



2026 Writing Competition Rules and Regulations

The Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo™ Trailblazer Committee is excited to announce the sixth year of our Writing Competition. We are committed to helping the youth of Texas transform their future by becoming enthusiastic readers, writers, and thinkers.

The Writing Competition consists of two categories, Essay and Poetry. Please read the details below and join us for this exciting opportunity to be a student author for the 2026 Rodeo season!

Who Is Eligible?

Any **fourth grade student** residing or attending school in Texas at the time of entry. Entries will be accepted in English or Spanish.

Categories & Prompt

The Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo Trailblazer Committee will once again accept entries for both Essay and Poetry. We are delighted to announce that we will accept entries in both English and Spanish. The 2026 season Writing Competition prompt is **My Golden Ticket Adventure**.

My Golden Ticket Adventure

One sunny afternoon, you discover a shimmering golden ticket tucked inside your backpack. It's not just any ticket—it's your all-access pass to the most spectacular event you have ever seen: **The Houston Livestock Show & Rodeo!**

But this ticket does more than get you a front-row seat—it lets you go *behind the scenes* to talk to the stars of the show, both human and animal! You hear their stories, learn their secrets, and explore all that the rodeo has to offer. Your ticket is only good for one day! Describe your adventure.

Here are some questions to help you brainstorm:

- Who are the most unforgettable rodeo stars, either human or animal, that you meet backstage?
- What Western traditions or talents do they share with you and what would you share with them?
- If you could join the show, what event would you compete in and how would you prepare?
- What moment during the rodeo makes the crowd cheer the loudest?
- How does your golden ticket adventure help you discover the heart of the Wild West?

Now write your story!

Use your imagination to write an essay or poem about your Golden Ticket Adventure.

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How to Apply

- Entry forms must be submitted to the [Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo Writing Competition Portal](#). **The entry portal will open on September 15, 2025.**
- A signed Entry Form and Release of Liability must be submitted with your entry.
- The entry deadline is **October 24, 2025**.
- There is no entry fee.

Awards

- Each student author will receive a Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo Certificate of Participation. Certificates will be available by March 30, 2026. You will receive an email when they are ready.
- The competition winners will be published on rodeohouston.com/writing on **January 23, 2026**. Winners will be notified by email or phone call after January 20, 2026.
- First place, second place, and third place in each category will receive a belt buckle.
- A Trailblazer's Choice winner will be chosen in each category and receive a belt buckle.

RULES AND REGULATIONS

Please read the rules and regulations carefully and direct any questions to the contact listed at the end of this section.

Eligibility

The student author must be a Texas resident or attend a school in Texas and be enrolled in the fourth grade at the time of entry. Home schools, hybrid, and online schools are eligible.

Categories

The two categories for the competition are Essay and Poetry, and the student author can participate in only one of the categories. Please check the category you wish to enter on the Entry Form & Release of Liability (Entry Form).

Essay and Poetry Rules

Essay

- May be written in English or Spanish
- Must have a minimum of 100 words
- Must not exceed a maximum of 350 words
- Word count includes "a," "an," and "the," but not the words on non-story pages such as a title page if included
- If handwritten, must be legible
- If typed, must be double spaced

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- IMPORTANT - please **ONLY include the entrant's initials on the document**. Do not include their name
- Word document format is preferred

Poetry

- May be written in English or Spanish
- Must have a minimum of 50 words
- Must not exceed a maximum of 150 words
- Word count includes "a," "an," and "the," but not the words on non-story pages such as the title page
- If handwritten, must be legible
- If typed, must be double spaced
- IMPORTANT - please **ONLY include the entrant's initials on the document**. Do not include their full name
- Word document format is preferred

Application

- Entry forms must be submitted to the [Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo Writing Competition Portal](#). [The entry portal will open on September 15, 2025.](#)
- A signed Entry Form and Release of Liability must be submitted for the entry to be valid.
- The entry deadline is **October 24, 2025**.
- There is no entry fee.
- Each Entry Form must include the student author's name, school district, teacher's name, school name, school phone and mailing address, and parent or legal guardian's name and signature.
- Incorrect or incomplete information on the Entry Form may result in disqualification of the entry or a delay in issuing awards.
- Submission of an Entry Form means the student author understands that the judge's decision is final and agrees to abide by the rules and regulations of the Writing Competition.
- The Rodeo has the right to limit entries. Entries will be dated as received and entries received first will have priority. All entries are considered accepted unless the student author is notified otherwise by the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo.

Judging

The Rodeo will select qualified judges for each competition category. Any questions about the judging criteria may be directed to the Writing Competition email listed under Contacts at the end of this document.

Judging will be based on the following categories:

- Ideas & Techniques

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- Voice
- Language Conventions
- Presentation

There will be two double blind rounds of judging before advancing to the finals. All entries will be judged in the first round. A subset of entries will be judged in the second round based on the first-round scores. The top 20 entries will advance to the final round.

Judges' decisions are final, and protests will not be considered. Results will be published on the [Rodeo's website](#) on **Wednesday, January 23, 2026**.

Other Considerations

The student author, teacher and parent or legal guardian understand, that as a condition of participation in the Writing Competition, they are granting the Rodeo permission to promote (via website, social media, and the like) and display the entry; to photograph, film, or otherwise record the entry or entries; and, to reproduce the entry or entries in whole, in part or composite.

The student author and parent or legal guardian waive and release any and all rights to inspect and/or approve the final product, and they release, discharge, and hold the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo harmless from any liability by virtue of the use of the entry or entries and/or images. While the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo takes every precaution to ensure the integrity of the entries, the Rodeo and the Trailblazer Committee are not responsible for loss of entries.

All works must be original works by the entrant, in English or Spanish. Entries with copyright or licensing infringement will not be accepted. If there is any reproduction, in whole or in part, of a registered trademark or work of another individual, the Rodeo reserves the right to disqualify the entry. Plagiarism will also result in disqualification as will any writing generated by computer software and/or artificial intelligence. Entries will be screened using software to detect plagiarism and artificial intelligence before any awards are given out.

The Rodeo is a family-oriented event. We reserve the right to disqualify any entry that, in the Rodeo's sole judgment, is deemed inappropriate for family reading, is controversial, or in poor taste prior to judging.

The Rodeo will not be liable for entries made in error and will not re-open judging to accommodate such entries.

All entries will become property of the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo.

All entries must be written by the individual listed as the student author on the Entry Form.

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Entries that do not comply with all competition rules will be disqualified.

Contacts

If you have any questions about the Writing Competition, please email us at the address below.

WritingCompetition@hlsr.com

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