



Guidelines for Evaluating WILLA Entries in the Children's Picture Books Category

The purpose of Women Writing the West® is to become the internationally recognized organization of writers and other professionals engaged in writing and promoting writing about the North American West with emphasis on the experiences and sensibilities of women in that region. The WILLA Literary Awards are presented annually for outstanding literature featuring women's or girls' stories set in the North American West and includes Alaska and Hawaii.

Entries in the Children's Picture Books category must have a storyline that is appropriate for ages 4-7, with short, easy-to-follow sentences. They must also have a narrative that is easy to read out loud with pictures that match the story. The following rubrics were developed to help readers evaluate such this entry. They are intended to be guidelines only. Readers should use their own judgement in assessing how well each entry suits its target audience.

Both author and illustrator are awarded for this category.

Points should be awarded as follows:

- 10 – exceptional in all regards
- 9 – excellent
- 8 – well done
- 7 – majority well done; room for polish
- 6 – good overall with strong points
- 5 – good overall
- 4 – good overall with some weak points
- 3 – good start but needs work
- 2 – good idea but poor presentation
- 1 – needs work throughout
- 0 – ineligible

Note that entries that do not warrant at least 4 points in the first benchmark, “Women of the West Theme,” should be disqualified.

WILLA CATEGORY RUBRIC CHILDREN'S PICTURE BOOKS

Note: If a picture book is chosen as a WILLA Winner or Finalist, both author and illustrator will be honored

Picture Book	Ineligible	4 – 7 points	8 – 10 points
1. Women of the West Theme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Male main character(s) • Book not set in the West* • Does not portray authentic western experience • Theme & content do not reflect WWW's mission & goals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Female characters prominent • Book set in the West but could have happened anywhere; or, book partly set in the West* • Generally portrays authentic experience • Theme & content generally reflect WWW's mission & goals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Female main character(s) • Western setting primary & essential* • Consistently portrays authentic western experience • Theme & content excellent reflections of WWW's mission & goals
	0 – 3 points	4 – 7 points	8 – 10 points
2. Characterization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Characters not well developed, not engaging • Does not engage readers in a child's or child-friendly experience • Characters not believable, or not appropriate for young readers • Didactic, preachy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Character(s) moderately well developed, of some interest • Moderately engages reader in a child's or child-friendly experience • Most characters believable, appropriate for young readers • Reader can generally differentiate among characters • Character's "lesson" generally well presented 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Character(s) well developed, engaging • Thoroughly engages reader in a child's or child-friendly experience • All characters believable, appropriate for young readers • Appropriate number of characters • Any "lesson" subtle & organic



3. Setting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Setting not cohesive with story • Setting not portrayed accurately • Text & illustrations inconsistent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Setting of moderate importance to story • Setting generally portrayed accurately • Illustrations generally complement or support text 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Setting supports story • Setting consistently portrayed accurately • Illustrations consistently complement or support text
Picture Book	0 – 3 points	4 – 7 points	8 – 10 points
4. Plot	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plot nonexistent, confusing • Main character does not solve problem • No solution • Resolution leaves no hope, unacceptable to child or adult reader 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plot weak, has holes • Main character depends on others to solve problem • Solution predictable • Resolution provides some hope, acceptable to both child & adult reader 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plot well crafted, comes full circle • Main character solves problem • Solution fresh & surprising • Resolution hopeful, satisfying for both child and adult reader
5. Voice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Narrative voice lacking • Point of view confusing • Difficult to read aloud • Rhyme (if used) forced or inconsistent • Story unlikely to be read more than once 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Narrative voice dependable • Point of view adequate; occasional wavers • Generally good to read aloud; some lapses in rhythm or language • Rhyme (if used) usually good • Story somewhat likely to resonate during multiple readings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Narrative voice fresh, engaging, distinct • Point of view appropriate for story & intended audience • Excellent “read-aloud” quality • Rhyme (if used) excellent • Story likely to resonate during multiple readings
6. Literary Qualities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor or inappropriate command of language (slang, word choice, figurative language, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moderate command of language (slang, word choice, figurative language, etc.) • Premise not new, but well explored 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistently strong command of language (slang, word choice, figurative language, etc.)



	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Premise conventional, expected• Content not appropriate or appealing for intended audience	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Content likely to appeal to some of intended audience	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Premise breaks new ground• Content likely to greatly appeal to intended audience
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Picture Book	0 – 3 points	4 – 7 points	8 – 10 points
7. Technical Conventions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Word count, sentence structure, vocabulary inappropriate for target age group • Frequent problems with grammar, punctuation, spelling • Dialogue poorly written or unbalanced 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Word count, sentence structure, vocabulary generally appropriate for target age group • Grammar, punctuation, spellings generally good • Dialogue adequate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Word count, sentence structure, vocabulary excellent for target age group • Clear grasp of grammar, punctuation, spelling • Dialogue appropriate, believable, incorporated well
8. Presentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Illustrations inadequate, unpleasing • Illustrations irrelevant to story • Unattractive cover art & design • Interior design features lacking • Font & typesetting difficult to read, not used to support story • Illustrations have no educational merit (if book appropriate or intended for classroom use) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Illustrations adequate, moderately well executed, pleasing • Illustrations generally support story • Adequate cover art & design • Design features offer moderate story support, or not always germane to text • Font & typesetting used adequately • Illustrations have some educational merit (if book appropriate or intended for classroom use) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Illustrations appropriate, well executed, engaging • Illustrations effectively help tell the story • Attractive, appropriate, compelling art & design • Excellent design features support story • Font & typesetting used effectively • Illustrations enhance book’s educational merit (if book appropriate or intended for classroom use) • Properly bound, i.e., audio and eBooks

* WWW defines “the West” as anywhere on the North American continent west of the Mississippi River, including Alaska and Hawaii, Canada west of Manitoba, and Mexico.

