

Heart of the West Writers Contest
Sponsored by the Utah/Salt Lake Chapter
Romance Writers of America®

Judge No: **Entrant No:**

Entry Title:

Category:

Comment on Ms? Yes ___ No___ **URWA Member?** Yes ___ No___

Judge's Credentials:

Agent/Editor ___ Published Romance___ Contest Finalist ___ Published Other___ Unpublished/Trained ___PRO ___
 Unpublished/Reader___

Judging Criteria

Award each number in the categories listed below 1 to 5 points
 (Please feel free to use decimal points (Example: 4.9)), **based on the following criteria**

5 = OUTSTANDING! Fun to read, perfect in this area. Ready for submission to an editor.

4 = GREAT WORK! An enjoyable read. Needs only minor revisions before submission.

3 = GOOD WORK! Shows promise, but needs revision before submission.

2 = FAIR JOB! Getting there, but needs heavy revision before submission.

1 = NICE TRY! Don't give up! Needs extensive work before submission.

Start at a perfect 5 score and detract from there

ELECTRONIC SCORE SHEET
CATEGORY SCORE MAXIMUM PTS FROM WORKSHEET

Opening:	_____ (10 Points)	Language	_____ (10 Points)
Characterization	_____ (15 Points)	Description/Setting	_____ (15 Points)
Conflict/Motivation	_____ (15 Points)	Originality/Plot)	_____ (15 Points)
Point of View	_____ (10 Points)	Mechanics	_____ (5 Points)
Dialog	_____ (20 Points)	Romantic Tone	_____ (5 Points)
Pacing	_____ (10 Points)	Bonus	_____ (5 Points)

TOTAL POINTS: _____

(135 Points Possible)

WORKSHEET

OPENING: (10 Points total)

1. _____ Is the opening premise fresh and unique? We've all hear that we have the first couple of paragraphs to catch the reader or editor's attention. Try answering this question after reading the first page. Does it grab your interest and make you want to read more?
2. _____ Does the story begin where it should? Is the set-up handled well? (Does it establish the character or plot in an interesting or unusual light...or does it leave the reader confused?)

Keep in mind that some prologues for romantic suspense manuscripts are meant to leave the reader curious, meant to draw them into the story to find out what the prologue is all about. But the opening still has to be a compelling read.

Comments:

CHARACTERIZATION: (15 Points total)

1. _____ Does the author paint a distinctive picture of the **hero/heroine** by his/her manner, descriptions or voice? Is her motivation clear and believable? Does the hero/heroine's thought process enhance the story and help the reader to understand his/her behavior?
2. _____ Are secondary characters necessary? If no secondary characters have been introduced yet, is there sufficient material for the main character(s) to carry the chapter effectively by themselves?
3. _____ Do you like the hero/heroine? (If not, please explain below.)

Why doesn't the score sheet ask two questions? One for the hero and one for the heroine? Sometimes both characters aren't introduced in the opening pages.

Comments:

CONFLICT AND MOTIVATION: (15 Points total)

1. _____ Is the conflict believably presented without relying on coincidence or misunderstanding?
2. _____ Are strong goals introduced for the hero/heroine?
3. _____ Is the motivation for action, behavior, and attitudes believable for the hero/heroine?

Comments:

POINT OF VIEW: (10 Points total)

1. _____ Is point of view clearly defined?
2. _____ If more than one point of view is used, are transitions clear and effective?

Comments:

DIALOGUE: (20 Points total)

1. _____ Is the dialogue natural and appropriate to the category/genre?
2. _____ Does the dialogue and narrative serve to advance the plot? (Does it need to be there?)
3. _____ Are characters' voices consistent and individual to their personalities?
4. _____ Is there a good balance between dialogue, narration, and introspection?

Comments:

PACING: (10 Points total)

1. _____ Is the manuscript balanced, with action, description, setting, and introspection blended throughout?
2. _____ Does each scene move the story forward? Are transitions between scenes smooth and unintrusive?

Comments:

LANGUAGE: (10 Points total)

1. _____ Is the manuscript smooth and easy to read with a rhythm created by varied sentence length and structure?
2. _____ Does the writer "show" as well as tell the story?

Comments:

DESCRIPTION AND SETTING: (15 points total)

1. _____ Does the author use the five senses?
2. _____ Is the setting clearly defined without extraneous details? (Are details necessary and enhance the story?)
3. _____ Is the setting well researched and presented well? (Is it easy to picture and gives a good sense of time and space?)

Remember, historicals will have more description. Romantic Suspense manuscripts will have less. Judge accordingly.

Comments:

ORIGINALITY AND PLOT: (15 points total)

1. _____ Is the plot fresh and original, the idea appearing fresh? (Is it told with a particular skill or twist?)
2. _____ Is the plot strong enough to sustain word count?
3. _____ Is the writing void of stereotypes, awkward phrasing, and clichés? (If clichés are used, are they deliberate?)

Keep in mind that stereotypes may be used deliberately. They are writing devices. Let the contestant know if it works.

Comments:

MECHANICS: (5 Points total)

1. _____ Is the manuscript neat in appearance, in standard submission format, and free of grammatical and spelling errors? (Canadian and British spellings are correct and acceptable.)

Comments:

ROMANTIC TONE: (5 points total)

1. _____ Is the relationship between the hero and heroine believable, the initial meet seeming to promise a compelling love story? If the hero and heroine have not yet met, are there sufficient hints that it will be believable, that the relationship will hold conflict, adventure, and/or desire appropriate to the genre you are judging?

Please keep in mind that Young Adult may not have a strong romantic tone, but we still want to see the hero/heroine form strong relationships with the people around them. Judge accordingly.

Comments:

BONUS: (5 points total)

1. _____ Based on this prologue/chapter, would you as a reader want to continue reading this book?

Please use the comments section to let the contestant know WHY you would or wouldn't want to continue reading. It's important to the contestant either way.

Comments:

_____ **TOTAL POINTS (Transfer this amount to Score sheet)**

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

What did you like about this entry?

Any suggestions for the author to work on?