



BULGARIAN CREATIVE WRITING COMPETITION JUDGING CRITERIA 2016

Grading creative work can be hard! However, to ensure that the judging is as objective as possible, we have developed a set of categories for ranking the entries to the BCWC.

Creativity	40%
Structure	20%
Language Use	20%
Adherence to Topic	10%
<u>“Wow!” factor</u>	<u>10%</u>
TOTAL:	100%

These criteria are discussed at length below. For every 10% of the score, there is a corresponding question to be answered—if the answer to the question is “yes,” then that 10% should be awarded. If the answer is “no”, then it should not.

The Judging Process

At the **regional level**, the creative writing pieces are read and marked by a single judge. Only those entries that receive an overall rating of 70% or higher, or receive the maximum number of points for creativity, are passed on to a second judge. (Everyone who participates will receive a certificate of participation.) For the final reading, the judges, divided into groups, will read the top ten entries for each grade level aloud and will engage in a measured discussion of their content and value before voting for the best four entries (in each grade level) to be sent to the national level. These top four entries do not need to be ranked first, second, third, and fourth. They will be placed in a pool with entries from other regions.

Note: Entries containing hate speech (i.e. speech that attacks a person or group on the basis of attributes such as gender, ethnic origin, religion, race, disability, or sexual orientation) should be disqualified.

At the **national level**, the creative writing entries are read and marked once by at least two judges. (The ratings of the regional judges are discarded and each piece is read “fresh,” as though for the first time.) The entries rated 80% or more progress to the final reading, where they are again read aloud and discussed. (Please note that reading at the national level is more stringent—what may receive an 80% at a regional level may not, compared to the best entries, necessarily receive an 80% at the national level.) This time, the judges must choose the top three entries for each grade level and award them first, second, and third places.

DESCRIPTION OF CRITERIA

40% - Creativity

Although this is the most difficult quality to measure, it remains the main focus of the competition and the most important aspect to take into account when grading entries. The goal is to reward students who display the ability to think “outside the box”—that is, those who provide something other than formulaic answers, and who can do so in a novel or unusual way. Here are the criteria to consider:

- (10%) Does this piece approach the question in an innovative way? Is the piece free of everyday clichés?
- (10%) Does this piece address the topic in a way that makes the reader think? Does it address the question in a unique way, creating new ideas and concepts, rather than using ones we already have? Yes/No
- (10%) Does this piece use vivid details to create clear imagery of what the author is describing? Yes/No
- (10%) Does this piece grab the reader’s attention and keep him or her engaged? Yes/No

20% - Structure

The way in which any piece of writing is organized helps make it more easily understood and appreciated. Creative works that are, for example, just one long paragraph with no visual breaks are both hard on the eyes and display a lack of maturity in composition. (However, exceptions may be made for younger students, such as those in 6th and 7th grade.) That being said, we encourage students to experiment with inventive ways of structuring their writing, as long as some kind of structure is evident.

- (10%) Is this piece organized in a comprehensible way? Yes/No
- (10%) Does the structure make sense, or fit, with the piece’s content? If the piece adheres to a traditional format, is there a clear beginning, middle, and end or introduction, body, and conclusion? If not, is there a valid reason for an unusual structure, such as cutting the work short or leaving questions unanswered? Yes/No

20% - Language Use

Language use involves grammar, punctuation, vocabulary, and spelling. Although all of these elements are important and should not go unrewarded, because the goal of this competition is to encourage creative thinking, as long as the language is understandable and does not hinder a reader’s ability to comprehend the piece, this 10% should be awarded.

- (10%) Is the language use of this piece correct enough that it is easy to understand? Yes/No
- (10%) Does this piece effectively deploy literary devices – metaphor, imagery, figurative language? Yes/No

10% - Adherence to Topic

Sometimes creative writing pieces are cleverly written, but they actually have little to do with the given topic. While creative writing pieces should be able to find many unusual ways to answer a question (questions can be answered as stories, poems, essays, and so on), they should still, in some way, obviously respond to the chosen topic.

- (10%) Does this piece, in one way or another, address the topic at hand? Yes/No

10% - “Wow!” factor

This portion is where points are awarded for exceptional creative writing pieces — those that display an incredible use of vocabulary, clever ideas or approaches to the topic, mature style, advanced English for the writer’s grade level, and so on. This 10% is to be awarded only to pieces that truly impress the readers, and these entries should likely make it to the second reading session.

- (10%) Does this piece “wow” the reader for one reason or another? Yes/No