



Smoky Hills PBS KIDS Writers Contest Rules 2026



NO PURCHASE NECESSARY TO ENTER OR WIN. The Writers Contest is produced by Smoky Hills PBS and is based on the Reading Rainbow® Young Writers and Illustrators Contest, a concept developed by WNED. This Contest consists of one round of local judging. To enter the Contest, you may submit your entry to Smoky Hills PBS, P.O. Box 9, Bunker Hill, KS, 67626. All entries must be postmarked by **February 23, 2026**, to be eligible. These Contest rules are subject to modification by Smoky Hills PBS at its discretion. This Contest is void where prohibited. Sponsored and coordinated by Smoky Hills PBS ("Sponsor" or "PBS") located at P.O. Box 9, 604 Elm, Bunker Hill, KS, 67626.

Eligibility & Entry Guidelines

- Entrants must be children in first, second, third, fourth or fifth grade.
- Children of employees of Smoky Hills PBS and judges are not eligible.
- To be eligible, an entrant must be a legal resident of the state of Kansas. Sponsor reserves the right to disqualify ineligible entries; such entries will not be returned.
- Only one entry per person will be accepted in this Contest; all subsequent entries will be disqualified.
- Only single-author stories qualify (no co-authored stories).
- Stories can be fact or fiction, and prose or poetry.
- Any failure to adhere to these Contest Rules may result in disqualification from the Contest.
- No purchase is necessary. Many will enter, few will win.

Word Count Requirement

- First and second grade stories must have a minimum of 50 words and a maximum of 200 words.
- Third, fourth, and fifth grade stories must have a minimum of 100 words and a maximum of 350 words.
- The word count includes "a," "an," and "the," but not the words on non-story pages such as the title page or those that enhance the illustrations.
- Text must be printed or written legibly or typed.
- Children who cannot write may dictate their story to be printed, written legibly or typed.
- Text may be integrated into the illustration pages or on separate pages.
- Non-English text must be translated on the same page and the translated text (English text) must adhere to word count.
- Invented spelling is accepted.

Format & Illustrations

- Stories must have at least 5 original, clear, and colorful illustrations.
- Stories must be submitted on 8 1/2 x 11 inch paper and left unbound.
- Original art can include drawings taken by the author.
- Stories submitted by mail must be created on one side of the paper and numbered on the back of each page.

Official Entry Form

- **Each entry must include the official Smoky Hills PBS KIDS Writers Contest Entry Form**, with the required signature of a parent/guardian or sponsoring teacher, consenting to allow their child/student to enter the Contest, confirming that the story and art are original, and granting certain rights to the entry materials.
- Teachers may fill out the bottom portion of the entry form on a single form if entries are submitted as a class.
- The entry form must be complete and legible to be eligible.

Judging, Awards & Notification

All entries submitted to the Contest will be judged using the judging criteria below by a panel of at least three judges, selected and coordinated by Smoky Hills PBS. Judging will occur in March. The judging criteria shall be scored and graded using a rubric based on the following criteria:

- Creativity and originality of plot and/or themes,
- Story structure and use of literary devices,
- Relevance, quality, and originality of illustration

All decisions of the judges are final and binding and not subject to appeal or review. Winners will be as follows: (1) the entry with the highest score from among all eligible entries received per grade will be deemed the First Place winners; (2) the entry the second to the highest score from among all eligible entries received per grade will be deemed the Second Place winners (3) the entry with the third to the highest score from among all eligible entries received per grade will be deemed the Third Place winners. In the event of a tie, the entry with the highest score in the creativity and originality category from among all tying entries will be deemed the winner from among all tying entries.

Prizes

Five (5) First Place Winners (One (1) First Place Winner Per Grade – trophy, gift bag, and books. Five (5) Second Place Winners (One (1) Second Place winner per grade) – gift bag and books. Five (5) Third Place Winners (One (1) Third Place winner per grade) -gift bag and books. Smoky Hills PBS reserves the right to substitute any prize for a prize of equal or greater value, at the sole discretion of Smoky Hills PBS. Potential winners will be notified in May for winner verification. Prize recipients must allow a minimum of 4 to 6 weeks from notification to delivery. Prizes are not redeemable for cash, non-transferable, and non-substitutable, except at the sole discretion of Sponsor.

Return of Entries

The Contest administrators will return mailed entries **only** if accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope of an appropriate size. *Smoky Hills PBS is not responsible for late, lost, stolen, misdirected, damaged, mutilated, incomplete, returned, or illegible entries, or postage-due mail.*

Rights Associated with Contest

Submission of the Entry Form constitutes permission from the participant's parent/legal guardian/sponsoring teacher for Smoky Hills PBS and PBS/WNED to use the participants' name, likeness, biographical information, information and materials contained in the Entry Form, photographs, stories and any statements or remarks made about the Contest in advertising and promotion without further compensation or permission, except where prohibited by law. All entries, and any copyrights therein, become the sole property of Smoky Hills PBS and PBS/ WNED. By entering, entrants' parent/legal guardian/sponsoring teacher agree to abide by the above stated rules, and warrant that their child's/ward's entry is their original work and does not infringe upon or violate rights of any third party, and grant to Smoky Hills PBS and PBS/WNED the right to edit, publish, promote, and otherwise use their entry materials without permission, notice or compensation. No royalties will be paid at this time or at any time. By submitting an entry and Entry Form, each participant's parent/legal guardian, on behalf of the participant, agrees to assign all right, title, and interest in and to the entry and Entry Form to Smoky Hills PBS and PBS/WNED and warrants that the participant's parent/legal guardian/sponsoring teacher has the authority to assign such right, title, and interest. If any applicable law requires certain formalities to be fulfilled to effectuate such grant of rights, each participant (and parent or guardian or teacher) agrees to cooperate with Smoky Hills PBS and/or PBS/WNED to achieve fulfillment of such formalities. By submitting an Entry Form, each participant's parent/legal guardian/sponsoring teacher, on behalf of the participant, agrees to be bound by these Contest Rules. Each participant's parent/legal guardian/sponsoring teacher, on behalf of the participant, agrees to release and hold Smoky Hills PBS Television and PBS/WNED, and its employees, officers, directors, shareholders, agents, representatives, subsidiaries, parent companies, or other affiliated companies harmless from all damages, losses, claims and liabilities arising out of participation in the Contest or resulting from acceptance or claiming of any prize hereunder. Smoky Hills PBS and PBS/WNED reserves the right, in its sole discretion, to terminate, suspend, or otherwise cancel the Contest at any time. Income and all other taxes are the responsibility of the prize recipient. Smoky Hills PBS and PBS/WNED are not responsible for any expenses incurred in connection with participation in the Contest. **Privacy:** Unless otherwise specified, all information connected with this Contest will be used by Sponsor solely for the purpose of administering the Contest. Sponsor may share your contact information contained in the Entry Form with Contest promotional part or their agents, to fulfill the offers. To understand how PBS uses, stores, manages, and discards private information, visit the PBS privacy policy at: <http://www.pbs.org/about/policies/privacy-policy/>.