustrations.
7. Turn in on time. Remember to plan ahead. Books take time and effort, so expect to do some extra work on this project.



Middle School Authors

“Oh no!” you moan. “I really don’t have to write another Young Authors’ story, do I? I’m too old for that, besides I am much too busy. With all this homework, I just don’t have the time. I don’t know what to write about.”

On the contrary, you’re just the right age. You finally have the experience and the skills to crank up that imagination and create. You have something to say.

1. Write what you know.

Check out your memories. Think about times you were happy, angry, sad, or jealous. Reminisce about people you know: all ages, friendly and unfriendly.

2. Look at pictures.

Look through old picture albums or newspaper pictures. Make up a story about that picture.

3. Read newspaper stories.

Sometimes real stories make the best fiction.

4. Write a sequel to a fairy tale or a what if.

What happened to Cinderella after the Ball?

What if Cinderella’s feet were swollen, and the glass slipper fit on the the ugly stepsisters?

What if the story took place today and not long ago and far, far away?

Before You Begin

1. Map out your story.

Decide on your plot, setting, and characters. Keep it simple. Too many characters may confuse your story. Often stories are about a main character and a villain. Describe your main characters. Get to know their habits, personalities, struggles, emotions. What do they look like, and why do they act like they do? There should be some sort of problem to work through. How does your character change or grow by the end of the story? What events lead to the climax of your story? What is the primary theme or point of your story?

How do I start?

1. Hook your reader.

Get to the point. Let your reader get an idea what the problem is. Is the main character telling the story (first person), or is it told by another person (third person)?

There are several ways you can start your story: dialogue, description, introduction of the main character, a question, or background information.

Dialogue: “Hey, Cinderella, get out of bed. Go clean up that pumpkin mess in the front yard,” her step-mother screamed as she flung open the bedroom door.

Description: The magic ended at midnight. All that remained of the golden coach lay scattered across the yard. Mice scurried over the chunks of pumpkin, nibbling at the seeds.

Character: I really should have paid more attention to the directions that my fairy god mother gave me.

I thought she said one o'clock. Boy, did I ever mess up!

Question: What will the Prince think of me for racing away from the Ball? Will I ever see him again?

Background: Since Cinderella was a little girl she had dreamed of attending a Ball at the castle. In a most peculiar way her wish had come true.

The Middle

Develop your plot and characters; build toward climax

1. Paint with words.

Let the reader see your thoughts. Use descriptive adjectives. Be specific. Watch out for vague words like nice, pretty, very, really, stuff. Use adverbs: he walked (quickly, slowly, hesitantly, determinedly).

Prepositional phrases help describe: through the twisting streets, before midnight, after the ball ended, under a starry sky.

2. Use strong verbs.

Rather than use a word a zillion times think of other words that would work. The word said gets boring quickly. Try words like: murmured, muttered, uttered, replied, groaned, screamed, stated, giggled, laughed, cried, whispered, shrieked, sighed. Avoid "to be" verbs. Instead of he is walking, use he walked.

3. Relate and refer to the five senses.

What does the character see, hear, taste, smell, touch?

How does the character feel about what is happening?

The Ending (at last)

1. The plot builds toward the climax.

This is the Big Scene where the problem is solved in some way.

2. The ending balances the beginning.

You must satisfy your reader, so don't get in a hurry and just stop. Sometimes you can even let your character say what he has learned or state the main point or theme of your story.

Just one more thing: *Revise, Revise, Revise*

Your story needs time to rest between writings. Read it aloud often, even as you write.

Let others proof for errors and suggestions.

It is better to have a few things happen and describe them fully.

Help the reader see your story through your five senses.