



## Short Story Critique Rubric

### 1. Title

- 5 - Exceedingly clever or creative
- 4 - Suitable and intriguing
- 3 - Functional
- 2 - Awkward
- 1 - Irrelevant or misleading

Score

### Comments

### 2. Hook

- 5 - Outstanding, creative, and instantly captivating
- 4 - Intriguing and appropriately timed, prompts the reader to read on
- 3 - Could be more compelling, may not be the best place to begin
- 2 - Flat, slow, or un compelling; begins too early or too late
- 1 - Confusing, misleading, awkward, or irrelevant

Score

## Comments

### 3. Language (e.g., voice, description)

- 5 - Effortless prose, compelling voice, creative or striking use of language
- 4 - Fluent prose, consistent voice, appropriate use of description
- 3 - Fairly good command of language with some missteps, room for improvement
- 2 - Inconsistent style or voice, lack of description, lack of clarity
- 1 - Difficult to follow, poor or absent descriptions, poor or cliché word choice

Score

## Comments

### 4. Plot/Premise

- 5 - Unique or uniquely delivered premise; a compelling, memorable, and character-driven plot
- 4 - Interesting premise, satisfying plot with authentic character engagement and memorable moments
- 3 - Solid (if familiar) premise, plot may not hold readers' attention and may lack authentic character engagement
- 2 - Premise and/or plot feels superficial, strained, or cliché; plot lacks direction or "just happens" to the character

1 - Unremarkable premise, difficult-to-follow plot, uneventful/doesn't tell a story

Score

**Comments**

**5. Character**

5 - Unique, believable, fully-developed characters whose actions/reactions drive the plot

4 - Relatable, well-developed characters with clear motivations and understandable actions and reactions

3 - Some characters lack authenticity and may not be sufficiently developed or motivated

2 - One-dimensional characters whose motivations are unclear and have little bearing on the plot

1 - Unconvincing, stereotypical, or convenient characters with no motivation to act the way they do

Score

**Comments**

## 6. Dialogue

5 - Compelling and believable, demonstrates character and offers a unique voice for each individual, effortlessly includes descriptive action/reaction and elements of setting in its framework, boasts flawless dialogue mechanics

4 - Holds reader's interest, demonstrates character through voice, uses an appropriate amount of description to ground scene, demonstrates a solid grasp of proper dialogue mechanics

3 - Has promising elements but misses the mark: may seem inauthentic at times, may fail to draw the reader into the scene, has too much or too little blocking/description, needs improvement in dialogue mechanics

2 - Reads like a script with too few scene-setting elements, fails to distinguish character voices, seems inauthentic or is being used as an obvious narration tool, demonstrates poor dialogue mechanics

1 - Feels flat and inauthentic, does not demonstrate a basic understanding of dialogue mechanics

Score

Comments

## 7. Theme

5 - Moving or thought-provoking theme, effortlessly integrated into plot and title, artfully demonstrated through character development

4 - Solid theme, clearly demonstrated through character development

3 - Discernable theme, promising but could be better executed

2 - Theme feels preachy or forced and is not closely tied to character development

1 - This piece doesn't have anything meaningful to say

Score

## Comments

### 8. Structure/Pacing

5 - Hits every beat effortlessly, propels the reader toward a compelling climax before reaching a meaningful or thought-provoking conclusion

4 - Well-constructed, engages interest and flows well, builds toward a climax, reaches a satisfying conclusion

3 - Shows promise but narrative lags at times; structure may be somewhat unbalanced

2 - Slow, lacks organization, may be missing structural beats

1 - Lacks any real structure, missing vital story components

Score

## Comments

### 9. Conclusion

5 - Artfully ties up loose ends, demonstrates character arch, subtly reinforces theme, offers something unexpected or structurally clever, leaves a lasting impression

4 - Appropriate, ties up loose ends, leaves the reader feeling satisfied

3 - Not particularly compelling or satisfying, takes the easiest or most obvious way out

2 - Disappointing, does not do justice to the story, may reveal that the reader has been tricked or misled

1 - Ends abruptly without answering important story questions or tying up loose ends

Score

**Comments**

**10. Reader Interest**

5 - Brilliant, thought-provoking, and emotionally engaging; stays with the reader long after they've put the story down

4 - A page-turner; engaging, satisfying, and well-written

3 - Interesting enough but not exceptional/memorable in premise or execution

2 - Not particularly entertaining or compelling, difficult to recommend

1 - Boring or confusing, difficult to finish

Score

**Comments**

## Your Score

**Total Points**  (0-50)

**Total Score**  (Total points multiplied by 2)

### **Additional Comments**

# Scoring

## Method

Storytelling skills will be divided into ten categories, each of which will be evaluated using the five-point scale below:

1	2	3	4	5
Needs Complete Overhaul	Needs Significant Work	Room for Improvement	Well Done	Superior Work

Your category points will then be totaled and multiplied by two to calculate your total score.

## Interpreting Your Score

**If your score is below 80**, you have a little work to do to make this story publishable, and that's OK. Remember, the best stories are not written; they're developed. My job as an editor and critique writer is to provide you with the best tools I can to help you develop your draft into the story you know it can be. Read my comments carefully, and feel free to reach out via email with any questions or concerns you might have throughout the editing process. Good luck!

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**If your total score is 80 or above**, congratulations! Believe me when I say the vast majority of stories I critique do not meet this benchmark. You've done well and likely have a publishable story on your hands. Before you begin submitting your work, take the time to address any recommended improvements, paying careful attention to any area scoring lower than a four. Make your edits, and get this story out there!

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**If your total score is 90 or above**, you've written an exceptional story—the kind of submission I'd put up a spirited fight for in editorial meetings. While a score of four in any individual category denotes solid, publishable work, a five indicates a unique mastery of that specific storytelling element. A score of 90 or better means you have not only met the benchmark in most categories but have also demonstrated superior storytelling skills in multiple others. Congratulations on some impressive work!