

Grading Rubric



Official Evaluation Rubric (Merit-Based)

All submissions are evaluated solely on merit by a review committee using the criteria below. No element of chance, random drawing, or public voting is used.

Each submission consists of:

- One original artwork
- One written response (up to 500 words)

Judging is conducted **within grade bands** (3–5, 6–8, 9–12) to ensure age-appropriate evaluation.

Prize Structure:

Grades 9-12 1st Prize \$1,500; 2nd Prize \$750

Grades 6-8 1st Prize \$1,000; 2nd Prize \$500

Grades 3-5 1st Prize \$500; 2nd Prize \$250

Parent & Teacher Summary

How Submissions Are Evaluated

All entries in the Freedom & Education 250th Anniversary Art & Writing Competition are **judged fairly and solely on merit**. There is **no public voting, random drawing, or chance-based selection**.

Students are evaluated by educators and reviewers using a clear rubric that looks at:

- How well the student answers the prompt about freedom
- Originality and depth of thought
- Quality of writing (age-appropriate)
- Creativity and effort in the artwork
- How well the art and writing work together

Students are judged **within their grade group**, so younger students are not compared to older ones.

Winning entries and selections for publication are based entirely on the **highest overall scores** earned according to these criteria.

Our goal is to celebrate student creativity, thoughtful reflection, and civic understanding—while ensuring a transparent, educational, and fair process for all participants.



Grading Rubric

1. Alignment to Prompt & Theme (25 points)

Evaluates how clearly and thoughtfully the submission responds to the competition prompt.

Judges consider:

- Does the work meaningfully address “What does freedom mean to you?”
- Is the theme of freedom or American civic virtue clear and intentional?
- Does the student demonstrate understanding appropriate to their grade level?

Scoring guide:

- 21–25: Exceptionally clear, focused, and thoughtful connection
- 16–20: Clear connection with solid understanding
- 11–15: Partial or surface-level connection
- 0–10: Minimal or unclear connection

2. Originality & Depth of Thought (20 points)

Evaluates the student’s independent thinking and personal perspective.

Judges consider:

- Does the submission reflect original ideas rather than clichés or copied content?
- Does it show personal reflection, insight, or imagination?
- Is the student’s voice evident?

Scoring guide:

- 17–20: Highly original, insightful, and personal
- 13–16: Some original thinking and personal voice
- 9–12: Limited originality
- 0–8: Largely derivative or unclear

3. Written Expression & Communication (20 points)

Evaluates the written component only.

Judges consider:

- Clarity of ideas and organization
- Age-appropriate grammar, spelling, and sentence structure
- Ability to communicate ideas effectively

Scoring guide:

- 17–20: Clear, well-organized, and compelling
- 13–16: Generally clear with minor errors
- 9–12: Understandable but uneven
- 0–8: Difficult to follow or incomplete

4. Artistic Expression & Craftsmanship (20 points)

Evaluates the artwork only.

Judges consider:

- Creativity and visual expression of the theme
- Effort, care, and attention to detail
- Effective use of chosen medium (appropriate to age level)

Scoring guide:

- 17–20: Highly expressive, thoughtful, and well-executed
- 13–16: Strong effort and clear idea
- 9–12: Basic execution with limited expression
- 0–8: Minimal effort or unclear intent

5. Overall Impact & Cohesion (15 points)

Evaluates how well the artwork and writing work together as a unified submission.

Judges consider:

- Does the art piece and writing reinforce one another?
- Does the submission leave a strong overall impression?
- Is the student’s message memorable and meaningful?

Scoring guide:

- 13–15: Powerful, cohesive, and memorable
- 10–12: Clear and effective overall
- 6–9: Somewhat cohesive
- 0–5: Disconnected or unclear

Selection Process

- All submissions are reviewed by a selection committee.
- Scores are compiled and ranked within each grade band.
- Top-scoring submissions are selected for:
 - Prize recognition
 - Inclusion in the Top 250 Coffee-Table Book
- Ties, if necessary, are resolved through additional committee review, not random selection.

Important Dates

- March 15 – Submissions Open
- Memorial Day – Submission Deadline
- June – Selection Committee Review
- July 4 – Winners Announced
- Late 2026 – Commemorative Book Publication

(Judging expectations are adjusted by grade band.)

