The 2025-2026 Young Authors & Illustrators Project Theme is



- Authors may write prose, poetry, fiction, nonfiction, narrative, informational, editorial, inspirational, memoir, biography, book/music/movie review, analysis, or any other writing mode related to the theme.
- Authors may write in their first language and submit along with an English translation.
- All entries must follow the guidelines below and be submitted as correctly formatted as Google docs via the NCRA Entry Form.*Check with your local council for entry submission directions.
- 2025-2026-NCRA Young Authors & Illustrators teacher resource Slide Deck

Help your students get published in the North Carolina anthology!

Become a NCRA Member	Launch with Students	Writing Workshop	Peer Review	Submit Entries
Join NCRA! When you join a local council, NCRA membership is included. No local council? Become an NCRA Member at Large. https://www.ncreading.org/membership	Introduce the theme "Educate. Advocate. Empower." Generate ideas together! Explore genres and creative forms to expand possibilities! Support students as they activate and amplify their voices!	Guide students through brainstorming, drafting, revising. Encourage creativity, voice, and purpose.	Use grade-band peer rubrics in slide deck (K–2, 3–5, 6–8, 9–12). Students give kind, specific, helpful feedback. Two stars and a wish format works great here.	Select entries to submit. Have students format entry with THIS TEMPLATE Submit entries to your local council or NCRA Members at Large by the deadline. Collect parent/guardian consent via paper form or Google from.

Young Authors & Illustrators Guide

GUIDELINES

- All entries must be original creations.
- Participants may submit only 1 writing entry and 1 art entry.
- All entries must be sponsored by a member of NCRA.
- All entries must have participated in local level judging before being submitted for the state judging.
- All entries must be sponsored and submitted through your local NCRA council **OR** NCRA member at large to the state judging level by **December 11, 2026.**
- These pieces will be published in a book for readers in kindergarten through adulthood. All entries (art and writing) should be appropriate for a wide audience that includes young children.
- If an entry is deemed too mature for young audiences, it will not be included in the book.
- ENTRY LENGTH LIMITS
    - Grades Pre-K-1: 200 WORDS
    - Grades 2-5: 300 WORDS
    - Grades 6-8: 400 WORDS
    - Grades 9-12 and Forever Young: 500 W0RDS
- Any entry submitted to the state level will be disqualified if it exceeds the word limit by more than 5 words. How to Use Word Count in Googledocs
- Each council may choose two entries as Council Choices to be published in the state anthology.
- These two Council Choice entries do not count toward the entries allowed by a council based on membership enrollment.
- Forever Young entries do not count toward the number of entries noted below.
- Forever Young entries should first be judged at the local council level and will be judged at the state level.
- Forever Young Authors must be members of NCRA**.**

ART ENTRIES

- Artwork must be original ideas and clearly connect with the theme- Educate. Advocate. Empower..
- Art may
    - cover art-portrait oriented and measure 8.5” horizontal x 11” vertical.
    - feature art- between 3”x 3” and 4”x4”
    - decorative page art- horizontal row of 7.5” x 2” or vertical column of 2”x10”
- Black and white and full color art can be submitted. *Theme colors are especially meaningful (black, teal, gold)
- Acceptable art media- Drawing, painting, word art, abstract, mosaic, themed zendala/zentangle, illustrated storyboards, original photographs
- Each local council may submit up to 10 art entries no later than December 20, 2024.
- Art must be submitted as high quality, high resolution JPEG or PNG files. PDFs will not be accepted.
- If you are photographing the art for submission, be sure to have
    - good lighting

    - contrasting background
    - direct, straight angle for photo
- Art works will be judged by the YA Committee or the Executive Committee who will select finalists.
- The President will select the cover design independently or request a vote from the Executive Committee.
- The State YA Chair will notify local YA Chair of art winners by **JANUARY 11, 2025**
- Councils will hold on to all physical art entries and submission forms for 1 year.
    - Physical art entries may be requested if necessary to obtain a high quality digital capture of the work.

NUMBER OF LOCAL COUNCIL ENTRIES

- In order to create a more equitable and balanced collection of Young Author entries from across the state, the YA Committee has revised the criteria in order to provide smaller and developing councils with increased opportunities. A baseline of 40 entries is in place with increasing entries based on membership levels.
- NCRA Members at Large
    - may submit 10 entries by December 11th, 2025.
    - must participate in the NCRA Members at Large online scoring session on December from 9:30a-12p.

MEMBERSHIP LEVEL	NUMBER OF YA ENTRIES
Developing – 20	**40**
21-75	**45**
76 – 125	**50**
126 – 175	**55**
176 – 225	**60**
226 – 275	**65**
276 – 325	**70**

ENTRY FORMAT

All entries should use THIS TEMPLATE to ensure they are formatted correctly:

- Include an original title, typed in 12 point “Arial”, with only the first letter of each major word in the title capitalized.
- Use 10 point, “Arial” font, single spaced, for the body of the piece.
- Do not center the piece unless that is part of the structure of the writing. Prose is not generally centered.
- Include author information after the body of the piece. Skip two lines and then center the following information in 10 point, “Arial” font:

Author's First and Last Name, Grade _____ (numerical) or Forever Young
Teacher: Name (Teacher's First and Last Name)
School Name
Local Council Name

IMPORTANT: Please use the student's **preferred name** to ensure it is published correctly.

SUBMISSIONS OF LOCAL COUNCIL WINNERS FOR STATE JUDGING

- All council entries to state judging must be in a Google Doc. THIS TEMPLATE
- PDFs and Word files will not be accepted. If necessary, cut and paste entry into a Google Doc and format according to specifics below.
- All entries must be named as follows: **GradeLevel_CouncilName_LastNameFirstName**
  - the child's grade level (PK, 00 for kindergarten, 01 for first, and so on through grade 12
  - Forever Young entries will be labeled FY
  - then the local council name
  - then the author's LastnameFirstname. This should be the name used on the submission form AND the name on the official entry; it will be the name under which the work will be published if chosen.
  - art entries will add ART to the beginning of the file name

EXAMPLES– FOLLOW EXACTLY:

Kindergarten: 00_twinrivers_willemsmo for art ART00_twinrivers_willemsmo	**Fifth Grade:** 05__moorecounty_dicamillokate for art ART05__moorecounty_dicamillokate	**Forever Young:** 13__crystalcoast_golightlyemily for art ARTFY__crystalcoast_golightlyemily

● ENTRY SUBMISSION FLOW

1. NCRA Member Sponsor Submits Entry & release signed by parent/guardian

- All entries must be correctly formatted in a google doc using THIS TEMPLATE
- Parent Consent must be obtained for all entries in one of the following ways:
  - NCRA Young Authors & Illustrators Entry Form PAPER may be used with families and sent to local council for record keeping
  - Parent Consent Online Form- entries will be automated to local council entry spreadsheet
- All entries must be submitted on the NCRA Entry Form. *Check with your local council for entry submission process.

**NCRA form use is required because it will*

- ➔ *automatically populate a spreadsheet for each local council with entries submitted by their members.*
- ➔ *maintain a clean copy of submissions for state judging and publishing and legal record of parent consent.*

2. **Local Councils- Score ONLY entries**
    - from their local council spreadsheet
    - that are formatted correctly in a google doc using THIS TEMPLATE
3. **Local Councils- Submit entries to state**
    - Highlight entire entry row in YELLOW for every council winner on local council spreadsheet by midnight on December 20, 2025. How to Highlight Row
    - On December 21st, ONLY YELLOW highlighted rows in each local council spreadsheet will be entered into the state judging process
    - **COUNCIL CHOICE ENTRIES**
        - These will bypass STATE judging, BUT will be read by at least two members of the EC.
        - The content and language must be deemed appropriate. If there is a question regarding publication of the council choice entry, the local YA chair will be contacted.
        - The Council Choice entries must be clearly marked in the local council spreadsheet by highlighting them in GREEN
4. **State Judging**-
    - Local members acting as judges for state level judging must watch the Calibration Exemplar Virtual Videos
    - Each Council will have a tab on the NCRA State YA Judging Spreadsheet with the entries from other councils to judge for state level
    - Each entry must be scored by two separate scorers
    - Each scorer completes NCRA State Judging Scoring Form for each entry they judge
    - State committee determines which pieces will be published
        - from combined scores from NCRA State Judging Form
        - GREEN highlighted rows for council choice pieces in local council spreadsheets

STATE JUDGING:

- Will be done remotely between December 29, 2025 and January 13th, 2026
- Local councils may choose to meet in person for their judging process
- Each writing entry will be judged twice using the State YA Rubric
- Each writing entry will be judged by members of a different local council than the submitting council
- Art entries will be judged by the state YA Committee and/or the Executive Committee

JUDGES' CHOICE

- Judges' Choice is determined when an entry receives a perfect score from both judges. This

will be noted by the Young Authors Committee. This is not determined by the local council.

NCRA Young Authors Art Contest Rubric

2024-2025 Theme: EDUCATE. ADVOCATE. EMPOWER.

ART CRITERIA	Excellent	Good	Fair	Needs Work
	4	3	2	1
Visual Impact (overall quality)	The unique use of art elements, content & execution create a striking and memorable work. It has the power to "wow" the viewer.	The use of art elements, content, and execution create cohesive work. The work has a lasting impact on the viewer.	The use of art elements, content, and execution are addressed in the work. The work holds the viewer's attention.	The use of art elements, content, & execution are incompletely addressed in the work. There is little or no impact on the viewer.
Creative Interpretation of Theme	The design shows a unique and creative interpretation of the theme far beyond what is required, with great attention to details. The theme is clearly evident and well-executed.	The design shows a clear understanding of the theme and the student's ability to "think outside the box". With more effort, the project might have been outstanding. The theme is evident in the piece.	The design shows some creativity and adequate interpretation of the theme.	The design requirements are fulfilled, but give no evidence of original thought or interpretation. The project is incomplete or lacks attention to detail.
Craftsmanship (made with skill of mediums and overall neatness)	It demonstrates a mastery of skill and a clear understanding and application of specific medium qualities. The design is beautiful and detailed.	It demonstrates skill and some understanding of specific medium qualities. The design is pleasing and complete.	It demonstrates partial skill and understanding of specific medium qualities. The design is fairly neat.	It lacks understanding of specific medium qualities. The design shows a lack of attention to detail in the work.
Criteria Submissions that do not meet one or more of the criteria may be disqualified from state judging.	**Acceptable file formats**- jpeg, png Art submitted as PDF file will not be judged at the state level. **Acceptable art media-** Drawing, painting, word art, abstract, mosaic, themed zendala/zentangle, illustrated storyboards, original photographs, graphic story page, etc. **Acceptable art dimensions**- Cover art- 7.5inches by 10 inches (on an 8.5x11 piece of paper with a one inch margin). Decorative Word Art Rows- 7.5 inches by 2 inches Decorative Word Art Columns- 2 inches by 10 inches Decorative Block- 3 inches by 3 inches			

YOUNG AUTHORS WRITING SCORING RUBRIC

2024-2025 Theme: EDUCATE. ADVOCATE. EMPOWER.

WRITING CRITERIA	1 point--Not evident *Is lacking or inconsistent for this grade level.*	2 points--Fair *Partially meets expectations for grade level criterion;*	3 points--Good *Meets expectations in this criterion for grade level. Is well-written.*	4 points--Exemplary *Exceeds expectations in writing.*
YA THEME ***is clearly addressed or represented.*** *May be explicit or implicit, but must be an unquestionable representation of at least one of the theme words.*	No clear connection to the theme, or it feels forced, unclear, or off-topic for the contest focus.	The theme appears in parts but feels surface-level or underdeveloped; connection may be stated rather than shown.	The theme is clearly present and relevant; the message or story naturally reflects at least one theme word.	The theme is woven thoughtfully throughout the piece; interpretation is insightful or symbolic; connections show deep understanding of "Educate. Advocate. Empower."
ORGANIZATION *The structure of the writing is appropriate for the genre and easy to follow.*	Writing lacks structure; reader cannot follow a clear path of ideas or story development.	Organization is uneven or confusing in places; reader can follow but ideas sometimes wander.	Logical order is maintained; clear beginning, middle, and end; transitions are appropriate for the genre.	Purposeful structure enhances meaning; transitions are smooth; pacing and sequence engage the reader fully.
SENTENCE FLUENCY and WORD CHOICE *~Rhythm and flow ~Sentence Variety -Precise language -Figurative Language*	Sentences are choppy or unclear; word choice limits the reader's understanding or engagement.	Repetitive or simple sentence patterns; word choice is basic or sometimes off-tone.	Sentences are clear and varied; word choice fits the purpose and tone.	Sentences flow naturally with rhythm and variety; vocabulary is rich and precise; figurative or descriptive language elevates the piece.
CONTENT ORIGINALITY *The piece is appropriate for a K-12 audience and is clearly an original creative work for this contest.*	Work lacks originality or appears copied, formulaic, or inappropriate for school-age audiences.	Some originality is evident but relies on familiar ideas or clichés; content may be uneven.	Writing shows originality and clear purpose; content is engaging and appropriate.	Concept is original and thought-provoking; creative approach shows risk-taking and imagination; content is fully appropriate for a K–12 audience.
AUTHOR'S VOICE & ORIGINALITY *The author's voice is clearly established.*	Voice is absent, generic, or disconnected from the topic.	Voice is emerging but uneven or uncertain; tone may shift or feel imitated.	Voice is clear and consistent; personality and purpose come through.	Voice is powerful and authentic; tone, mood, and perspective feel fully the writer's own; emotion or conviction draws readers in.
CONVENTIONS *Age and genre appropriate spelling, grammar, capitalization, and punctuation.*	Frequent errors or inconsistencies interrupt the flow but meaning is still clear.	Minor errors do not interfere with reading; grammar and mechanics are age-appropriate.	Writing is clean, polished, and virtually error-free; conventions enhance readability and impact.	

2024-2025 YOUNG AUTHORS PROJECT TIMELINE/DEADLINES

ACTION	WHO	DATE
Theme Introduction	Heidi Perez, President	Summer Leadership
Leadership Session for YA	YA Committee	Summer Leadership
YA Intent to Participate Tab on NCRA Local Officers Roster	Council YA Chairs/Presidents	Sept 1, 2025
Local Council Planning- to market and promote YA information	Local Council officers and YA Chair(s)	July-August
1. Promote YA Project and share all state resources 2. Devote a beginning meeting to YA (please share dates w/ Christine so state board members may attend if/when possible). 3. Set Local Deadlines for writing and art entries 4. Share and/or make copies of the NCRA YA Entry Form 2… 5. Utilize all social media sites for council to create anticipation and excitement for YA	Local Council Officers and YA Chair(s)	August-October
1. Collect Writing and Art Entries 2. Ensure that all entries have a Permission form (keep these at local level) 3. Judge at the local level and choose your state level entries according to allotted membership numbers (use the chart in the General Information Document) 4. Councils use information and signatures from the local submission form and submit all writing and art entries on	YA Chair(s)/Committee	November - December **DEADLINE** for submitting entries for state level judging is December 20, 2025 **YA State Submission Support Webinars**

the 2024-25 YA State Digital Submission Form. 5. Councils keep paper entry forms and physical copies of art submissions for 1 year.		
1. The State Judging Window is opens December 26. 2. Each Council needs AT LEAST 2 council members to judge for state. (Identify on NCRA State Officers Roster) 3. The state judging link will be shared on the first day of the window. 4. Specific details and criteria for state judging will be shared prior to the judging window. 5. All art work will be judged by the state YA Committee.	State YA Chair Local Council YA Chair(s) Local Council Presidents Local Council State Judges	December 26, 2025-January 10, 2026
Notification of art and writing winners	State YA Chair	By January 20
Local Councils plan Local Celebration and Publication of Local Winners	Local YA Chairs Local EC/BOD	January-March
Celebrations and YA Book Release	Everyone	March
Post YA Celebration Photos and information on all social media sites	State YA Chair State Social Media Director Local YA Chair(s) Local Presidents	March-June

QUESTIONS?

Please contact your local council Young Authors Committee for questions or concerns. Please visit the NCRA website www.ncreading.org for a list of local councils and contact information.

Contact Information for State Young Authors & Illustrators Committee
Matthew Lococo, Greene County School
Elizabeth Landry, Ed.D. UNC Pembroke
Andy Cason, Parent Advocate
Savannah Bowman, Teacher, Hillside High School
youngauthorsncra@gmail.com