

**HAWKINSVILLE UNITY**  
**Juneteenth Essay & Art Contest**  
**OFFICIAL JUDGING RUBRICS**

**DIVISION 1: ART CONTEST | Grades 3–5**

*Each criterion scored 1–4 | Maximum: 16 points*

<b>Judge Name</b>	
<b>Submission ID / Student Code</b>	
<b>Date Reviewed</b>	

Criteria	4 — Excellent	3 — Proficient	2 — Developing	1 — Beginning
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Connection to Theme</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>How clearly does the artwork relate to freedom and/or Juneteenth?</i></p>	Artwork powerfully and clearly conveys the theme of freedom/Juneteenth with strong visual storytelling.	Artwork clearly connects to the theme with most visual elements supporting the message.	Artwork has some connection to the theme, but the relationship is unclear in places.	Artwork has little or no visible connection to the theme of freedom or Juneteenth.
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Creativity &amp; Originality</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Does the student bring a fresh, personal perspective?</i></p>	Artwork is highly original, imaginative, and shows a distinct personal vision.	Artwork shows creativity and some original choices in subject matter or approach.	Some creative elements are present, but the piece relies on conventional or imitative choices.	Little originality; artwork appears copied, generic, or unrelated to personal expression.
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Effort &amp; Craftsmanship</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Is the work completed with care appropriate for the student's grade level?</i></p>	Exceptional care and effort evident throughout; work is polished and complete for grade level.	Work shows solid effort and attention; minor areas could be more refined.	Some effort is evident but the piece feels rushed or incomplete in key areas.	Minimal effort or craftsmanship visible; work appears hastily done or unfinished.
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Clarity of Visual Message</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Can viewers understand what the artwork is communicating?</i></p>	Visual message is immediately clear and compelling; description enhances understanding.	Message is generally clear with minor ambiguity; description is helpful.	Message is somewhat unclear; the written description is needed to understand intent.	Message is confusing or absent; description does not clarify the visual communication.
<b>TOTAL SCORE</b>	<b>/ 16 points</b>			

**Judge Comments**

<b>Strengths (What stood out?)</b>
<b>Areas for Growth (Optional encouragement for the student)</b>

## DIVISION 2: MIDDLE SCHOOL ESSAY | Grades 6–8

*Each criterion scored 1–4 | Maximum: 16 points | Essay length: 350–500 words*

<b>Judge Name</b>	
<b>Submission ID / Student Code</b>	
<b>Date Reviewed</b>	

Criteria	4 — Excellent	3 — Proficient	2 — Developing	1 — Beginning
<b>Connection to Theme</b> <i>How well does the essay connect to freedom and/or Juneteenth?</i>	Essay powerfully and directly explores the theme with rich personal and/or historical connection.	Essay clearly connects to the theme; most of the essay supports the central idea.	Essay has a general connection to the theme but the link is inconsistent or surface-level.	Essay has little or no meaningful connection to freedom or Juneteenth.
<b>Personal Voice</b> <i>Does the student use a thoughtful, authentic voice?</i>	Voice is distinctive, engaging, and authentic throughout; reader feels the student's genuine perspective.	Voice is present and generally engaging with moments of strong personal expression.	Voice is inconsistent; some sections feel genuine while others feel generic or flat.	Voice is absent or unclear; the essay reads as impersonal or detached.
<b>Organization &amp; Structure</b> <i>Does the essay have a clear introduction, body, and conclusion?</i>	Essay is expertly organized; intro, body, and conclusion flow naturally and effectively.	Essay is clearly organized with a solid intro, body, and conclusion; transitions work well.	Basic structure is present but transitions are weak or sections feel disconnected.	Essay lacks clear organization; intro, body, or conclusion may be missing or unclear.
<b>Writing Mechanics</b> <i>Grammar, punctuation, spelling — appropriate for grade level.</i>	Nearly error-free; mechanics enhance rather than distract from the reading experience.	Minor errors present but they do not interfere with meaning or readability.	Noticeable errors that occasionally distract from the essay's message.	Frequent errors that significantly impede readability and understanding.
<b>TOTAL SCORE</b>	<b>/ 16 points</b>			

**Judge Comments**

**Strengths (What stood out?)**

**Areas for Growth (Optional encouragement for the student)**

### DIVISION 3: HIGH SCHOOL ESSAY | Grades 9–12

*Each criterion scored 1–4 | Maximum: 16 points | Essay length: 500–750 words*

<b>Judge Name</b>	
<b>Submission ID / Student Code</b>	
<b>Date Reviewed</b>	

Criteria	4 — Excellent	3 — Proficient	2 — Developing	1 — Beginning
<p><b>Thesis &amp; Argument</b></p> <p><i>Does the essay have a clear, compelling central idea?</i></p>	Thesis is original, insightful, and compellingly argued throughout the essay.	Thesis is clear and well-supported; argument is logical and generally consistent.	Thesis is present but may be vague or inconsistently supported across the essay.	Thesis is absent, unclear, or not meaningfully developed.
<p><b>Historical &amp; Community Grounding</b></p> <p><i>Does the essay draw on history, community experience, or research?</i></p>	Essay is richly grounded in historical detail and/or community experience; sources used effectively.	Essay includes relevant historical or community grounding that strengthens the argument.	Some historical or community content is present but not well integrated or developed.	Little to no historical or community grounding; essay relies on general statements.
<p><b>Engagement &amp; Original Thought</b></p> <p><i>Does the essay show creative, independent thinking?</i></p>	Essay demonstrates exceptional originality; student's unique perspective enriches the argument.	Essay shows genuine original thinking and engagement with the topic.	Some evidence of independent thought, but student mostly restates familiar ideas.	Essay shows little original thinking; arguments are generic or borrowed without credit.
<p><b>Writing Craft</b></p> <p><i>Organization, voice, clarity, and mechanics — appropriate for grade level.</i></p>	Writing is polished and sophisticated; structure, voice, and mechanics all strengthen the essay.	Writing is clear and well-organized; mechanics are largely correct with strong voice.	Writing is functional but uneven; structure or mechanics weaken the overall impact.	Writing is difficult to follow; significant issues with organization, voice, or mechanics.
<b>TOTAL SCORE</b>	<b>/ 16 points</b>			

**Judge Comments**

**Strengths (What stood out?)**

**Areas for Growth (Optional encouragement for the student)**