

OVERVIEW

Applying leadership and 21st century skills, participants create an illustrated children's story of high artistic, instructional, and social value. The narrative may be written in prose or poetry and take the form of a fable, adventure story, or other structure. The physical story book should be of high quality and designed to meet the annual theme, which will be posted on the [TSA website](#) under *Themes & Problems*.

ELIGIBILITY

Three (3) teams per state may participate; individual entries are permitted.

TIME LIMITS

SEMIFINAL ROUND

A. Five (5) minutes are allowed to answer questions from the judges.

ATTIRE

TSA competition attire is required.

PROCEDURE

PRE-CONFERENCE

- A. Participants review the TSA Honor Statement for Competitive Events found in the General Rules and listed in the individual competitive event rules.
- B. Participants access the annual design challenge on the [TSA website](#) under *Themes & Problems*.
- C. Participants concentrate their efforts in researching, writing, and illustrating children's books and literature, as well as the creation of storybooks similar to the annual design challenge (e.g., pop-ups, interactive books, etc.).
- D. Participants develop and construct a high-quality children's storybook with illustrations.

- E. Participants record the design process in a documentation portfolio.
- F. Participants "field test" their storybook and document outcomes and findings.

PRELIMINARY ROUND

- A. No more than two (2) team representatives report to the time and place stated in the conference program to check in:
 1. The storybook
 2. The documentation portfolio
- B. Entries are reviewed by judges with neither students nor advisors present.
 1. Judges score the Storybook criteria to determine the top twenty-four (24) preliminary contestants, which will not be posted.
 2. Judges score the Documentation criteria of those top twenty-four (24) contestants to determine the top twelve (12) semifinalist teams.
- C. A list of twelve (12) semifinalist teams (in random order) is posted.

SEMIFINAL ROUND

- A. One (1) team representative reports to the event area at the time and place stated in the conference program to sign up for an interview time.
- B. No more than two (2) representatives report at the assigned time and place for the interview.
 1. Both representatives participate in the interview process. The interview process lasts up to five (5) minutes.
- C. Judges score the interview criteria.
- D. No more than two (2) team representatives pick up the team's entry from the display area at the time and place stated in the conference program.
- E. Ten (10) finalists are announced during the conference award ceremony.

REGULATIONS AND REQUIREMENTS

Students will work to develop their leadership and 21st century skills in the process of preparing for and participating in this TSA competitive event. The development and application of those skills must be evident in their submission, demonstration, and/or communication pertaining to the entry.

PRE-CONFERENCE

A. Storybook:

1. Participants design and create an entirely original storybook, complete with narrative and illustrations to meet the annual design challenge.
2. The physical storybook should be of high quality, designed to meet the age group for which it is intended. For the purposes of this event, children are defined as those twelve (12) years or younger.
3. Together with the storybook, the narrative and accompanying illustrations should result in an experience that delights, enlightens, and contributes to the wholesome development of a child.
4. The storybook and narrative with accompanying illustrations should take no more than ten (10) minutes to read and view.
5. The physical storybook must not exceed 12" x 12" when closed.
6. There is no limit on the number of inside pages (may be one or two-sided).
7. The team must determine which format best presents the team's narrative and illustrations.
8. There must be a minimum of seven (7) illustrations that enhance the story and deepen the child's understanding and enjoyment of the reading experience.
 - a. An illustration on the book's cover may count as one (1) of the required seven (7) illustrations. The team may use the cover illustration within the story as well
 - b. All illustrations MUST be original, freehand, and/or computer-generated drawings made by the team member(s).

c. All computer-generated work MUST be developed from primitive lines and shapes and be the sole work of the team members.

d. Physical or computer templates, previously existing drawings, characters, backgrounds, etc., are NOT PERMITTED. The storybook may include the name of the author(s) and illustrator(s) on the cover. This inclusion of the name of the author(s) and illustrator(s) is an exception to the General Rules.

9. Copyrighted material is NOT PERMITTED.
10. The physical storybook must be the original work of the team members.
11. If narrative or illustrations appear in the story and they are not authored by one of the team members, the team will be disqualified.
12. The book must be designed, engineered, created, and bound together solely by the team; no professional binding is allowed.
13. Photographic verification of the book construction process must be included in the portfolio.
14. The story must be no more than fifteen hundred (1500) words.
 - a. There will be a five (5)-point deduction for every hundred (100) words over the fifteen hundred (1500) word limit.
 - b. Stories containing two thousand (2000) or more words will be disqualified.
 - c. There is no minimum number of words required.
 - d. The word count (number of words comprising the story's narrative) must be listed on the inside of the front cover of the book.
15. Publishing rights remain with the authors and illustrators.

B. Documentation Portfolio:

1. Documentation portfolio is required and must be secured in a **clear front report cover** with the following single-sided, 8½" x 11" pages, in this order:

- a. Title page with the title of the story, the event title, the conference city and state, the year, the team/individual chapter ID number, and the word count (number of words comprising the story's narrative); one (1) page
- b. Table of contents; pages as needed
- c. Purpose of story; one (1) page, to include:
 - i. Story's intent
 - ii. Summary of storyline and theme
 - iii. Intended audience (age, gender, demographics, and special disabilities, if any)
 - iv. Word count – Number of words comprising the story's narrative
- d. Photographic verification of book construction and binding; pages as needed
- e. Field Tests Summary. A “field test” is a reading of the storybook to a group of children in the intended target age range; pages as needed
 - i. A minimum of two (2) field tests must be conducted.
 - ii. Participants must document each field test with a summary paragraph that details the outcomes and findings.
 - iii. Each summary paragraph must include the date, time, and location of the field test.
 - iv. Each “field test” must be signed off by the chapter advisor.
- f. Research summary: A written summary of the research, writing strategies, problems encountered, and solutions developed in the writing and illustrating of the story; one (1) page.
- g. Project summary: A written summary of the research into the creation of storybooks similar to the annual design challenge (e.g., paper folding, interactive features in books). The summary must include the process and challenges the team encountered and the solutions developed in overcoming them; one (1) page.
- h. A list of tools, software (if any), and techniques used in the creation of the physical storybook and illustrations; pages as needed.
- i. References/research sources; one (1) page.
- j. Work Log (see 2026 & 2027 Forms Appendix); pages as needed
- k. Photo/Film/Video Consent and Release forms. If the entry contains images of people (minors require parental consent), proof of consent must be included (see 2026 & 2027 Forms Appendix); pages as needed

PRELIMINARY ROUND

- A. No more than two (2) team representatives drop off the storybook and documentation portfolio at the time and place stated in the conference program. NOTE: The documentation portfolio and storybook must be submitted together, in order for the entry to be judged.

EVALUATION

PRELIMINARY ROUND

Tier 1

- A. The physical storybook

Tier 2

- B. The documentation portfolio

SEMIFINAL ROUND

- A. The interview

Refer to the official rating form for more information.

TSA HONOR STATEMENT

All work must be created and completed by individual competitors or teams. Plagiarism, the use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) software, copyright violation, cheating, and falsification of information are prohibited. Participants may NOT use any generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) tools (e.g. ChatGPT, Google Gemini, GitHub Copilot, etc.). Any attempt to gain an unfair advantage will not be tolerated. Competitors at any level of TSA competition understand and agree to abide by the TSA Honor Statement.

If it is determined that a student violated the TSA Honor Statement, a rules violation of twenty percent (20%) will be incurred.

STEM INTEGRATION

Depending upon the subject of the story this event may align with one (1) or more of the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) educational standards. Refer to the STEM Integration section of this guide for more information.

LEADERSHIP AND 21ST CENTURY SKILLS

This event provides opportunity for students to build and develop leadership and 21st century skills including but not limited to – Communication, Collaboration/Social Skills, Initiative, Problem Solving/Risk Taking, Critical Thinking, Perseverance/Grit, Creativity, Relationship Building/Teamwork, Dependability/Integrity, and Flexibility/Adaptability

CAREERS RELATED TO THIS EVENT

This competition has connections to one (1) or more of the careers below:

- Writer
- Illustrator
- Educator
- Editor
- Publisher
- Graphic artist

Participant/Team ID# _____

CHILDREN'S STORIES

2026 & 2027 OFFICIAL RATING FORM

MIDDLE SCHOOL

Judges: Using minimal (1-4 points), adequate (5-8 points), or exemplary (9-10 points) performance levels as a guideline in the rating form, record the scores earned for the event criteria in the column spaces to the right. The X1 or X2 notation in the criteria column is a multiplier factor for determining the points earned. (Example: an "adequate" score of 7 for an X1 criterion = 7 points; an "adequate" score of 7 for an X2 criterion = 14 points.) A score of zero (0) is acceptable if the minimal performance for any criterion is not met.

Go/No Go Specifications

- Before judging the entry, ensure that the items below are present; indicate presence with a check mark in the box.
- If an item is missing, leave the box next to the item blank and place a check mark in the box labeled ENTRY NOT EVALUATED.
- If a check mark is placed in the ENTRY NOT EVALUATED box, the entry is not to be judged.

TIER 1 – Storybook is present
 TIER 2 – Documentation portfolio is present and the story is 1999 words or less (verified on cover page and in portfolio)
 ENTRY NOT EVALUATED

TIER 1 – STORYBOOK (130 points)			
CRITERIA	Minimal performance	Adequate performance	Exemplary performance
	1-4 points	5-8 points	9-10 points
Story Narrative (X3)	Narrative is poorly written; there is little apparent purpose; it is lacking a coherent theme and storyline.	Narrative's purpose is clear, with a focused theme and storyline; the narrative has good pacing and development of characters and events.	Narrative is extremely well written with a clear purpose; storyline is fast paced and exciting; the details are rich and enchanting.
Illustrations (X3)	Artisanship of the illustrations reflects little technical skill; illustrations add little value to the story's narrative, storyline, and/or theme.	Artisanship of most illustrations reflects good technical skill; illustrations add to the story's narrative, storyline, and theme.	Artisanship of illustrations is excellent, reflecting sophisticated technical skills; illustrations enhance the story's narrative, storyline, and theme, and they are of high esthetic quality.
Book Construction and Concept (X3)	Book construction demonstrates little or no creativity or innovation; minimal consideration is given to basic design principles and book construction; book is poorly constructed or is not bound.	Construction of the book is of good quality and demonstrates some degree of creativity and innovation and an understanding of basic design principles; adequate choice of materials was used in its construction.	Book is designed with attention to detail; construction is of high quality and demonstrates a thorough understanding of design principles; an excellent choice of materials was used in the construction of the book.
Impact (X3)	Story (narrative, with the illustrations) is lacking in purpose and coherence; it is not very interesting; it lacks artistic, and/or instructional, and/or social value.	Story (narrative, with the illustrations) reflects a purpose and incorporates artistic, instructional, and social value; it is somewhat compelling and entertaining.	Story (narrative, with the illustrations) is beautifully told; it is compelling, entertaining, purposeful, and it reflects high artistic, instructional, and social value.
Theme (X1)	The annual theme is not addressed.	The annual theme is somewhat addressed but doesn't contribute to the effectiveness of the overall design.	The annual theme is addressed and contributes to the effectiveness of the overall design.
TIER 1 – STORYBOOK SUBTOTAL (130 points)			

Record scores in the column spaces below.

CHILDREN'S STORIES

Rules violations (a deduction of 20% of the total possible points for the above sections) must be initialed by the judge, coordinator, and manager of the event. Record the deduction in the space to the right.

Indicate the rule violated: _____

TIER 1 – SUBTOTAL (130 points)

Record scores
in the column
spaces below.

TIER 2 – DOCUMENTATION PORTFOLIO (80 points)

CRITERIA	Minimal performance	Adequate performance	Exemplary performance
	1-4 points	5-8 points	9-10 points
Portfolio Components (X1)	Portfolio is unorganized and/or is missing three (3) or more components.	Portfolio is missing one (1) or two (2) components and/or is loosely organized.	Portfolio has all required components in order and is well organized.
Purpose of Story (X1)	Story's intent, storyline, and theme are poorly explained and/or the intended audience is not identified.	Story's intent, storyline, theme, and intended audience are adequately explained.	Story's intent, storyline, theme, and intended audience are complete and well explained.
Photographic Verification (X1)	Photographic verification is very unorganized or is missing.	Photographic verification is somewhat disorganized and is missing a few components; the process is somewhat outlined.	Photographic verification has all components and is well organized; the process is clearly outlined; there is photographic verification of book construction and binding process.
Field Test Summaries (X1)	Summaries are poorly organized and/or incomplete.	Summaries are adequately detailed and organized and contains most of the required components, including a record of the field tests.	Summaries are well documented and contains all the required components, with special attention given to field tests.
Research and Project Summary (X2)	Summary of the research, design, and writing process is poorly done and/or is incomplete.	Summary of the research, design, and writing process is generally clear and complete.	Summary of the research, design, and writing process is very well written, detailed, clear, and complete.
Tools and Software (X1)	Lists are missing several components, and/or they are unorganized.	Most components are included; the lists are generally organized and complete.	All components are included and organized in the lists.
Research Base (X1)	There are few references listed, and/or the references listed show little relevance to the project's goal; sources lack credibility.	There are a sufficient number of references listed, with some credible references.	Many credible and high-quality references are listed, reflecting research in writing and illustrating for children, and in child development.

TIER 2 – DOCUMENTATION PORTFOLIO SUBTOTAL (80 points)

Rules violations (a deduction of 20% of the total possible points for the above sections) must be initialed by the judge, coordinator, and manager of the event. Record the deduction in the space to the right.

Indicate the rule violated: _____

Story length violation: For stories exceeding 1500 words, a deduction of 5 points will be incurred for every 100 words more than 1500 and up to 2000. Stories of 2000 words or greater will be disqualified. Example: 1600 – 1699 words, 5 points; 1700 – 1799 words, 10 points; 1800 – 1899 words, 15 points; 1900 – 1999 words, 20 points; 2000 words and above, disqualified.

PRELIMINARY SUBTOTAL (210 points)

SEMIFINAL INTERVIEW (30 points)			
CRITERIA	Minimal performance	Adequate performance	Exemplary performance
	1-4 points	5-8 points	9-10 points
Knowledge (X2)	Participants seem to have little understanding of the concepts in their project; answers to questions may be vague.	Participants exhibit a general understanding of the concepts in their project.	Participant shows clear evidence of a thorough understanding of their project.
Articulation (X1)	Communication of the design process is unclear, unorganized, and/or illogical; leadership and/or 21 st century skills are not evident.	Communication of the design process is somewhat logical and clear; leadership and/or 21 st century skills are somewhat evident.	Communication of the design process is clear, concise, and logical; leadership and/or 21 st century skills are clearly evident.
SEMIFINAL INTERVIEW SUBTOTAL (30 points)			

Record scores
in the column
spaces below.

Rules violations (a deduction of 20% of the total possible points for the above sections) must be initialed by the judge, coordinator, and manager of the event. Record the deduction in the space to the right.

Indicate the rule violated: _____

SEMIFINAL SUBTOTAL (30 points)

To arrive at the TOTAL score, add any subtotals and subtract rules violation points, as necessary.	TOTAL (240 points)
---	---------------------------

Comments:

I certify these results to be true and accurate to the best of my knowledge.

JUDGE

Printed name: _____ Signature: _____

CHILDREN'S STORIES

EVENT COORDINATOR INSTRUCTIONS

PERSONNEL

- A. Event coordinator
- B. Judges:
 1. Preliminary round, two (2) or more
 2. Semifinal round, two (2) or more
- C. Assistants for check-in, two (2)

MATERIALS

- A. Coordinator's packet, containing:
 1. Event guidelines, one (1) copy for the coordinator and for each judge
 2. TSA Event Coordinator Report
 3. Stick-on labels for identifying entries
- B. Stopwatch
- C. Display tables for entries (minimum width 18")
- D. Table and chairs for judges and two (2) semifinalist team representatives.

RESPONSIBILITIES

AT THE CONFERENCE

- A. Attend the mandatory event coordinator's meeting at the designated time and location.
- B. Report to the CRC room and check the contents of the coordinator's packet.
- C. Review the event guidelines and check to see that enough personnel have been scheduled.
- D. Inspect the area(s) in which the event is to be held for appropriate set-up, including room size, tables, chairs, etc. Notify the event manager of any potential problems.
- E. At least one (1) hour before the event is scheduled to begin, meet with the judges to review time limits, procedures, regulations, evaluation, and all other details related to the event. If questions arise that cannot be answered, speak to the event manager before the event begins.
- F. Ensure the judges have access to the online judging system.

EVENT CHECK-IN

- A. Check in the entries at the time stated in the conference program.
- B. Participants check in:
 1. The storybook
 2. The documentation portfolio
- C. Portfolios should be held by the coordinator and not placed with the storybook.
- D. Each entry must include the participant's identification number in the upper right-hand corner of the entry.
- E. Late entries are considered on a case-by-case basis and only when the lateness is caused by events beyond the participant's control.
- F. In order to compete, participants must be on the entry list or must have approval of the CRC.
- G. Requirements for attire do NOT apply during check-in, only on the first day of the conference.
- H. Position the entries for evaluation and viewing.
- I. Secure the entries in the designated area.

PRELIMINARY ROUND

- A. Judges independently review the entries based on the following criteria:

Tier 1

- 1. Judges score the storybook criteria to determine the top twenty-four (24) preliminary contestants, which will not be posted.

Tier 2

- 2. Judges score the documentation criteria of those top twenty-four (24) contestants to determine the top twelve (12) semifinalist teams.

- B. Decisions about rules violations must be discussed and verified with the judges, event coordinator, and the CRC manager to determine either:

- 1. To deduct twenty percent (20%) of the total possible points in this round

- 2. To disqualify the entry

The event coordinator, judges, and CRC manager must initial either of these actions on the rating form.

- C. Create a semifinalist sign-up sheet for each team's final presentation.

SEMIFINAL ROUND

- A. Two (2) team representatives report to the event area at the time and place stated in the conference program to sign up for an interview time.
- B. Two (2) team representatives report at the assigned time and place for the seminal interview.
- C. Discuss rule violations (e.g. 20% deduction, disqualification) and have all relevant parties initial the rating form.
- D. Manage the interviews:
 1. Team members must be prepared to discuss illustrations included in the story.
 2. Both team members participate in the interview process (lasting up to five [5] minutes).
- E. Judges score the reading and interview criteria.
- F. If necessary, manage security and the removal of materials from the event area.