



2026 CREATIVE WRITING CONTEST

Poetry Rubric - Grades 1-5

Criteria	Excellent (4)	Strong (3)	Demonstrates (2)	Developing (1)
Creativity / Originality	Highly imaginative; unique, fresh ideas that stand out	Creative with a few original ideas; may emulate other work but is mostly original	May be modeled after other work and share mostly familiar ideas and expressions	Ideas are repetitive and/or lack originality
Structure	Clear and well-organized; lines flow well	Mostly organized with minor errors in flow	Structure is inconsistent	Line breaks are random; no structure present
Language Use	Vivid, descriptive language enhances the poem	Strong language; effective word choice but lacks depth	Basic language; limited description	Simple language
Imagery / Figurative Language	Excellent use of imagery and figurative language	Good use of imagery, less vivid May use standard figurative language	Some attempt at imagery but unclear, figurative language is derivative	Little to no use of imagery or figurative language
Sound Devices	Smooth rhythm; consistent rhyme if used Employs techniques of alliteration, consonance, assonance, onomatopoeia	Some rhythm and rhyme present, may be inconsistent Employs at least one sound device	Rhythm and rhyme, if present, may be inconsistent or awkward Does not use additional devices like alliteration, assonance, or consonance	No noticeable use of sound devices
Theme	Theme is clearly present in work and fully explored; reader understands larger point	Theme is clear with some explanation; reader may struggle for full interpretation	Theme is present but underdeveloped; reader struggles to understand theme	Theme is unclear or not present
Pacing & Flow	Excellent pacing, keeps reader engaged Length feels appropriate to content	Generally good pacing, slight slowdowns in piece, may feel slightly long or short for theme/content	Inconsistent pacing; poem occasionally loses focus; feels overly long or short for theme/content	Disjointed pacing; poem is hard to follow and clearly too long or short for content
Spelling / Grammar	Perfect spelling and grammar; any errors are intentional and stylistic in nature	Minor errors that do not affect readability	Noticeable errors that slightly impact readability	Many errors that undermine readability

Poetry Rubric - Grades 6-8

Criteria	Excellent (4)	Strong (3)	Demonstrates (2)	Developing (1)
Creativity / Originality	Highly creative and unique; explores new perspectives and ideas	Creative; offers some new ideas or twists on familiar concepts	Displays some creativity but poem may be mostly predictable or familiar, may emulate existing poetic works	Relies heavily on cliches or common ideas, lacks creativity, may copy existing poetic works
Structure	Clear and effective structure that enhances poem's impact	Generally structured but with minor weaknesses	Structure is evident but disrupts flow at times	Poem lacks clear structure
Language Use	Rich and evocative language	Effective use of language but lacks full depth of expression	Language is functional but does not enhance poem	Basic language choices
Imagery / Figurative Language	Exceptional use of imagery, sensory details, and figurative language	Good use of imagery and sensory details but may be less vivid May use standard figurative language	Some attempt at imagery and sensory details but unclear, figurative language is derivative	Little to no use of imagery, sensory details, or figurative language
Sound Devices	Smooth rhythm; consistent rhyme if used Employs techniques of alliteration, consonance, assonance, onomatopoeia	Some rhythm and rhyme present, may be inconsistent Employs at least one sound device	Rhythm and rhyme, if present, may be inconsistent or awkward Does not use additional devices like alliteration, assonance, or consonance	No noticeable use of sound devices
Theme	Deep, insightful exploration of the theme; reader understands larger point	Strong treatment of the theme with good reflection and insight; reader may struggle for full interpretation	Theme is present but underdeveloped; reader struggles to understand theme	Theme is vague, underdeveloped or missing
Voice & Tone	Strong, distinct voice that adds character to the poem	Clear voice, but lacks some consistency in tone	Voice is unclear and/or lacks uniqueness	No clear voice or tone, poem is flat
Pacing & Flow	Excellent pacing, keeps reader engaged for full poem	Generally good pacing with minor breaks in flow; may feel slightly long or short for them/content	Uneven or inconsistent pacing; poem occasionally loses focus and feels slow or hurried; feels overly long or short for theme/content	Disjointed pacing; poem is hard to follow and clearly too long or short for content
Spelling / Grammar	Perfect spelling and grammar; any errors are intentional and stylistic in nature	Minor errors that do not affect readability	Noticeable errors that slightly impact readability	Many errors that undermine readability

Poetry Rubric - Grades 9-12

Criteria	Excellent (4)	Strong (3)	Demonstrates (2)	Developing (1)
Creativity / Originality	Highly original; explores unique perspective with depth and complexity	Creative with strong ideas, may rely on familiar themes	Some originality, but often predictable or derivative; may emulate existing works	Lacks originality; heavily reliant on clichés or basic ideas May copy existing works
Structure	Excellent, intentional structure that enhances meaning and impact of poem; strategically employs line breaks, white space, and other tools	Clear structure, but some moments may be awkward; some intentional use of line breaks, white space, or other structural tools	Structure is present but weakly executed	Structure is unclear or disruptive to poem's meaning
Language Use	Sophisticated, powerful language that enhances theme and emotion	Strong language but may lack nuance or depth	Language is functional but may be basic and repetitive and does not enhance poem	Limited vocabulary lacks the ability to evoke emotion
Imagery / Figurative Language	Masterful use of imagery, sensory details, and figurative language to create clear, vivid mental pictures and connect readers with emotional impact	Strong use of imagery and sensory details but may be less vivid May use standard figurative language	Some imagery and sensory details but not fully developed or clear, figurative language is derivative	Little to no use of imagery, sensory details, or figurative language Relies on vague descriptions
Sound Devices	Smooth rhythm; consistent rhyme if used Employs techniques of alliteration, consonance, assonance, onomatopoeia	Some rhythm and rhyme present, may be inconsistent Employs at least one sound device	Rhythm and rhyme, if present, may be inconsistent or awkward Does not use additional devices like alliteration, assonance, or consonance	No noticeable use of rhythm, rhyme, or sound devices
Theme	Deep, insightful exploration of the theme; reader understands larger point	Strong treatment of the theme with good reflection and insight; reader may struggle for full interpretation	Theme is present but underdeveloped; reader struggles to understand theme	Theme is vague, underdeveloped or missing
Voice & Tone	Strong, confident voice and tone, perfectly aligned with poem's message	Clear voice and tone, but lacks some consistency	Voice is unclear or inconsistent and/or lacks uniqueness negatively affecting emotional connection	No clear voice or tone, poem feels flat and disconnected
Pacing & Flow	Excellent pacing, keeps reader engaged for full poem Length feels appropriate to content	Generally good pacing with minor breaks in flow; may feel slightly long or short for theme/content	Uneven or inconsistent pacing; poem occasionally loses focus and feels slow or hurried; feels overly long or short for theme/content	Disjointed pacing; poem is hard to follow and clearly too long or short for content
Spelling / Grammar	Perfect spelling and grammar; any errors are intentional and stylistic in nature	Minor errors that do not affect readability	Noticeable errors that slightly impact readability	Many errors that undermine readability

*Collaborative Writing - Additional Criteria

*Please use the rubric assessment appropriate to the genre/age group of the chosen piece, then assess these categories in addition to that rubric

Criteria	Excellent (4)	Strong (3)	Demonstrates (2)	Developing (1)
Integration of voices	Voices are fully integrated, creating a unified, cohesive style throughout the piece	Voices blend well, though there may be minor shifts in tone or style	Voices are somewhat integrated, but noticeable differences disrupt the flow	Voices do not blend, creating a fragmented or inconsistent style
Cohesion and Consistency	The writing is highly cohesive, with a consistent tone, style, and perspective throughout. No noticeable shifts between authors.	Writing is mostly cohesive, with only slight shifts in tone or style	Some noticeable shifts in tone, style, or perspective make the piece feel disjointed	Writing lacks cohesion; tone, style, or perspective shifts are frequent and jarring