Welcome to the 2019-2020 Season of Power of the Pen!

Begun in 1986 by Lorraine and Frank Merrill, Power of the Pen, Ohio’s premier middle school interscholastic writing league, is available to all 88 counties in Ohio. This year we expect up to 500 schools to participate in our tournaments.

Power of the Pen provides instructional tools for the classroom, as well venues to provide recognition for young writers in District, Regional, and State tournaments.

The 2019-2020 Coaches’ Manual provides information detailing how the program works and the steps coaches may take to nurture their school team. You may access the Coaches’ Manual online or print a copy if you prefer to have a hard copy.

Please do not limit Power of the Pen materials only to your competitive team members. Using the Power of the Pen prompts and copies of the Book of Winners as classroom tools will allow you to reach all your students by

» awakening and strengthening their creative voices
» recognizing the development of various specific skills
» providing incentives to strengthen writing programs
» preparing them for state proficiency testing
» enabling them to implement the writing process effectively.

Power of the Pen also provides teachers a chance to connect and interact with teachers from across the state to share ideas and strategies that enhance learning.

Please note that Power of the Pen focuses more on creative writing than expository. Power of the Pen believes that after young writers develop confidence in their creative voices, they will be much better equipped to handle the composition of essays and research papers at the high school level. Although we know mechanics are important, Power of the Pen does place greater importance on the elements of good writing. Developing a love for language will surely spur students to be more attentive to mechanics.

Some maintain that creativity cannot be taught, but teachers who use Power of the Pen materials are adamant that it can be fostered with specific lessons on dialogue, sensory images, tone, etc. Through the years we have witnessed amazing work by middle-schoolers that can be used as models for instruction in the elements of writing.

We welcome all of you – past participants and newcomers – to another season of powerful writing!

– Mary Anderson, Interim Executive Director
Summary of Section Contents

**Preliminaries**
Welcome from the Founder. Scope of the sections in the Manual. Note especially the inclusion of a Coaches’ Checklist with deadlines.

*Section I (PREPARATION)*

**Preparing for the Tournament**
A subtle exposition of the philosophy behind Power of the Pen through discussions of how a Writing Team Coach can prepare student contestants for tournament participation. Note the emphasis on holistic evaluation. A vocabulary of key words for Power of the Pen is included.

*Section II (TOURNAMENTS)*

**Participating in the Tournament**
Detailed discussions of the mechanics of tournament participation as they relate to the Writing Team Coach and the student contestants. These areas include judging, gridding, scoring, and awards.

*Section III (GOVERNANCE)*

**Governance**
The Mission Statement adopted by the Power of the Pen Board of Trustees in 1994; the current membership of the Board; policies governing EEO, Civil Rights Compliance, and Plagiarism; policies and procedures for using POP’s name and/or logo, and for holding local Power of the Pen Tournaments; the Constitution of the Ohio State Committee.

*Section VI (FORMS)*

**Forms**
A collection of forms and instruction sheets of value to the Writing Team Coach.

**Fees**
A complete listing with careful explanations of any fee that could be incurred by a school in the course of the tournament season.
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## A Checklist for Writing Team Coaches

The success of your in-school program as well as the success of Power of the Pen’s Statewide season depends upon how efficiently communication deadlines are met. Here is a handy checklist of your major communication tasks that will help you to remember what has to be done and when.

### Deadline  Action Required

#### Sept. 1-Oct. 15
- **Register Online.** After October 15, registration fees increase $50. After November 30, a school may join, space permitting; registration fees increase another $50.

#### Nov. 1
- **Registration Fee:** Submit payment online or by invoice to purchase order number by or before November 1. *Payment must follow Purchase Orders by December 1 to avoid an additional late payment assessment.*

#### Sept. 1-Dec. 1
- **Contestant Names:** Submit contestant names online by editing your member profile. *For December District events, names must be sent in by November 20.*

#### Dec. 1
- **Permission to Publish Forms:** Run copies of the Permission to Publish form from masters in the Forms section of the Manual. Send copies home with each contestant and alternate for parental signature. Permission to Publish forms must be submitted by every contestant because contestant writing may be used for training purposes. Permission to Publish forms also serve as a photo release. Also run copies of the Runner & Student Volunteer Photo Release form and send copies home with each runner for parental signature.

  *Please note: If a school has not emailed or brought its Permission to Publish Forms to the District Tournament, it must email them to the Regional Director immediately. If the Permission to Publish Forms for every writer who participated in District are not received by the Regional Director no later than 96 hours before the Regional Tournament, the writer whose form is missing may not participate in the Regional Tournament.*

#### Dec. 1
- **Payment Due:** Check to see if Purchase Orders have been paid before winter break to ensure participation.

#### 96 hours before District tournament
- **Last-Minute Drops, Changes for District Tournaments:** Update your team profile on powerofthepen.org and notify your Regional Director of contestant drops or changes no later than 96 hours before the tournament (for example, by 9 a.m. Tuesday for a Saturday tournament). Any contestant drops after that time, even if the school updates the online profile, will incur a $25 contestant drop fee.

  Every school is required to provide one 7th grade judge and one 8th grade judge for the District Tournament if the school has both a 7th and an 8th grade team. There are no judge hires. Judge drops incur a $50 fee.

#### District Tournament
- **Last-Minute Reminder:** Scan and email Permission to Publish Forms in alphabetical order by student last name as a single pdf to the Regional Director. Scan and email Runners & Student Volunteer Photo Release Forms in alphabetical order by student last name as a second pdf to the Regional Director. If the coach has not emailed the forms, the coach must bring Permission to Publish and Runner & Student Volunteer Photo Release forms to the District Tournament registration.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Deadline</th>
<th>Action Required</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Post-District</td>
<td>□ <strong>Post-Tournament:</strong> Submit edited copies of the Best of the Best winners eligible for publication as soon as possible after District competition. Follow Publication Procedures listed in the Forms section of the Manual.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASAP</td>
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<tr>
<td>POP’s Instructions</td>
<td>□ <strong>Regional Registration:</strong> Following instructions provided after the District Tournament, confirm qualifiers who are participating in the Regional tournament no later than 96 hours before the Regional Tournament. Any contestant drops after that time, even if the school updates the online profile, will incur a $50 contestant drop fee. Also confirm required judges or judge hires no later than 96 hours before the tournament. Any judge drop or failure to provide a required judge after that time, even if the school updates the online profile, will incur a $75 judge drop fee.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 1 or POP Instructions</td>
<td><strong>State Registration:</strong> Confirm by May 1 which State qualifiers will be contestants in the tournament. Contestant drops after this time will incur a $75 fee. A judge drop after this time incurs a $100 fee.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 10 or POP Instructions</td>
<td><strong>State Conference Reservations:</strong> Confirm conference reservations, per POP’s post-Regional instructions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-State</td>
<td>□ <strong>Post-Tournament:</strong> Submit edited copies of Best of the Best winners eligible for publication as soon as possible after State competition. <em>(Note: No awards will be sent until final copies of edited work are on file at Power of the Pen.)</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>ASAP</td>
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Section I

Preparing for the Tournament
Identifying Excellent Writers for Interscholastic Competition

Now that you have registered for participation and committed yourself to being a writing coach, your first step is identifying the best writers in your school who will ultimately make up your writing team. Keep in mind that students will not often “volunteer” to be on the team – especially those new to the program. Most middle school students need to be told that they have talent. They need to be encouraged to participate. Therefore we urge you to set aside a class period in which all students – or as many as possible – in seventh and eighth grade are given a practice prompt to write on within a 40-minute period. (Additional prompts are available in each volume of the Book of Winners). You and other teachers on your staff (even the Principal can help) can then, by reading the results, identify those writers whose responses show the greatest promise.

Most schools find that rather than “drafting” a team immediately, it is wiser to identify as many prospective team writers as possible – even if this means working with an A, B, and C team at the outset. You will be surprised at the growth and improvement demonstrated in after-school writing sessions. The team that eventually enters the tournament need not be selected until there has been a number of these practice meets. Many coaches prefer to work with 24 to 36 students initially and do not designate those who make the cut and earn a place on the team until December 1, the deadline for submitting the names of team members to Power of the Pen. Even when this is done, we recommend that students not be told who actually made the team until two weeks before the tournament. We also recommend that you send a letter home requiring a commitment from parents. This will discourage frustrating drops that can occur when parents are not fully informed about their children’s activities and commitments. Most schools charge parents for the drop fees which occasionally occur. Replacement changes can be made without penalty right up to – and including – the day of the tournament itself.

Schools which have had the most success in developing writing teams have told us what works and what doesn’t. We share their suggestions with you.

» DON’T put a poster up on the bulletin board asking students to sign up for a writing team. They won’t.

» DON’T ask an entire English class, “Who wants to be on a writing team?” unless somebody raises his hand; usually nobody does.

» DON’T assume that students with high grades are necessarily those with the strongest creative talents. It will surprise you to find that students who are not in the accelerated classes are sometimes truly gifted writers who are only waiting for the right kind of challenge.

» DON’T regard Power of the Pen as a “contest” or as an activity solely for the benefit of twelve members of a Writing Team. It is a program designed to benefit an entire Middle School student population when implemented in the right way. In fact, we encourage teachers to use the materials we provide as teaching devices in their classrooms.

» DON’T assume that students who are chosen for the team will stay with it until competition time comes along. Drops are not surprising at this age level. That’s why we encourage coaches to identify more than six writers for each grade level team. Writers should earn the right (just as in sports) to be an official team-member representing their school at an interscholastic event.

» DO make a commitment to be a writing team coach and let your own enthusiasm for this new activity become contagious.
• DO accept the fact that you may start out with a small group of writers, but that core will slowly build into a larger and permanent academic activity.

• DO try to get the Principal and other staff members to support you and to help in the actual identification of excellent young writers.

• DO build self-confidence in the writers you have identified by letting them know you think they can do this.

• DO write letters to the parents of potential team members telling them you think their child has talent and should be included in Power of the Pen practice sessions.

• DO recruit parent volunteers to assist you at practice. (You can teach them to be judges. Keep in mind that to judge at tournaments they must be trained in holistic evaluation and have a college degree.)

• DO invite students you have identified (and perhaps their parents too) to a meeting where – apart from a larger class environment – you can tell them about the program and what challenges lie ahead. Invite them to join you in establishing a new kind of academic team that will interact with other good writers in Ohio. In short, challenge them to meet the people with whom they will ultimately compete in life itself. And emphasize, as well, that this interaction will present a chance to develop friendships beyond the limits of their own school.

If you are lucky enough to have a large body of interested writers at the outset, why not hold a mini-tournament of your own to determine the contestants who will represent their school? And finally, once you have identified your potential team members, send a notice home requiring a “contract of commitment” (see a sample contract in Forms VI). At this age, good students usually want to try their hands at everything in sight. Your job is to help them make choices and to realize that honoring commitments is as important as the grades they get on their report cards.
Preparing Your Writers for Competition

Once you have identified your potentially promising young writers, it is up to you to establish weekly or bi-weekly sessions with them in which the practice prompts are used as a basis for (a) writing and (b) discussion and improvement. Some schools ask parents of their writers to assist as monitors during practice writing sessions so that teachers can be free to grade papers or perform other tasks. In some schools where it is difficult for students to remain after school, writing can be done in monitored study-hall sessions or at home under parental supervision. What is important is that all practice writing is timed so that students know what to expect at the tournament.

No topic should be given to student writers in advance since they will not know the prompt at a tournament until just before the writing round begins. Learning to write with no advance knowledge of the topic is an important part of the preparation.

Most coaches have two sessions a week. One is a timed 40-minute session for writing. The second is a discussion session in which students share what they have written and evaluate it themselves in peer-group conferencing sessions.

A model of a winning composition should be shared with students (by copies or on a SmartBoard) only after they have produced a forty-minute piece of writing themselves on the same topic. Learning will take place (and improvement with it) only when students can compare their writing with writing on the same topic that has won large audience appeal. The big questions are: Why did judges like this piece of work? Why does it have audience appeal? The answer to these questions will help students discover the important elements of good writing (with your guidance, of course).

It is not advisable to give the Book of Winners, which contains prompts and models, to your students at the outset. This book is a teaching tool for instructors. To allow students to use the book without supervision can inadvertently encourage plagiarism. We strongly advise coaches to use the models of excellence in the Book of Winners for planned learning experiences. Each model can be used to teach important elements such as: dialogue, characterization, description, detail, paragraph development, etc.
Structuring Your Practice Sessions with the Writing Team

As a writing coach, how you choose to prepare your students is ultimately up to you. You might begin, however, by asking yourself what kind of preparation will serve their needs best. Simulating the tournament experience as often as possible will allow them to feel comfortable and know what to expect. At a tournament, they will be expected to:

1. Write in three different 40-minute rounds against five other opponents from different schools. At the end of forty minutes, their papers will be collected and evaluated by a teacher-judge from another school. They will be graded according to (a) Rank and (b) Quality Points. The highest score they can receive in each round is a “1” in Rank and a “100” in Quality Points.

2. Write on a topic not known in advance. Tournament prompts are written specifically to evoke good responses in narrative, descriptive, and persuasive types of writing. Style is open-ended, so that some prompts may evoke either a humorous or a dramatic response. What is most important is that a writer addresses the topic and remains focused on its development.

3. Write in a manner that is legible to the reader and is basically coherent. If a writer’s handwriting is hard to read, his idea may be superb but weakened by its illegibility. Scratch-outs and minor lapses in mechanics are to be expected, but sloppiness and gross errors will only detract from the total effect of the work and diminish the success of the writing. Students with poor handwriting might be asked to consider printing as a way to improve legibility.

4. Students in competition write with pens (medium, and preferably black ball-point) on two-part carbon-less forms that allow us to “send home” a copy of all writing done at the tournament and still keep a copy of all written work for our files. This means that students should have some practice using the two-part writing form and pressing down with their ball-point.

In practice sessions, coaches should try to prepare students to:

» Think and write under the constraints of time.

» Arrive at interesting approaches to topics.

» Use dictionaries or a thesaurus only when time permits to double check spelling and improve vocabulary.

» Discover what ingredients of writing appeal to readers and how they can improve their own efforts. Mini-exercise sessions, for instance, in using concrete imagery, using dialogue effectively, and working on effective beginnings and endings is time well spent.

» Be aware that they are writing for an audience by creating a real and varied audience for them. To do this, make copies of the official Power of the Pen ballot, randomly arrange student work in sets of six, and ask other staff members, and even professionals in the community, to evaluate their work. This evaluation process will give each writer input from a broader range of readers. It will also allow you, as the program supervisor, to remain more objective in the selection of a team.
The Role of a Writing Coach

Nobody can better define what it’s like to be a writing coach than a teacher who undertakes this new kind of challenge. Frequently we receive letters from teachers describing how they implement Power of the Pen as an enrichment activity and also how they use it as a writing program to facilitate student writing in their individual classrooms. In summary, here is what a writing coach must do:

1. Identify excellent young writers within the school population and direct their talents toward this new interscholastic challenge. It is the enthusiasm of the coach that will ultimately determine the size and spirit of the team.

2. Set up practice sessions that prepare individual contestants or writing teams for interscholastic competition.

3. Fund-raise if necessary for entry fees and/or writing team T-shirts (Many schools have these custom-designed.) Schools that wish to use our logo on shirts of their own design must pay a $25 use fee. See the “Logo Use” form in the Forms Section at the end of the Manual.

4. Review the guidelines for holistic evaluation carefully so that you – as a teacher-judge – will be prepared for competition yourself.

5. Return all forms required promptly so that plans for the tournament can be executed smoothly. (This is especially important for the “Permission to Publish” forms.)

6. Turn in purchase orders, if your school requires them, to your school treasurer in order to expedite the payment of fees. Remember that a purchase order is not payment. Please forward all Power of the Pen invoices to the school treasurer so that payment may be sent to Power of the Pen.

7. Involve parents as volunteer supporters of this new activity. Parents are always needed to assist in many capacities at the interscholastic events, and each school is required to bring along at least one parent volunteer to the initial District as well as the Regional tournament.

8. Mark your calendar well in advance so that you are prepared to accompany your writing team to the interscholastic events. Enlist the aid of other qualified teachers to act as judges if needed.

9. Promote your school’s participation and success by getting press releases out to local newspapers.

10. If you are dedicated beyond these duties, get involved as a volunteer. This Ohio-based program needs educational pioneers to steer it toward national growth. Just let your Regional Coordinator know that you are willing to help and to discuss areas of involvement best suited to your interests.

11. Adhere to the “Checklist for the Writing Team Coach.” It contains the deadlines you have to meet.
Educational Benefits of Power of the Pen

1. It encourages schools to identify, challenge and reward excellent young writers.

2. It brings together students from different schools who share a common interest in writing. With this newly achieved group identity, they constitute a “visible majority.” This lends new-found prestige to the skill of written expression.

3. Interscholastic competition inspires schools to take greater pride in their young writers and to develop more effective in-school programs to foster excellence in written expression.

4. The community becomes more aware of the importance of writing through public events. Writing becomes a less private affair.

5. It creates awareness at a young age of the importance of writing as a competitive skill in the job market.

6. It provides the opportunity and experience to write under pressure (three rounds of impromptu writing), preparing students for the demands imposed by exams and the pressured tempo of a high-tech society’s communications.

7. It allows young writers to develop pride, confidence, and self-esteem and to enjoy greater respect from their peers.

8. It awakens and strengthens the creative voices of young writers.

9. Pre-tournament topics and practice techniques, as well as copies of written work and evaluations from teacher-judges, provide schools with a practicum for teaching improvement skills.

10. Teachers benefit from the experience by learning how to evaluate work holistically--by learning how to identify beyond the realm of mechanics the elements of good writing.

11. Teachers are able to measure the competency of their own writers against writing done in other schools. Through the identification of certain middle schools as strongholds of writing excellence, in-service programs are developed that offer opportunities for sharing successful techniques and methodology in the teaching of writing skills.

12. Writing competency is State-mandated. The program assists schools in upgrading student skills through practice and interscholastic experiences which are not only beneficial but highly enjoyable for the participants.
“Coach Wilson.” Gosh, who could have predicted twenty-three years ago that I’d be signing my name that way? Aren’t I the one who stood in line for almost two hours to change my physical education requirement from team sports to folk and national dance?

“Coach Wilson.” It has kind of a nice sound; doesn’t it? Did I ever dream while studying Restoration Literature and Psycholinguistics that somewhere in my professional career I’d become involved in team endeavors? Nah. Not me.

Basketball? Football? Soccer? It’s apparent that I have the skills for none of these so just what is it that I coach? Writing, of course. A full season of interscholastic training and competition, fall to spring, culminating in a State writing tournament has me appreciate just what it takes to earn the title, “Coach.” Team selection, training sessions, bus permits, fund-raisers – I’ve learned how to do all these things in the past two years all because of a special program called Power of the Pen.

Power of the Pen is a series of interscholastic writing tournaments (presently designed for grades 7 and 8) which encourages schools to identify creative talent, challenge bright young minds to think and write under pressure, and reward the best writers at District, Regional and State levels of interscholastic competition. Founded in 1986 by Lorraine Merrill, an English teacher at Nordonia Middle School, the program has become a statewide model for national competition. It allows young writers to meet, compete, and receive recognition for excellence in impromptu writing.

Many other types of essay contests exist, but all invariably measure and reward edited and revised samples of work produced under home or school supervision. No program comparable to Power of the Pen exists, however, that brings together schools, teachers, and writers in interscholastic competition to measure more accurately the skills of creative thought and expressiveness. Writing under the constraints of time and in response to topics not known in advance provides this measurement.

In actual competition, at Middle School-hosted Districts, or college/university-hosted Regionals, students write three impromptu rounds each forty minutes long. The prompts are kept secret until time for the actual round. Writers must respond, revise, and edit their work in the forty minute sessions. Their compositions are judged, and ranked against other writers in their round, assigned quality points, and given overall ratings in the tournament. Based on quality points and overall merit, students receive certificates indicating Superior, Honors, or Merit awards for their efforts. Teams and individuals compete for trophies and the [eventual] honor of being invited to compete at the State tournament. (The top twenty per cent at Regionals are given State invitations.)

At West Carrollton, the response to this program has been terrific. For the past several years, the best and most interested writers have engaged in a series of after school “write-offs” to determine team members. That has meant each year that approximately sixty students compete in the junior high write-offs. No interested students are excluded from trying out, but invitations are issued to those who have been identified as excellent writers by their English teachers. Spring writing sample scores help in identifying potential eighth grade team members. By November, the team of ten each from seventh and eighth grade has been selected and then narrowed to six from each grade who actually compete at the tournament. (We still train with all members.)

The writing team meets to write, revise, and edit each week after school. Meetings last longer than forty minutes because students are eager to share their writings with each other for approval and critique.

Audience. Purpose. Voice. Vocabulary. These are the terms that have become everyday language for members of the junior high writing team. As a “coach,” I’ve experienced quite a bit of personal satisfaction in helping these young writers develop their writing potential.

*Now retired, Alvine Wilson’s role as Writing Team Coach is now in the hands of other teachers at West Carrollton.*
How I Use Power of the Pen to Facilitate Writing

by Charles Debelak

Power of the Pen is not merely a competition, but rather a comprehensive writing approach that builds writing skills into children while they prepare for the competition. Power of the Pen does more for teaching writing than any other program I’ve observed in my 25 years in the field of education.

Other competitions certainly have their place, but most fail to affect the vast majority of student writers in elementary and junior high schools. In the past, I entered my students’ work in many writing competitions. Gradually, I questioned the value. First, a child’s work has often gone through numerous revisions under the eye of parents and teachers. Unfortunately, participation by adults is seldom sterile, so it is questionable how much of the final product is solely the child’s. Secondly, the larger competitions tend to reward the truly gifted writer. The vast majority of students have little opportunity to win any recognition simply because they are outclassed by those of exceptional ability.

Power of the Pen, however, is quite different. As a competition it first provides an extrinsic goal for the children. Then it puts the writing process, from creative thought to a final, developed product, into the hands of each child regularly and consistently. At least this is the way I have used the program in my own classroom. My children, through the Power of the Pen program, are becoming writers, and I am absolutely thrilled. They not only can write, they enjoy writing. And as a teacher, I cannot tell you what gratification it is to send my children off to high school knowing each of them is able to compose a coherent essay or story.

...I want you to know how I have used the program and why I believe Power of the Pen can be a vital part of every writing program.

First of all, using the prompts, I have my fifth through eighth graders write at least one essay per week. In the lower grades I allow more time, but the seventh and eighth graders work within the forty minute confine. This means that each child is writing a complete composition each week, ranging from 150-500 words. That is practice. And interestingly enough, the children are not bored with all this writing, but in fact they beam with enthusiasm on “POP Day.” Seldom does a week go by when the children don’t pester me asking, “Mr. Debelak, when is Power of the Pen Day?” I love to see their enthusiasm. But more importantly to me, by the very fact that they write so often, their writing has improved immensely. Even if I did nothing other than have them write each week, their growth as writers would be marked.

Secondly, because writing for Power of the Pen is assessed according to six general elements, the children must learn to continually incorporate style, development, grammar, spelling, etc. into each piece they write. On my part, I use the essays written in the previous week to hone my skill lessons. When sentence structure is monotonous, we spend time learning to vary sentence length. If the development of creative ideas wanes, I will teach them strategies to expand their theme, or techniques to conclude a good essay poignantly. Grammar lessons are easily derived from the multitude of mistakes made the week before. And when vocabulary grows trite, we review the use of the Thesaurus and talk about how to choose precise nouns and verbs. Teaching skills in this manner is so valuable because the individual skills and the completed essay are handled at the same time. They work together, and the children easily draw the connections whereby their next paper frequently reflects the skills we just covered. Surely you can appreciate my excitement. Parallel structure and all the other literary terms and techniques which so often gather dust in children’s minds actually mean something to these students because they are working with them all the time.

Furthermore, because my students are writing weekly, I am continually training their ability to think. First, they are learning to be creative. Every essay begins with 5-10 minutes of brainstorming (for which we do many training exercises). I love watching their faces as they ponder which direction they
will let their ideas sail. Because I read most of their essays during the following week, each child tries his/her best to write a response that will be striking to the others. They love to show off their creative skill and draw admiration from their readers. Second, they are learning to be analytical. Many of the prompts encourage careful thought. Therefore, the students must organize their reasoning before laying out a persuasive or argumentative essay. So they are not just writing a story. They are creating as well. They are analyzing. In essence, they are involved with the fundamental purpose of writing.

Also, because Power of the Pen prompts address several areas of writing, my children become experienced at writing essays that are narrative, descriptive, persuasive, humorous, and self-reflective. Their ability to approach any topic is automatically enhanced as week after week they approach a new prompt which leads them on exciting paths of self-expression. Since they are writing varied essays each week, many of them have the opportunity to develop their style. It is so gratifying to have children recognize they have particular talents in creating unique plots, or in developing humorous stories, or in presenting logical arguments, or in expressing their deepest feelings. Personal style emerges from the depths of their young hearts.

 Needless to say... I am excited about Power of the Pen. My only regret is that I can only enter one team on the seventh and eighth grade level because using this program within my classroom has turned even the mediocre student into a formidable writer. I do my best to placate those who do not make the team. Before the District and Regional competitions, I have everyone stay at my house the night before for a Power of the Pen party. Then we go to the competition together. Those who are not on the team come along as “runners.” They feel too much a part of the writing team not to be included.

May I conclude by thanking you again for helping fulfill a writing teacher’s long time aspiration. Through the help of Power of the Pen, [Birchwood is] now producing classrooms of competent, inspiring writers... And you have the right to share in my pride and gratification. Power of the Pen has hit the mark.

Sincerely,

Charles W. Debelak  
Principal and English Teacher  
The Birchwood School  
Cleveland, Ohio

Note: Birchwood, one of Power of the Pen’s veteran schools, is one of the highest ranking schools in Ohio.
Parents Can Also Coach a Team
by Bob Sikon

I first became involved with Power of the Pen in 2005 as a parent/coach for the St. Angela Merici 7th grade team. Since they were 7th graders, 2005 was their first experience with the program.

It quickly became evident to me that my students loved to write. To them, writing was fun. It was an activity that they looked forward to and enjoyed, so I made it my primary goal to keep our sessions as enjoyable as possible.

Equal time was allotted to writing and reading. Not only did the team love to write, but they also liked to read their work aloud to their teammates.

Prompts were assigned for writing in class and at home. In class, we held to a 40-minute time limit. This was, of course, to prepare them for competition. I was less concerned with how long they took to write an essay at home, however. For home practice, I was more concerned with giving them the additional opportunity to write and exercise their imaginations.

I tried to make things a bit more interesting throughout the year by adding a couple of special activities and challenges.

For instance, we practiced character development. On several occasions, we created new characters by writing fictional “biographies.”

I also discovered that we weren’t writing with enough dialogue. To practice, as a team, we created two characters. I broke the team into pairs and asked them to write a prompt, as a two person team, using mostly dialogue to tell their story. Each writer took on the “role” of one of the characters that we had created.

Special “challenges” were issued. I compiled a list of “mystery words.” These were simple, everyday words that I assigned to the students. Each student had a different word. The task was to write a prompt while hiding the “mystery word” in the story. After the writing was complete, each student read their story to the team. The writer’s goal was to hide the word so well that their teammates couldn’t guess the “mystery word.” Of course, the team’s goal was to guess the word. Several students accepted the challenge of hiding two and even three words in their essays!

Similarly, I asked the team to give me twelve words. I compiled those words into a list and assigned them with a prompt. It was their job to use all twelve of these unrelated words in their essay. It was a challenging task but one that they accepted with pleasure.

The whole Power of the Pen experience has been rewarding for both me and my students. In fact, we were fortunate enough to win First Place at our District tournament as well as have one of our writers win 10th place in the 2005 State tournament.

The enjoyment didn’t stop with our success at State. Even after the school year ended, we created a Summer Writing Club that was attended not only by veteran Power of the Pen writers but by other interested students as well. The success of this endeavor really paid off. This year over 40 students (!) have tried out for the Writing Team. Together, throughout the Power of the Pen season, we all learned and grew as writers.

Bob Sikon is a Parent Coach at St Angela Merici School in Fairview Park.
Using the Prompts for Practice

Power of the Pen prompts are designed to evoke a creative response from the writer. By way of contrast, expository writing is explanatory in nature and requires a body of factual knowledge which the writer communicates to the reader. Whereas expository writing requires the writer to use a voice more like that of a teacher, creative writing encourages the early development of individual style: the writer’s voice reflects the personality of the writer or main character. Power of the Pen prompts search the student’s personal experience and allow him or her to respond narratively, descriptively, or persuasively. The prompts also allow (generally) humorous or dramatic treatment – which is not normally the case with expository writing.

Power of the Pen’s prompts are also intended to produce an immediate response. Contestants are expected to address the prompt and move from rough draft to a finished copy within a 40-minute time frame. Each District and Regional event is structured across three such rounds of writing. At the State Tournament, the time is reduced to 35 minutes, and finalists write one additional round.

Coaches can best prepare contestants for competition by assigning as many practice prompts as possible before a tournament takes place. They may design their own prompts – which often proves to be a stimulating challenge for Writing Team Coaches – or they may use Power of the Pen’s practice prompts as found in each year’s Book of Winners. This is an annual publication that contains both (a) the prompts which actually appeared at all tournaments within that program year, and (b) the best student writing, as determined by the tournament judges, that these prompts evoked. These results, many teachers find, serve as models of excellence that truly inspire their students (“Why didn’t I think of that?” “I could do better than that!”). They are fast becoming indispensable teaching aids in Ohio’s Middle School language arts classrooms.

Additional prompts for practice appear in past copies of The Book of Winners and in six volumes of Prompts that Put Power in the Pen. These publications are available at powerofthepen.org/Publications.
Holistic Evaluation

Most research and study points to one glaring conclusion: the tedious process of correcting papers with red ink does little to improve the quality of written expression. English teachers who have been using this standard approach to grading compositions for years are often uncomfortable with this conclusion because it immediately raises the question – *How then do we teach Johnny to write?*

Recent studies also reveal that competency in written expression is the subtle synthesis of a number of factors. Among them are:

1. the reading background of the writer (a good reader is usually a good writer);
2. the environment of the writer (a child who grows up with role models who value reading, writing, and communication is often a good writer); and
3. experience itself (the child who has a variety of experiences to talk about will have more to say and the motivation to say it).

Practice, too – that is, the frequency of the writing experience seems to make a difference. Motivating writers with interesting, challenging assignments also seems to be a factor in stimulating the expression of equally interesting thoughts.

At any rate, amid all of this study, holistic grading is an approach that forces the reader’s attention away from the mere mechanics of a paper and allows the reader to focus on the whole result, according to Charles Cooper in *Evaluating Writing* (NCTE, 1977),

*Holistic simply means that a paper, read quickly, can be ranked according to the general (or whole) impressions that it gives a reader, since obviously many aspects of writing, including vocabulary, sentence structure, surface features, ideas, etc. contribute to its total impression.*

Power of the Pen encourages teachers who act as judges at its interscholastic tournaments to use the “general impressions” approach in evaluating the merit of student work. No analytical point system is used because the process of analyzing a piece of writing distracts a reader from simply enjoying it. Common sense tells us that we do not read a novel or a short story with a score sheet in hand. Even the success of TV fare is determined by its total viewer-appeal. If a piece of writing succeeds, it is because all of the elements which compose it fit together in such a way that it makes us laugh... or cry... or because it inspires us. Sometimes it provides us with a vivid avenue of escape from reality, or conversely it plummets us into a world of stark reality. But whatever it does is done effectively, and behind what it does is a Voice and a Purpose.

We ask that you study in advance the criteria listed on the ballot and also study in advance the very simple guide to holistic evaluation included in this manual. Then come to the tournament trusting to your good judgment as an intelligent and sensitive reader, ready to read student work and appreciate the voices of young writers.

A short orientation session is held at each tournament prior to the rounds of writing to give additional support and instructions to judges. If, after reading this material and studying the sample ballot, you feel insecure about your role as a judge, contact your Regional coordinator. If enough teachers express the need for pre-tournament orientation, such a session will be arranged at workshop sites throughout Ohio.
Holistic Evaluation or General Impression Scoring

It is difficult – if not impossible – to write the perfect prescription for “good writing.” But there is fairly universal agreement among teachers and students of writing that one can point to certain characteristics which are generally found in successful writing and which are generally lacking in writing that is not successful.

This sample guide is not designed for determining the rank of writers in a round. Rather, like many holistic charts, it suggests what some of the most important elements of good writing might be and demonstrates how their absence affects a decline in quality.

Strong, Effective Writing That Sustains a Reader’s Interest

Ideas and/or events are original, creative, imaginative, and interesting. Ideas and/or events are well organized, expressed with clarity. The piece is well developed with vivid, descriptive detail. Sustained level of excellence in expression. Writer has a strong sense of purpose and audience - an individual style. Infrequent or no mistakes in mechanics.

Writing Communicates Content Without Sustaining Reader’s Interest


Writing Is Clear in the Main but Lacks Organization and Detail

Maintains general idea and/or logical story events, but the writing is weakly organized. Little variation of sentence beginnings. Few details, little descriptions. Punctuation marks and capitalization generally used correctly.

Writing Lacks Clarity and Imagination

Understandable but unimaginative language. Some concrete details. Paragraphs not clearly developed. Some ideas and/or events are missing or out of order. Complete sentences with little variation. Some errors in mechanics.

Writing Is Difficult to Follow

Unclear and/or unimaginative writing. Lack of clarity in ideas and/or events. Poor organization, ideas and/or events not developed. Many fragments and/or run-on sentences. Errors in word usage distracting. Frequent errors in mechanics and syntax.

Writing Lacks Intelligibility

Unclear, dull, or vague language. Many irrelevant sentences, details. Topic unidentifiable because of poor development and missing detail. Difficult to read because of excessive errors in mechanics. Paragraphs not indented. Writing unintelligible.

Developed by Karen Eichler, Independence Middle School
Holistic Evaluation Guide

This is a subjectively prioritized list. Categories should be weighted according to their position from top to bottom when judges make their evaluations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>SUPERIOR 100-94</th>
<th>HONORS 93-82</th>
<th>MERIT 81-75</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CREATIVITY</td>
<td>interpretation is unique and striking</td>
<td>complete but predictable prompt development</td>
<td>prompt is misunderstood or developed in a vague manner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VOICE/UNITY</td>
<td>theme and purpose clear; writer’s style is clearly developed</td>
<td>unfocused theme; many parts strong but there is some lack of unity</td>
<td>no clear purpose or style; theme lacks appropriate development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STRUCTURE/IDEAS</td>
<td>writing shows sustained development of idea with no loose ends; strong beginning, middle, and end</td>
<td>ideas are strong but not fully developed or tightly woven</td>
<td>writing is competent, but unimaginative and ideas are underdeveloped</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FIGURATIVE/DESCRIPTIVE LANGUAGE</td>
<td>writing contains fresh and fitting use of descriptive/figurative language</td>
<td>description and/or figurative language is vague or over-used</td>
<td>writing is unimaginative or trite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PARAGRAPH/Sentence Structure</td>
<td>paragraphs are well-developed and transitions are apparent; variety of sentence structure appropriate to the purpose and tone of the writing</td>
<td>some attempt at paragraph unity and some variety in sentence structure</td>
<td>work has awkward or repetitious sentences and paragraphs seem unstructured</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MECHANICS/SPELLING</td>
<td>mechanics are generally good and don’t interfere with the clarity</td>
<td>there are enough mechanical and/or spelling errors to marginally affect clarity and distract from the unity of the writing</td>
<td>the mechanics and/or spelling errors interfere with the flow of the writing and affect the reader’s understanding of the writing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: This guide was drafted in May of 1991 by a special sub-committee of the Power of the Pen State Committee, chaired by Dan Kovatch and Kathy Troike of Briar Middle School. Its purpose is to assist judges in assigning Quality Points with greater accuracy.
A Power of the Pen Vocabulary List

Any program as highly developed and complex as Power of the Pen inevitably produces a vocabulary of its own. The following is a “short list” of Power of the Pen’s key terms – accompanied by thumb-nail definitions. Almost all touch in one way or another upon central concepts or issues, and form the basis of detailed discussion throughout various sections of the Coaches’ Manual.

» **Best of Round**: an award given in each round at a District or Regional tournament for the best response to a prompt, as determined by a panel of independent readers, among all responses receiving a Rank Point designation of 1. (Note: there are three prompts – one for each round, and therefore three Best of Rounds – for each grade at District and Regional Tournaments.)

» **Best of the Best**: awards given for the best response to a given prompt from among all recipients of the relevant Best of Round awards. Best of the Best awards are made for District, Regional and State competitions – as determined by a panel of independent Judges.

» **Coach**: the person who prepares a school team for tournament competition. Generally (but not always) each Coach also serves as a Judge at the tournament. Generally (but not always) the Coach is a school’s language arts or English teacher. Compare “Judge.”

» **Computer Operator; Computer Scorer**: a person, generally in the Tab Room, who enters raw score data from the Judges’ ballots into a Power of the Pen computer scoring program and processes the results. The Computer Operator works in collaboration with with the Tab Room Supervisor.

» **Director’s Choice**: an award given at the executive director’s discretion for exemplary writing in response to a prompt in a given round at the District, Regional, and State tournaments. This honor provides an opportunity for more than one excellent piece to be recognized in a round.

» **District Coordinator**: the individual charged with all local, on-site responsibilities preparing for and administering a District tournament. Generally, but not always, the District Coordinator is the Host School Coordinator.

» **District Tournament**: the initial tournament from which qualifiers are drawn for a Regional Tournament. Generally, two District Tournaments feed into each Regional.

» **Drop**: the non-appearance of a registered contestant, Judge, or school at a tournament. A “Same Day Drop” or “Late Drop” is a non-appearance without appropriate prior notification and results in the assessment of a penalty fee.

» **Grid; Gridding**: the grouping of 6 (or 5) contestants and the appropriate number of judges (1, 2 or 3) into sections for each round of competition at a tournament according to rigid formulae. Gridding is a computerized procedure that is finalized at the tournament after registration drops and adds are entered into the scoring program.

» **Hire**: See POP-supplied Judge.

» **Holistic; holistic grading**: a comprehensive assessment founded in the professionally developed critical skills and total life experience of the evaluator. Generally, holistic evaluators avoid the use of a rubric except as an initial aid.

» **Host School Coordinator**: the individual from the school hosting a tournament charged with all local on-site responsibilities preparing for and administering the event.
» **Initial Fee**: the fee which a school pays upon entry into the program. This covers the cost of a one-year membership in the Ohio Interscholastic Writing League, and the entry fees for both a District and Regional tournament, provided contestants qualify for Regional. Each team is guaranteed at least one qualifier for each grade level in which a full team of six writers competes at the District tournament.

» **Initial Tournament**: the first tournament in which a school participates in a given tournament season. The Initial Tournament is a *District* Tournament.

» **Judge**: the person who evaluates student work at a tournament. Generally, but not always, a Judge is a Coach. Judge qualification is the subject of various discussions throughout the *Manual*. Compare “Coach.”

» **Ohio Interscholastic Writing League (OIWL)**: (1) an alternate charter name under which Power of the Pen was incorporated in 1989; (2) the name under which Power of the Pen copyrights some (but not all) of its publications; (3) the name of the Ohio membership entity Power of the Pen assigns to schools enrolling in its Ohio-based programs.

» **Models of Excellence**: impromptu student responses to prompts, which can be relied upon as being authentic by virtue of the tournament conditions under which they are produced, which (1) display exceptional merit; and (2) can act as learning exemplars for other student writers.

» **Name Tag**: a label with the name of the tournament and a unique code number presented to each Contestant and Judge at a tournament, to be worn like a name tag. The purpose of the tag is not to make known the person’s identity to others; it is to provide the individual with a constant and highly visible reminder of his own code number.

» **Penalty Fees**: Assessments made when drops occur less than 96 hours before the tournament. This includes drops on the day of the tournament. Penalty fees have been authorized by the State Committee to discourage the incidence of problems that inconvenience, delay, or otherwise threaten the success of a tightly scheduled interscholastic event. See the section on Fees for specific details.

» **Permission to Publish Form**: a routine parental release form enabling Power of the Pen to publish, and otherwise use, a student contestant’s work and any tournament photograph in which their minor child may appear without additional authorization. Please note that if a parent/guardian will not sign the form, the student may not write as a contestant. Also, if the parent/guardian does not allow the student to be photographed, the student must leave the stage before photographs are taken if he or she wins an award. Note also that foster children are not allowed to have their photographs published; the coach must draw the guardian’s attention to this aspect of the permission to publish form so that they may make a note to Power of the Pen not to photograph the child.

» **POP-supplied Judge**: a limited option whereby a school may authorize Power of the Pen to enlist an independent Judge (as needed) to meet part of a school’s judging commitment. This option is only available for Regional and State tournaments, and under very strict conditions (see pages 31-32 of this manual.) This option, if exercised, requires payment of an additional fee, regardless of whether Power of the Pen must, in fact, hire additional judges to meet the gridding requirements of the tournament. Also referred to as “Judge Hire,” “Hire,” or “Supplementary Judge.”
» **Primary Contact**: the one person in a participating school to whom Power of the Pen addresses all written communications concerning non-billing matters. The primary contact person is the name and email address used to register the team.

» **Prompt**: a brief statement, generally no more than two or three sentences long, designed to elicit a student’s creative response. Power of the Pen’s prompts are intended to produce narrative, descriptive, and persuasive writing – as opposed to expository.

» **Quality Points**: one of the two scores given to each piece of student work by Judges at a Tournament. Quality Points designate the Judge’s evaluation of the *overall achievement level* of the contestant’s writing. Quality Points correspond roughly with conventional classroom percentage grading; they fall within the range of 75-100. Compare **Rank Points**.

- **Rank Points**: one of the two scores given to each piece of student work by Judges at the Tournaments. Rank Points designate the *comparative position* of a given contestant’s paper within the 6 (or 5) contestants writing in each Round. 1 is high; 6 is low. Compare **Quality Points**.

» **Regional Coordinator**: the individual charged with all local, on-site responsibilities preparing for and administering a Regional tournament.

» **Regional Director**: POP staff member overseeing the coordination and execution of the District and Regional tournaments in one of Ohio’s regions.

» **Regional Tournament**: a tournament from which qualifiers are drawn directly for the State Tournament.

» **Runner**: a student volunteer at a tournament who provides the physical link between the Judge(s) in a room and the Tab Room; the person who brings contestants’ papers and Judges’ ballots to the Tab Room and carries messages, or supplies, from the Tab Room to the Judges.

» **Runner & Student Volunteer Photo Release Form**: A routine parental release form enabling Power of the Pen to publish photos of runners and student volunteers.

» **State Committee; Ohio State Committee**: the body of Ohio educators that meets biannually to prepare for the State tournament, and to enact rules, procedures, and principles of conduct governing Power of the Pen’s activities in the State of Ohio.

» **Sweepstakes**: the combination of 7th and 8th grade team scores at a tournament as a total School Team result. Sweepstakes trophies are given only at Regional and State Tournaments.

» **Tab Room**: the room, or area, which acts as the nerve center for the tournament; the place where scores are collected and tabulated, and take-home packets are assembled.

» **Tab Room Supervisor**: the person responsible for the on-site training of volunteer help for the Tab Room, and the administration of all activities in the Tab Room.

» **Take-home Packet**: the materials assembled in the Tab Room during the course of the tournament for the Coach to take home at the conclusion of the Awards presentation. These materials include all writing produced at the tournament by his/her student contestants and all of the tournament Judges’ evaluations of their work.
Policies on Plagiarism and Censorship

The act of plagiarism, including self-plagiarism, is in direct conflict with the essential goals of Power of the Pen. While instances of plagiarism have been rare in the program’s history, judges who suspect plagiarism should bring the writing to the attention of the Tab Room Supervisor. See the detailed policies on pp. 71-72 of this manual.

Judges should also keep in mind Power of the Pen’s Policy on Censorship, which appears on pp. 72-73 of this manual. Professional expertise, not personal bias, should guide each judge. The genre, subject, and even language of the piece should not be subject to the judge’s personal biases. Each piece should be judged on whether or not it thoughtfully and creatively addresses the prompt with quality writing.
Section II

Participating in the Tournament
Conflicting Dates, and Other Problems

While Power of the Pen does its best to see that tournament dates do not conflict with other major activities that are available to seventh and eighth grade students, it cannot avoid the occasional case when a tournament and another event happen to fall on the same date. We publish our calendar far enough in advance, however, so that both coaches and students have enough basic information for making choices which work best for them.

As adults, we constantly face conflicting commitments and priorities. We make what we hope are the best decisions – and then try to follow through on them. We should be encouraging our students to do likewise.

Still, some things can (and will) change at the last moment. That is why we push the deadlines for last-minute changes to the last possible moment (96 hours before a District tournament!) and at this level we also encourage the use of alternate writers to fill in for any possible last-minute no-shows.

No refunds of fees can be expected, however, when a student, or a judge, or a school determines in the last few days before the time of the event – when the gridding has been programmed, the computerized scoring templates customized to the event, and all of the other preparations are firmly in place – that there is no binding commitment to show up. Furthermore, a school that does not show up on the day of the event without ample advance notice incurs a severe penalty fee for jeopardizing the integrity of the painstakingly pre-programmed experience for the other participating schools, as well as running the risk of disqualification from participating in the program in following years.

Each Region is made up of designated suggested counties; schools in these counties are encouraged but not required to sign up for a District tournament in that Region. Coaches should note the dates of the District, Regional, and State tournaments before selecting their District event. **Schools attending a District event are required to attend the Regional associated with that same District.** Each tournament site has limited spaces. If the site closest to your school is filled, you may sign up for another District tournament, as long as spaces are available.
Dealing with Irresponsibility at the Middle School Level

It is frustrating for the Middle School teacher when a student at this adolescent age makes commitments and then, quite unexpectedly, breaks them and shows no sense of responsibility to his or her teammates. It is not unusual for the State Office to receive a call from a 7th or 8th grade coach who – almost on the verge of tears – tells of a student who has decided at the last minute to participate in a basketball game instead of going to the Regional competition, or a student who can’t make it because of a vacation planned with the family.

This kind of frustration can often be nipped in the bud by one or two simple expedients applied early in the game. First, require students who want to be on the Writing Team to sign a “Contract of Commitment” spelling out what is expected of them – as a condition of participating. Second, consider requiring a co-signature by the parent or guardian as well as the student’s. A sample Contract of Commitment appears in the Forms section of this Manual.
Number of Judges Required at Events

General: The number of Judges a school must supply for a tournament is not arbitrary. In order for a tournament to take place, there must be a predictable ratio of Judges to Contestants. The numerous discussions that appear throughout the Manual give clear indication of how essential this is. (See the various sections relating to Judges, fees, rules, gridding, etc.) When adhered to, the number requirements listed below allow the tournament to be gridded successfully and to provide, as well, sufficient volunteers to ensure that all the basic Tab Room operations will be covered.

District

Numbers required: one Judge per each grade level team, regardless of the number of contestants on the team(s). This is an absolute requirement. A school that cannot supply a qualified Judge for any team cannot enroll that team.

Please make every effort to provide the required number of qualified judges at District in order to be prepared for future tournaments. To be qualified to judge at Regional, the person must have either judged at District or attended an official Power of the Pen training in holistic evaluation.

Qualifications: At the District level, those who are best qualified to judge are the Teacher/Coaches at each grade level who have used Power of the Pen prompts and models in the classroom and who have guided their own contestants through practice sessions and preparation for competition. In those schools where one teacher acts as coach to both 7th and 8th grade teams, it is the responsibility of the school to enlist and train a second judge. That person may be an in-school member of the staff who teaches a content area other than language arts, or a parent or member of the outside community who holds a college degree. In both cases, the team coach must make certain that the Judge (1) has read the Power of the Pen Coaches’ Manual and is comfortable with program procedures and philosophy; (2) receives personal training from a Writing Team Coach or at a Power of the Pen training session; (3) reads and evaluates at least one set of 6 papers using holistic evaluation; and (4) is familiar with all salient features of the tournament format and scoring system.

Regional

Numbers required: Each school must supply, or arrange for: (a) 1 Judge for 1-3 student contestants per grade level team, or (b) 2 judges for 4-6 contestants per grade level team. Example: if a school has 5 Seventh graders and 2 Eighth graders going to Regional, it must supply, or otherwise arrange for, 3 Judges – 2 for 7th, and 1 for 8th.

When two judges are required at each (or both) grade level(s), a school has the privilege of exercising a “Supplementary (‘Hire’) Judge” option to help meet a part of its overall commitment. There is, however, an absolute requirement which it cannot use the option for: this is the one-Judge-per-grade-level-team threshold. The Supplementary (“Hire”) Judge option may be exercised for the second Judge only required of grade level teams numbering 4-6 contestants. (Example: in the preceding example – 5 Seventh graders, and 2 Eighth graders – the school could exercise the option of replacing the second judge required of the Seventh grade team with a “Supplementary Judge” – but no others.

The fee for the “Supplementary (‘Hire’) Judge” option is $50 per Judge – whether or not Power of the Pen must, in fact, hire additional people to meet the gridding requirements for the tournament.

The absolute requirement provides a reasonable expectation (but not a mathematical certainty) that there will be a sufficient number of school-supplied Judges to grid the event.
Qualifications: The qualifications for Regional Judges are more stringent. To be qualified at the Regional level, the Judge must either (1) have had prior experience in judging at a Power of the Pen event; or (2) have received formal training at a certified Power of the Pen training session. Such training sessions are held periodically at various sites throughout the State of Ohio.

State

Numbers required: The formula for State is the same as that for Regional: Each school must supply, or arrange for: (a) 1 Judge for 1-3 student contestants per grade level team, or (b) 2 judges for 4-6 contestants per grade level team. Example: if a school has 5 Seventh graders and 2 Eighth graders going to State, it must supply, or otherwise arrange for, 3 Judges – 2 for 7th, and 1 for 8th.

Each school has an absolute requirement to supply at least half of its total required number of Judges. In the preceding example, if a school has 7 contestants, and its total judge requirement is 3, it must in fact supply 2 (qualified) Judges. As is the case for Regionals, a “Supplementary (‘Hire’) Judge” option is available, once the minimum threshold is met, for those schools that need it. Note, however, that the Supplementary (“Hire”) Judge option can only be applied for the second required Judge at a given grade level.

“Waiver of Requirement:” The “at least half of its total required number of Judges” stipulation necessarily implies that any school attending State must supply at least one qualified judge.

We recognize that there are times when this last condition presents a real hardship. It may involve a Writing Team Coach with an enthusiastic State qualifier – especially a teacher from a small school, possibly facing a budget crisis, sending one qualifier, travelling some distance, facing the expense of an over-night. And the harassed Writing team Coach is probably caught up in a web of calendar conflicts at the end of the school year as well.

Under such circumstances where there is one writer and no coach, and upon proper request (in writing), the Executive Director may relax the “at least one qualified judge” requirement. If so, it is with the following four stipulations, to which no exceptions can be made.

(a) The Coach must arrange for – and supply to Power of the Pen, in writing – the name, address, telephone number, and relationship of a responsible (non-Judging) adult who will accompany the student(s) to and from the tournament site, and who will be available at all times during the course of the event in case of an emergency.

(b) The Writing Team Coach is responsible for providing the parent-chaperone in advance with (1) copies of all necessary information in the school’s possession concerning the State tournament; (2) basic orientation in the procedures followed at Registration and subsequently in the tournament itself.

(c) The Writing Team Coach and his/her school school must take care of the payment of all fees – both registration and conference – in advance.

(d) A school that is not sending a qualified Judge to State must pay a premium fee ($150) for the replacement Judge and instruct the parent chaperone to assist in the Tab Room as needed.

Schools which take this provision for granted and send a student to state on their own with a parent who has not been well-informed in advance about rules and fees may be fined for burdening Power of the Pen with responsibilities which belong properly to the school.

Under no circumstances will the Executive Director exempt a school from the minimum threshold requirement when 2 or more student contestants from the school are involved.

Qualifications: Only those persons who have had prior experience as a Power of the Pen Judge may judge at a State Tournament. A school which fails to observe this requirement may be disqualified.
Instructions for Tournament Judges

An orientation for judges is held at each tournament before the first round of writing begins. For the purpose of arriving at the identification of excellence in a uniform manner, a video is also available for viewing at the District level when time permits. It is suggested that judges follow these procedures:

1. Read through all of the papers in each round quickly but comprehensively.

2. Arrive at the best composition. Give it a rank of 1 (the highest score). Then assign it quality points according to its overall merit. Remember that the best paper in each round will not necessarily be in the 90s. The highest paper might possibly be an 85 or even an 80, depending on the overall quality of writing in the round.

3. This paper becomes the “measuring rod” or “post” against which all other papers are ranked and assigned quality points in descending order. Do not duplicate rank point or quality points awards.

4. The assignment of quality points is very important for two reasons.
   (1) They will indicate whether the round was a tough one or an average one and give the writer a better idea of what his/her holistic score actually means.
   (2) In the case of Districts and Regionals, they will be used to break ties. At State, they determine the winners.

5. Even though two papers may be very close in quality or rank, a decision must be made that gives one an edge over the other. The guidelines for evaluation provided in this Manual are not intended for specific point deduction. Use them to help you in identifying the strengths of the writer’s work.

6. Comments on the ballot should be helpful and encouraging. Try to remember that young writers need reassurance. Every writer in the tournament should feel valued and should leave wanting to write more often because the experience has been enjoyable and challenging. No improvement can take place unless the writer (through his/her own discovery) wants to improve.

Because judges seem to have the greatest difficulty in assigning Quality Points, four samples of student work will be found in the pages that follow preceded (below) by a discussion of the reasons why these scores were rightfully awarded.
Quality Point Ratings

Evaluators generally feel more comfortable when they are ranking six papers in a round than when they are assigning Quality Points. These are scores which fall into one of three performance ratings: Superior (100-94), Honors (93-82), and Merit (81-75). It is important for teachers and students to understand that these ranges are not identical to the percentages upon which report card grades are traditionally based.

Coaches should consider sharing the holistic evaluation guide on page 23 with students as they prepare for tournaments.

For our purposes, Judges can view these ranges broadly as an A, B, and C – with deviations (example: 93 or 92 would be high B pluses, 94, a low A minus).

After reading a large number of papers in a short period of time at a Power of the Pen tournament and evaluating them holistically, Judges quickly develop an automatic sense of where each paper rightfully belongs. Newcomers, however, may require some assurance that their grading is comfortably in accord with what others are doing. Accordingly, we are including in the Manual a set of sample 7th grade student papers drawn from an actual tournament.
Judges’ Comments on Ballots

In addition to determining the Rank and Quality Point awards for each of the six papers in the round, the Judge is asked to make a short comment about each paper. This third part in the evaluation process is particularly significant to the student writer: he is more than just a little anxious to see what the anonymous reader-audience-judge has to say about his work. If what he finds is harsh, or somehow inappropriate – and doesn’t offer something that is positive and reinforcing – it can very easily reduce him from the brink of high expectation to a state of despair.

Fortunately, this is something that does not occur too often. But there are times when it does. And when it does, an occasional disheartened teacher-coach may send the offending ballot back to the State Office with a note begging us to remind Judges of the need to write constructive comments.

What kinds of comments are “constructive?” What are “non-constructive?”

Before attempting to answer that question, let us first consider what, at their best, judges’ comments should accomplish:

• They should sustain or increase, but certainly not diminish, the confidence of the writer.

• They should acknowledge enthusiastically outstanding talent whenever it appears.

• They should offer helpful suggestions to writers whose work reflects the need for improvement.

The fact that a student is present at the event is testimony to (1) the student’s interest in writing, and/or (2) the teacher’s belief in the student’s ability. The mission of the evaluator, then, regardless of how the paper ranked in the round, or what its overall quality was, is to assist the writer in becoming a better writer – or to revel in the discovery of outstanding talent.

Comments, of course, can sometimes be misinterpreted by contestants. Some coaches are wise in withholding the ballots from their students until they have had a chance to read and understand them themselves. Then they are in a better position to guide their students toward a clearer understanding of the ballot: its scores and its comments.
Writing Poetry at a Tournament?

Questions are often raised at tournaments about the acceptability of poetry – whether it should be “allowed.” Here is the position taken by Power of the Pen.

POP is in strong disagreement with the suggestion that poetry is “not allowed.” To adhere to such a rule would be to deny the value of poetry and its use and especially to dictate the voice of the writer. We would feel uncomfortable if a student were penalized by such a ruling, for example, from employing poetic expression successfully in a passage of figurative language, or if he used it successfully to convey stream-of-consciousness thought, or if he incorporated it successfully in a longer prose piece.

It should be noted that POP does discourage student contestants from submitting poetry in response to tournament prompts. The reason is that part of the essence of poetry lies in its “compression.” (We distinguish here between poetry and verse). This “condensation-of-thought-and-words” normally requires a more leisurely pace than prose does for the student-writer to create successfully – and the Judge to evaluate responsibly.

*Student writers who ignore this recommendation generally place themselves at a severe competitive disadvantage. Even a mature, skilled poet would find writing impromptu, and writing within the time constraint of 40 minutes severely limiting.*

Second, the tournament experience requires that the Judges make rapid-fire holistic evaluations of a number of pieces of work. They cannot help but find it difficult to evaluate and compare the relative merits of compressed poetic thought against those of 5 other uncondensed prose pieces in the thirty minutes at their disposal.

While we discourage the use of poetry, we feel that we cannot, in clear conscience, disallow it. We cannot help thinking about an analogous situation in a parallel art form. A successful watercolor may very well enjoy the same high degree of artistic merit as an oil painting. But because these two works of art are expressed in different media, it would be difficult to judge the value of one against the other. Poetry and prose are different genres. While both are valuable, it is wiser not to have to judge the merits of one against the merits of the other. Teacher-coaches are therefore advised to make these difficulties known to their contestants. The final decision is theirs.

Because poetry more often than not plays a prominent role in the life of any successful writer, we offer a major Poetry Award each year at the State Tournament. Details about this are found in the *Manual* and in the Awards brochure.

– Lorraine B. Merrill, *Founder*, Power of the Pen, March 27, 1994

*Statement Adopted by the State Committee, April 1994*
Samples of Student Writing

The following pages provide six stories from a recent district tournament, ranked highest to lowest, followed by rank and quality points, and exemplary judge comments. The prompt for these stories was “It all started with. _____ Fill in the blank and use this phrase to develop the theme of your story.”

**Power of the Pen AT**

*An Interscholastic Tournament for Young Writers*

MarionmentJunior High

(Tournament Site)

Date: July 26, 19

(Month/Year)

Contestant Code Number: A873

Round Number: 2

Prompt: It all started with. 

Fill in the blank and use this phrase to develop the theme of your story.

**TITLE**

*Eating cookies with Grandma*

It all started with grandma. The smell of cookies filled the air everywhere I would walk into that little house.

I stepped into the house, ready to take in a relaxing deep breath filling my lungs with the sweet smell. A sweet smell that no longer existed in the city. I was ready to sit at the counter and talk about all of our memories, but I couldn’t.

He couldn’t. Something was missing and I knew exactly what it was. Grandma. My heart hitched, and my breath hitched. My stomach dropped to my feet, and my brain locked up within itself. The small, green kitchen had always been my favorite place. Baby blue curtains, hung by the windows, and little tchotchkes sat on the window ledge, absorbing the sunlight. The sunlight streamed through the kitchen, bringing in light. Illuminating photos on the walls, and inspirational quotes sitting on the counter. I knew Grandma was gone, but it had never hit me until now. Grandma’s kitchen had always been open to anyone who wanted to come in, bring joy and happiness to every saddest of days. My feet wound towards the counter, the cabinet I used to

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Seeing again, my fingers slightly touched the exhibit book
page in wishing over me, inside of the cabinet for
all of the dry ingredients or cookies. I brushed my fingers over
them as a sense of sadness swept over me. Out of
habit, I found myself pulling out some of the ingredients,
pulling them in order on the counter. Flour, sugar, vanilla
extract, baking soda. And from the fridge, butter, milk, and eggs.
The ingredients blended together, just as grandma used my
thoughts had, I could talk to her about anything. She
was always there for me, good days, and bad days. My
eyes glanced around the window sill at the picture of
grandma, and me on the beach, seeing myself reading books. My
mind wandered back to the day I had found out
about grandma's death. I hated myself for thinking about it
but my heart was too heavy to let go.
I called the cookie dough in my fingers, remembering
how grandma always called hers perfectly. Placing the
dough in the oven, and took in a deep breath. in
the kitchen, I could see grandma again, chuckling
in the oven, or breaking into tears. They looked perfect.
Evelyn! she would exclaim! I went to buy her, but
she vanished as fast as the rain. The little things
bring back the most memories grandma would always say.
My mind wandered as the oven gave off a faint
little "ding" my face lifted up, expecting to see grandma
come over, until the oven was empty, but she didn't. I took
Cookies with Grandma  | Rank= 1, Quality= 97

This is a heartfelt piece of writing, full of exact examples that show the relationship between the narrator and her grandmother. Vivid, active verbs like "brain tangled up within itself", "heart lurched", and "breath hitched" all help to convey the emotions the narrator is experiencing. We can feel the calm, welcoming kitchen with the sense of place you’ve created through the baby blue curtains and little succulents absorbing the sunlight, the inspirational quotes and the family photos. Using sentence fragments slows down the pacing and allows the reader to "be" with the narrator as she works through her grief. Your beginning and ending effectively "bookend" the narrative--a well-written story!
**Power of the Pen** at Mariemont Junior High School

*An Interscholastic Tournament for Young Writers* (Tournament Site)

**Date**: January 2019

(Month/Year)

**Contestant Code Number**: AJ74, **Round Number**: 2

**Prompt**: Fill in the blank and use this phrase to develop the theme of your story.

**TITLE**: The Culprit

---

It all started with Chloe. In Chloe, a chocolate--

Lab, was notorious. She had created, somewhat of--

a name for herself. Being a dog, it was only--
natural to have a primitive drive for food, but--

Chloe, well elevated it to the next level.

Let’s say, there was a pizza on the counter--

Unattended. Chloe, being who she was decided that any food, or anything edible rather that was--

unsupervised was free for her to eat.

This pizza, would be gone before anyone--

Even began to arrange silverware or set the--

table.

Her owner, a sly, 11 year old boy named Max Oliver was disappointed one evening with--

Chloe’s boisterous behavior:

"Chloe!!" He griped grabbing the chubby--

lab’s collar.

"You ate my chicken didn’t you?!!"

Chloe, stared back at him with--
Her muzzle encrusted with crumbs and smeared with grease. Innocent! Obviously!

"Mom," Max whined. "Chae ate my chicken!"

His Mom glanced up briefly, then her gaze returned back to her computer screen.

"Not now honey, I am emailing your sister about your uncle’s wedding!" She cooed excitedly.

Rolling his eyes and slinking away, Max Oliver retreated to his bunk bed.

Stupid wedding, he thought angrily.

The following morning was a Saturday, and it marked the second time period until his uncle’s wedding. His soon-to-be aunt was coming over, and in a way Max hoped that she would get cold feet.

That night when the leashed Francesca arrived, Max Oliver hid away in his room thinking and wondering about his role as ring bearer:

Why do I have to do it, he complained. When his Mom and future aunt concluded their meeting his mom ordered him down stairs.

"Sweety take this case up to your room and don’t open it!"

Max shrugged and once again returned to his room. He put the box down on his bedroom floor, and the lid slid off partially.

Contestant Signature or Initials
Chloe came in to the room and eyed the box intently.

"What's the big deal about this dumb wedding anyway?" He fumbled openly and Chloe strolled over and licked his knee affectionately.

Two days later, the wedding was underway. Magnolias, daisies, and assorted flowers decorated the Oliver's backyard and snow-white chairs and tables were set up.

Chloe bobbed around in search of food and Max sat down alone at a table, as far as possible away from where the wedding was supposed to be performed.

"Max!" Someone called, his uncle was beaming and waving as he experienced his last moments as a bachelor.

Max rolled his eyes and grumbled.

The vows were beginning and Max clutched the box in his hands. He felt slightly lighter than previously but he paid most attention.

"Do you take Joe as your lawfully wedded husband?"

I do."

Max ran up as he realized he was supposed to be up there at the front already.

Chloe had something in her mouth.
Max looked at the box, the lid was hanging open, and nothing was inside.

Max glanced around and became scarlet. Was something supposed to be in there? Oh no. He had had the rings. He gave the empty box to his uncle and he reached in for the rings but his hand came back empty.

"What the?"

Max knew what had happened.

"Chloe,!!?" His screamed at her and all the guests gasped some throwing their hands over their mouths which hung open again with shock.

Chloe scurried away and Max chased her. Chloe scurried around tables which were like a maze, until Max got her by the flabby scruff of her chocolate neck.

She swallowed gave Max Oliver a grateful look.

"What is going on here?" His uncle cried.

Max pointed furiously at Chloe. Maybe Chloe wouldn't just eat things that were edible, or maybe she was craving metal, but Chloe...
was now, going to be in big trouble. After
a few silent moments passed and
curiosity hung in the air for so long.
an odd scoffing sound arose and everyone
looked around to see the source of it.

Chloe was hacking up something and
then she vomited. Afterwards she licked her
chops.

"Well at least we got the rings back?"
offered Max cheerfully.

The Culprit  |  Rank= 2, Quality= 94

Excellent characterization of Chloe and her “notorious” eating habits right from the beginning.
Good foreshadowing of the ultimate conflict when Chloe eyes the box with the lid half off. Solid word
choice throughout – strong, vivid verbs. Consider adding a bit more about Max and his feelings
toward his future aunt, along with his reasons for dreading the wedding. Humorous last line!
Her Dreams

Sports. I’ve always loved them. My whole life I’ve wanted to play them all. Soccer, softball, track, you name it. But, my parents had other ideas. “Sports like that are too dirty,” they would say. “You need to be elegant and graceful.” So they signed me up for ballet. I have nothing against it, it just isn’t what I want to do. My mom always loved ballet, but her family was too poor to sign her up for lessons. So, when she became a successful business owner and got money, she forced her dream on me. I guess that’s what started it all. Money. If we had a normal amount of money then instead of being at the most expensive, top ballet school, I could be outside playing sports. I’m not trying to sound stuck up and selfish, but I just don’t see the point of needing blisters and lots of pain for something I don’t love.

I first started taking lessons when I was three. When I was seven, I went to a ballet camp overseas for a month. When I was eight, I had the brilliant idea of running away and live under a soccer net. Silly, I know. When I was ten, I finally spoke up. “Mom? I need to tell you something.”
"What is it, money?"

"I... I hate ballet!"

"What do you mean?"

"I don't want to do it anymore! Why can't I play outside and do sports like all the other kids my age?"

"Because, sweetie. Mommy loves ballet and if you stopped I would be very sad. You don't want to make me sad, do you?"

"No... I don't." So, I kept going. All the time I would tell her I didn't want to do it anymore, but she wouldn't listen. Every time she would get stricter and stricter. It was like she was my ballet instructor. It drove me crazy. I could tell I was driving my mom insane. One day, she got out that big wallet of hers and sent me to boarding school. A boarding school centered around ballet. I couldn't go. I wouldn't go. So, I ran away. At night, I packed a backpack with some money, food, warm clothes, and matches. I snuck out the back door in to the forest behind our house. It didn't last long. I was found the next morning. And, I was grounded. My mom came up to my room one night.

"Why did you run away?"

"Because you never listen to what I want. I've heard stories from people that you were nice and caring before you got rich. I heard you put others before yourself. Why can't you go back to that way. Can't you see I don't want what you want?"

"Sweetie, you're right. It all started when I got money, before, I was never like this. It feels awful. I've been..."
Her Dreams | Rank= 3, Quality= 89

Thoughtful use of craft moves throughout your narrative – your use of one word sentences and listing of exact examples help to create your writing voice and establish your narrator. Strong, meaningful dialogue to move your story forward. The conversation at the end seems to happen a bit too easily – consider adding in more of the mom’s reactions and feelings as her daughter confronts her about this difficult topic.
**Power of the Pen**

*An Interscholastic Tournament for Young Writers*

(Tournament Site)

Date: January 26, 2015

Contestant Code Number AK72 Round Number 2

Prompt: It all started with ____________ Fill in the blank and use this prompt to develop the theme of the story.

**TITLE** “The Trip Gone Wrong”

It was just supposed to be a normal family vacation. I wasn’t supposed to end up stranded miles of the coast of Florida with only my brother and food to last us 2 weeks. It all started with a homeless family vacation.

We started prepping to go on vacation in about the middle of June. I packed some swimsuits, some shorts and tanktops, and a little bit of candy for the ride to the beach.

The drive was way too long for my claustrophobia self. But the long, unbearable ride made vacation ten times better.

I stepped out onto the hot and grainy sand. I took a deep breath and thought ‘Ah, the beach!’ I hopped back into the car, and we drove to our beachside house. We pulled into the driveway and unpacked our luggage. That was enough in the car. We had practically packed.
our entire house into the trunk of our suburban. I quickly choose the room with the best view of the ocean before someone else in my family did. I promptly put on my bathing suit and ran out to the beach. "I love the ocean so much!" is what I was thinking as I brainstormed ideas of how to spend this week in paradise.

A dinner As I munched down on my hamburger, I listened to the usual conversations of politics and current events in boredom. My parents brought up a boat crash that had happened in a lake miles north of our house. I cut my dad off and almost yelling, I said, "I want to learn to sail!" Everyone looked at me in confusion. My brother Josh stepped up, "Me too! Sounds fun sis!"

The next day it was right out on the beach for us. There was a sail boat prepped for us to take off. There was a big, muscly man in a bright orange life vest and blue swim trunks. "He must be our teacher," I told Josh. We both must have looked worried because when we got...
down to the beach, he asked, "you guys ok?"

We dragged the boat out into the water, and we were off. We sailed all around the shore, down to one pier and back to the other. Then-- As Josh and I got more comfortable with the boat, we got farther out to sea, even to the point of not being able to make out people on the beach. Suddenly there was a gust of wind, and I panicked. I pulled something that must have been wrong because the boat flipped over. The sail made a horrible cracking noise, and the instructor looked worried. From the few hours I had spent with him I noticed that he was very confident him being worried worried me. We all swam back over to the boat, and we attempted to flip it back over when we tried, the sail fell off, and it floated off to sea.

All of this time we had been given a faulty boat. Josh reassured me, "It'll be fine. A gust... or someone, anyone will come get us," to make things worse, it started to rain. The waves started to pick up, and the distant shore was no longer visible.

Contestant Signature or Initials ___________________________
We had no choice but to hunker down in the sailboat with no sail. The next day, I woke up to see that our teacher had a box. It looked like a bright red toolbox, but when he opened it, there was food and water. He said grimly, "Bad news, we're well... a bit off track. I groaned as I thought, "And it all started with vacation, the beach, and Lauren being stupid."

The Trip Gone Wrong | Rank= 4, Quality= 85

Strong sensory details, like “hot and grainy sand.” Vivid verbs throughout to show the action. Your narrative flows well with a mixture of dialogue and exposition. Consider adding in some more of the characters’ thoughts and feelings in order to “show” more than “tell,” especially as their sailing lesson goes dangerously awry.
Low was a problem child. It all started with the gum incident when she stuck gum on the seat of every chair in her homeroom. She had come in early to do this. If not, just say many kids had to go home and change their pants several times.

She kept up with her pants, putting men near in kids laughing knowing it how to target the Smelly Kid, The Nerd, The Goth, et cetetera.

But now, she had gone too far. She hadn't known what else to do. Everyone hated her. She had quite a reputation. So she knew she had to do something. She staggered behind after school, fiend with her backpack, staying deepening her pens all

eased to stay behind until her last

Page One
Classmate had filed out of the room.
And she set to work. Going to each desk, setting everything up.
She was a mastermind. She knew every kid, watched them, asked them questions—she knew what they liked. She knew what would get to them.
And once her work was done, she grinned stylishly and hurried from the room.
She walked home, congratulating herself on her brilliance.

The next morning, everyone filed in, astonished at what they found.
They rushed to their desks — wondering who possibly could've done this.
Carlise supplied them with such gifts.
Terri found a new football on his desk.
Larry found a new D&D book.
More found some new black eyeliner.
Lou had never before felt so proud.

Untitled | Rank = 5, Quality = 82

Your story moves quickly with your short paragraphs. The theme is an important one, showing that the “problem child” can find ways to brighten a school day for her classmates. The exact examples at the end show how well Lou got to know her classmates by choosing the “right” surprises for each one; consider showing snippets of their earlier conversations to help flesh out the narrative and make the resolution feel more satisfying to the reader.
Power of the Pen

An Interscholastic Tournament for Young Writers

Contestant Code Number: A473
Round Number: 2
Prompt: It all started with ______. Fill in the blank and use this phrase to develop the theme of your story.

TITLE
If Only I could've been content with what I had before

It all started with me waiting in line to get an iPhone Xs during Black Friday. I decided one day, Black Friday to be exact, to get a new iPhone. I had a crusty old iPhone 5 and I wanted to upgrade. So I went to the store to get the phone. When I reached the Apple Store, it was 9:00 in the night and there was a 7 hour waiting line.

I needed the phone, so I just decided to wait it out in the line. For the first hour, everything went well, I was on my phone just watching a couple of YouTube videos with my AirPods on. But my phone ran out of battery and I couldn't use my phone anymore. I waited another hour in line just waiting patiently doing nothing.

At the third hour, a short statured man started cutting me in line and everyone got angry at him. We all yelled at him saying, "Get to the end of the line," but he wouldn't budge. So, I decided to fight him and make him go to the end.

I punched him once, twice, the last and he fell. Everyone was laughing at me that I knocked him down. My face became with pride and I started getting overconfident. While I was signing someone's shirt, this man bit me back and I fell twice as hard as I did. But I regained my strength and hit him in the now which
caused it to bleed. When this happened, the security came and told me that I needed to leave the man alone and go to the end of the line. I was outraged! What had I done? I had only told him to go to the end. But I listened to the security and went to the end of the line. At this point, it was midnight and people were sleeping on the floor. An Apple employee also said that they were running low on supply for iPhones. But I had a gut feeling that I would get it and stayed in the line. I also slept on the floor eventually because I was exhausted and I needed sleep.

In the middle of the night, someone accidentally stepped on me without knowing. This happened seven times within the duration of the night. But coming in strong, I still stayed in the line.

Next morning when I woke up, I was at the front of the line. I was happy and very excited. When I asked an Apple employee where I could ring up an iPhone, he said, "Sorry, we have no more iPhones left in our store." I was bummed out that I couldn’t get the phone. I wanted to scream at the employee but I knew I couldn’t do that. That would be very rude to do.

If only I was content with my old iPhone that I had originally. I would have had to endure this pain.

If I Only I Could’ve Been Content with What I Had Before | Rank= 6, Quality= 80

It’s good to know that your narrator learns an important lesson by the end of the story, even if he has to learn it the hard way. Good use of transition words to help move your narrative forward. To help enhance the exaggerated actions in the story, consider using more dialogue and exact examples to more fully develop and even out the tone.
**Tournament Gridding**

The assignment of student contestants and judges to the individual sections in the rounds of a tournament is called gridding. (A sample grid appears below. Note how contestants and judges receive code numbers, and that these are assigned to various rooms for the three rounds of writing.)

Each tournament in reality is *two* tournaments: a seventh grade and an eighth grade tournament. Each grade level is gridded separately; each grade level is scored separately (until the final stages at Regional and State levels where the scores for the two grade levels are spliced together to determine sweepstakes results.)

Seventh and eighth grade gridding assignments are made by computer programs prior to the tournament according to ten specific conditions:

1. Each section contains six student contestants. When the total number of contestants in the grade level is not divisible by 6, the minimum number of sections of 5 is scheduled.
2. The number of judges assigned to each section in a District Tournament is one; in a Regional Tournament, two.
3. Judges remain in one location for all the rounds. This is to facilitate grading papers. Contestants move to different rooms between rounds. This is to provide an opportunity for a short “activity break.”
4. No judge is assigned a contestant from his own school.
5. No judge is assigned the same student more than once during the course of the tournament.
6. No student contestant is judged by a judge from his own school (this is the same as #4 above), and no contestant is judged by the same judge more than once.
7. No student competes against another student from his own school during the course of the tournament (District, Regional, and the morning rounds of State).
8. Normally, no student competes against a student from another school more than once during the course of the tournament (District, Regional, and the morning rounds of State).
9. In the case of Regional Tournaments preceded by two or more District Tournaments, every effort is made to distribute the District qualifiers proportionately through the sections so that the contestants are competing across District lines to the greatest extent possible.

**Brief Explanation**

For a student *not* to meet another school more than once, it requires (a) his own school, (b) 15 different other schools against which to compete in the 3 rounds of 6/round, and (c) 3 additional schools to provide judges whose schools are not presented in the first 16. This totals 19 schools.

When the enrollment falls below the minimum, one (or more) of the conditions must be sacrificed.

(Please note, however, that if 3 (or more) *Hired* judges can be made available, not affiliated with *any* of the participating schools, the minimum number of schools which will meet all programming requirements can be reduced to 16.)
Sample Grid

Canfield Middle School DISTRICT Tournament  (Eastern REGIONAL)
EIGHTH GRADE  Saturday, January 19, 2019

**ROUND ONE**

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**Student Instructions**

1. Find your Code Number, and circle it in each of the three rounds.

2. Report to your assigned room on time.
   a. If you are late to a Round, you will not be given extra time to write beyond the scheduled 40 minutes.
   b. If you arrive in the wrong room, remain there and write; that room’s Judge will get your paper to the correct Judge for evaluation.

3. Judges remain in the same room; Contestants are the ones who change rooms for each round.

4. If you finish early, remain seated; the Judge will collect all the papers when the allotted time is over.

5. Be sure to put your Code Number clearly on your ballot and all pages of your work; all scoring done by the computer is based on Code Number. If your Code Number is incorrect or illegible, you may not receive credit for what you have written.
Tournament Scoring – Rank and Quality Points

Power of the Pen tournaments employ a dual scoring system. Each system measures student achievement in a different way. When used together, but with different emphases, as they are throughout the tournament season as a whole, they render a remarkably accurate quantitative profile of students’ qualitative achievements.

Judges evaluate student writing by Rank Points and Quality Points.

**Rank Points**

Teacher-judges compare submissions of the six student-contestants in each section and rank them against one another. The best paper in the section of a round receives a “1,” the second best a “2,” and so on.

Judges cannot give ties. There can be only one “1,” one “2,” etc., in each round – regardless of the overall quality of the section.

What Rank Score reveals is how six papers compare with one another under a carefully defined set of conditions. Putting it in another way, it shows how successfully one student-contestant competed against five other student-contestants in one section of one round of one tournament.

What Rank Score does *not* reveal is how well a student-contestant measures up against the overall notion of excellence that the teacher-judge brings with her – a perception that is the natural outgrowth of the critical objectivity she gains in determining what makes good writing throughout the whole of her intellectual life and, more specifically, in evaluating student written work as a matter of course throughout the whole of her teaching career.

**Quality Points**

Teacher-judges simultaneously evaluate student submissions on a percentage system which parallels the traditionally based grading system. It is modified, however, as follows:

- **100 - 94** Superior
- **93 - 82** Honors
- **81 - 75** Merit

A teacher-judge does not make a Quality Point assignment below 75. Power of the Pen places great emphasis on the significance of positive “feedback” from judges to student-contestants (and their teacher-coaches). It also assumes that no student who has been sanctioned by his teacher-coach to participate would do so without having achieved Merit status.

Teacher-judges are again disallowed from giving tie scores. Two papers may appear to be of equal merit, but the teacher judge is *required* to make a reasoned decision. The requirement to discriminate, especially when the overall quality of student work may be very high and very close, is part of the teacher’s educational experience in a Power of the Pen tournament.

Quality Point scores supply judgment factors missing from Rank Point scores:

(a) they show how close (or far apart) the papers are from one another;

(b) they show how close (or far apart) the papers are from the judge’s educated sense of what “Writing Excellence” truly is;
but in measuring work against these more comprehensive “objective” norms, Quality Point scoring loses the ability to discriminate and compare a specific sample (one student’s submission) within a limited data subset (one section of a round of a tournament).

*Rank Point scores give higher priority status to competitive achievement. Quality Point scores give higher priority status to normative excellence.*

The two systems are integrated into a comprehensive scoring matrix throughout the whole of the tournament season. Computerized scoring, however, places temporarily greater emphasis on Rank Scores (competitive achievement) in District and Regional Tournaments, and Quality Point Scores (normative excellence) in the State Finals.
Computing the Scoring Data

The Rank and Quality Point data which the teacher-judges assign to student writing are carried to the Tab Room where they are entered into a computer scoring program. The program processes this data in carefully prescribed ways.

Quality Points

Quality Points are processed as judges report them. A judge’s Quality Point score of “100” is entered and processed as 100; a judge’s Quality Point score of “92” is entered and processed as 92.

Rank Points

Rank Points are entered into the computer program as the judge reports them (a third place is entered as a “3,” a first as a “1”), but the computer program immediately converts Rank Points to different values before processing them.

It has been found in the past that Rank Scores which are not converted produce misleading results. A student who writes quite well may have scored “1” in Rounds 1 and 2. In Round 3, however, he may have (a) found himself in a round where there are three other exceptionally strong writers, or (b) written more poorly to the topic than he should have, or (c) been judged by someone who, for whatever reason, rated his work much lower than other judges in all probability would have done. The end result in all three cases is the same: the student is penalized unduly when the scores are added up.

In September of 1990, the State Committee observed that in general there may be more difficulty in discriminating between first and second place, and fifth and sixth place, than between the middle places. Accordingly, in the 1990-91 tournament season, the Rank Point Score spread (1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6) is overlaid on a bell-shaped curve where first and second place are closer together than second and third; second and third closer than third and fourth. At the other end of the spread, fifth and sixth are closer than fourth and fifth; fourth and fifth closer than third and fourth.

The values for the conversions are as follows:

- Rank Point of 1 = Computer Value of 100
- Rank Point of 2 = Computer Value of 95
- Rank Point of 3 = Computer Value of 85
- Rank Point of 4 = Computer Value of 70
- Rank Point of 5 = Computer Value of 60
- Rank Point of 6 = Computer Value of 55

*NOTE: These computer value conversions for Rank Scores are in no way meant to be considered as equivalent with traditional percentage grading scores. They are solely interim computer working tools that are used to (a) close up the spreads (and the penalties) between top and bottom contestants while opening up the middle, and (b) produce other desirable results (i.e. make it possible to flag automatically score totals incorporating grossly disparate addenda – an indication of radical differences in judges’ scores).

A perfect rank score total for a District Tournament is 300. (A perfect Quality Point score total for a District Tournament is also 300.)
**District Tournaments: Scoring and Breaking Ties**

District Tournaments are judged by one judge in each section of each round. There is no prior school score data. Winners in each grade level are determined by total Rank Score. Ties are broken: first, by Quality Points; second, whether the tied contestants competed against one another in the course of the tournament; third, by how each contestant performed against his/her top three competitors in all three rounds; fourth, by looking at all three rounds of writing and checking to see which competitor scored the highest individual quality point score.

The three top ranking school teams – at each grade level – are also determined by the total number of Rank Point scores for all of the individual team members. Ties are broken by total Quality Points.

The scores of contestants receiving a “Superior” rating (only) are transferred to Regionals, and entered there as values which are computed into the determination of Sweepstakes.

**Regional Tournaments**

Regional Tournaments are judged by two judges in each section of each round.

Score data for Rounds 1 and 2 are individual ballots (i.e. 2 per contestant entry). Round 3 score data is a single (conferenced) ballot. The computer program doubles both Quality Point and Rank Point scores reported in Round 3 before computing. A perfect Quality Point or Rank Point score in a Regional Tournament, then, is 600.

Judges are asked to rank papers with no more than a two-place difference between them in the non-conferenced rounds (Rounds 1 & 2). For instance Rank Point scores of 1 and 3 for the same paper are acceptable; a 1 and a 4 are not acceptable. Similarly, Judges should allow no more than a 5-point difference in Quality Point awards in these same non-conferenced rounds. For instance, Quality Points of 90 and 85 for the same paper are acceptable; 90 and 84 are not acceptable.

Winners in each grade level are determined by total Rank Scores. Procedures for breaking ties are the same as those used at the District level.

The three top ranking school teams in each grade level are determined similarly.

In addition to the winning 7th and 8th grade school grade team, a School Sweepstakes Winner (7th and 8th teams combined) is also determined. For Sweepstakes, each school’s qualifying score data from its earlier District Tournament (i.e. scores achieved by contestants meriting Superior certification only) is weighted at 50% of the value of the current Regional score data and then added to it.

The primary criterion for both grade level School Team winners and Sweepstakes is the Rank Point Score team score total. Ties are broken by total Quality Points.

**State Tournament**

The format of the Power of the Pen State Final Tournament is reviewed at its annual meeting by the State Committee and modified as necessary. Its essential features to date have included:

1. The State Tournament consists of 3 morning rounds, involving all contestants, and one afternoon writing round for the top 54 contestants at each grade level.

2. To the extent that it is possible, three Judges are assigned to all sections of all rounds (all sections receive at least two Judges). In sections where there are three, the Judges determine among themselves which two actually judge each given round.

3. Single-ballot conference judging is employed in all rounds.
4. Priority criterion for top winners are total Quality Points, ties being broken by Rank Points.

In District and Regional Tournaments, scoring emphasis is placed upon competitive achievement. Rank scores describe how effectively one student competes against five other contestants in a given section of a given Round. Quality Points are used to break ties and determine Certificate grades.

In State competition, the emphasis is placed upon how a student measures against an objective norm of excellence that the judges bring to bear in their evaluation of the students’ work.

At State, students are measured against one another by Quality Points. Ties are broken by Rank Points. This reverses the order of priority used in the District and Regional Tournaments.

For the specific values of computer conversions of Rank Points, see the section on computerized conversions of Rank Point scores earlier. Please note, however, that all State Tournament scores, both Rank and Quality Point, are automatically multiplied by a factor of 2 to reflect the fact that all State judging ballots represent the judgment of two Judges.

**Qualifiers for the Afternoon Final Round**

The top fifty-four contestants from each grade level – approximately 18% – are qualified after Round 3 to continue on to the final writing round in the afternoon. The determination is made by the highest numbers of Quality Points. Ties, if they exist, are broken by the highest numbers of Rank Points.

**Top Rated Individual Seventh and Eighth Grade Writers (12 Awards per Grade Level)**

As was true in the morning rounds, contestants are measured against one another by the highest number of Quality Points. Ties are broken by the highest number of Rank Points.

Final contestant standings were determined as follows in the 2002 Ohio State Finals at The College of Wooster:

1. All contestants compete in the first three rounds of writing. The time allotted for the first three rounds at State is 35 minutes each.

2. Two judges evaluate the work of each contestant in each round of writing. Judges confer in their decisions and reach a consensus. One ballot is turned in for each round of writing. The ballot counts as two scores instead of one, thereby indicating that the vote is a collaborative one.

3. Judges in Rounds 1 through and including the first stage of 4 (note special scoring used in the Power Round below) give each contestant a Rank Point score (1 to 6) and a Quality Point score (75 to 100). Winners in the State tournament are determined by total Quality Points. Ties are broken by Rank Points.

4. At the end of three rounds, Quality Points accumulated by each contestant are totaled. The top 54 contestants in each grade level, measured by the total number of Quality Points, qualify as finalists to continue into the final round of writing.

5. **Round 4-First Stage:** Contestants who make it into the fourth round have 30 minutes in which to write. As in the first three rounds, each contestant is evaluated by two judges who confer about each paper. Their joint decision again is recorded in a single ballot.

6. **Round 4-Second Stage, “The Power Round:”** Contestants receiving either a 1 or 2 Rank Point Score in Round 4 are then judged a second time by special two-Judge panels. This panel re-judges each paper on a scale of 1 to 10-10 being the highest. They may give as many (or as few) ties as they wish. When the conferencing Judges cannot agree within 2 points of one another, the Executive Director (or her designee) will referee the final award decision.
7. **Contestant Award Computations:** Winners are determined by the total number of Quality Points. Quality Point totals are the sum of: (1) Round 1 through 3 scores (which have been doubled to reflect a two-judge consensus) – 600 total points possible; (2) Round 4 scores (which have been doubled to indicate a two-judge consensus), multiplied by a factor of 1.5 to reflect semi-Finalist round status – 300 total points possible; (3) Power Round bonus point awards (1 through 10), doubled to indicate a two-judge consensus, and multiplied by a factor of 2.5 to reflect Finalist round status – 50 total points possible; and (4) a Bonus Award of 50 points (arithmetic constant), given to ALL Finalists – 50 points.

The highest possible number of Quality Points is 1,000. The additional factor for Round 4 (and the Power Round) acknowledges that the Finalist competition is regarded as being considerably more rigorous than Rounds 1 through 3.

**Ohio State School Team Championship Trophies – 3 Awards**

Ohio State Championship Trophies are awarded to those schools which have demonstrated in Power of the Pen competition, at both the Regional and State levels, that they have the finest records of writing excellence in the State of Ohio.

The determination of the winners takes into account both quantitative and qualitative factors. Grade 7 and Grade 8 scores are added together and computed in Sweepstakes fashion. Final school standings since the 2002 Ohio State Finals at The College of Wooster have been determined as the sum of the following:

1. Transferred scores from the Regionals for only those contestants who, in Regional competition, achieved Superior standing. Transferred scores are weighted at 50% of the value of State scores. They account for 1/3rd of the total calculated values.

2. Quality Points earned by all State tournament contestants in Rounds 1 through 3 – provided the total falls within the Superior range – regardless of whether the contestants qualify for the final rounds. Score totals which fall below the Superior range are ignored in the computation.

3. A bonus addition of 100 Quality Points for each contestant qualifier in the final rounds.

   Grade 7 and Grade 8 scores, per the above, are computed in “Sweepstakes” fashion. Note: scores actually earned during Round 4 do not enter into the calculation.
Awards

Through a unified system of awards, students receive recognition at District, Regional, and State levels of competition.

**District Tournaments**

1. Certificates for all contestants.
2. First to third place trophies for best individual writers in the 7th grade and in the 8th grade.
3. Medallions for fourth through twelfth place writers, each grade level.
4. First, Second, and Third Place team trophies and individual team member ribbons for each grade level.
5. Best of Round awards: a writing journal for each student who writes the best response to a single topic in each round of writing, announced in the post-tournament report and presented at the Regional Tournament. Anyone who receives a Best of Round award at District automatically qualifies for the Regional Tournament.
6. Director’s Choice awards: announced in the post-tournament school report and presented at the Regional tournament. Anyone who receives a Director’s Choice award at District automatically qualifies for the Regional Tournament.

**Regional Tournaments**

1. Certificates for all contestants.
2. First to third place trophies for the best writers in each grade level, 7th and 8th.
3. Medallions for fourth through twelfth place writers, each grade level.
4. First, Second and Third Place Team Trophies for each grade level.
5. A Sweepstakes Trophy to the school which has accumulated the most points in both grades at the District and Regional events.
6. Best of Round awards: a writing journal for each student who writes the best response to a Regional prompt in each round of writing, announced in the post-tournament report and presented at the State Tournament. Any student receiving a Best of Round award for their Regional Tournament writing automatically qualifies for the State Tournament.
7. Director’s Choice awards: announced in the post-tournament report and presented at the State Tournament. Any student receiving a Director’s Choice award for their Regional Tournament writing automatically qualifies for the State Tournament.
8. Best of the Best Awards: Special awards for best responses to single prompts written at the District level competition which are judged to have Statewide Merit. Best of the Best winners automatically qualify for the State Tournament.
State Tournament

1. Certificates for all contestants.

2. Special cash awards for first, second and third place writers in each grade level:
   - First Place $250
   - Second Place $150
   - Third Place $100

3. A State Championship Trophy to the first place school.

4. Second and Third place trophies to the runner-up schools.

5. Other scholarship, memorial, or special awards (see next section).

6. Outstanding teachers and/or volunteers may also be singled out for special recognition awards at the State Tournament.

Publication

The highest award a young writer can receive is publication in the *Book of Winners*. Only writers whose work receives a Best of Best are published. Out of thousands of pieces of writing produced annually, less than 200 are published. The current volume is distributed free to a school when it registers. Additional copies, including those from earlier years, may be purchased for $30 on the Publications page of the Power of the Pen website or by using the order form in the Forms section of this Manual.
Special Awards

In addition to the awards which contestants and schools may win at District, Regional and State levels of competition, Power of the Pen has established a system of evaluation that allows outstanding writers to achieve even greater honors.

Best of Round

Each District and Regional tournament consists of three rounds, and a different prompt is used in each round. A “Best of Round” represents the best response to a given prompt, in a given round, at a given tournament. At both District and Regional levels of competition, the work of all contestants receiving a #1 Rank Point score in each section, in each round, is evaluated by Power of the Pen leadership for Best of Round Awards. Winners for each of the three rounds receive:

1. a journal with POP’s stamped logo
2. a blue Best of Round ribbon
3. the opportunity for the winning work to be measured against all District and Regional Best of Round winners throughout the State for Best of the Best Awards.

No ties may be given for Best of Round awards. However, all No. 1 papers from each round are read by Power of the Pen leaders for Director’s Choice Awards. Director’s Choice Awards are announced in the post-tournament report and are presented at the next level of competition.

Students who receive a Best of Round or Director’s Choice Award for District Tournament writing automatically qualify for the Regional Tournament. Students who receive a Best of Round or Director’s Choice Award for Regional Tournament writing automatically qualify for the State Tournament.

At its 1994 annual meeting, the State Committee resolved that:

1. Since the purpose of Best of Round is to measure the best response to a prompt in each round of writing in both the District and Regional events, judges will award a journal to the deserving writer of each round.

2. A writer may be the designated recipient for more than one Best of Round award at a given tournament.

Best of the Best

At each District and Regional event, at least three seventh and three eighth grade papers are selected for Best of Round awards. These papers are then carefully evaluated against one another for a higher award – the “Best of the Best.” Winners of the Best of the Best awards are eligible to have their winning piece published in the Book of Winners. To be considered for the Book of Winners, the piece must be sent to Power of the Pen by following the guidelines and completing the form in the Forms section of this Manual.

Promising Young Talent Award

This award is presented annually at the State Tournament by a guest author who has read the work of 8th grade winners from the previous year and who has singled out that writer who demonstrates the most promise as a young novelist. Only eighth graders whose work appears in the current Book of Winners are eligible.
The Humor Award
One outstanding piece from among humorous Best of the Best selections is chosen to receive the annual Humor Award.

The Powerful Pen Award
This award is not an annual one. Candidates are exceptional writers who meet the highest standards of quality, including having received four Best of the Best awards over a two-year period.

Poetry Award
This annual award, first established in 1991 by the family of Renee Hairston of Shaker Heights, is presented each year to one 7th or 8th grade writer from among those contestants who qualify for the State finals. To be eligible for this award:

1) a contestant must qualify for the State Finals;
2) a contestant must submit an entry of pre-written poetry, verified by his/her teacher to be original by the published deadline of the current year;
3) the entry may consist of a single poem or more than one shorter poem, but the entry may not exceed one typed 8-1/2 x 11 sheet of paper.

Only State qualifiers are eligible for this award.

Distinguished Friend to Young Writers Award
To honor outstanding volunteers whose dedication and service has made a significant impact upon the quality of Power of the Pen, this award was established by the State Committee in 1998. The Committee must unanimously approve any candidate recommended for this award. (Not necessarily presented on an annual basis.)
Instant Results and Post-tournament Reports to Schools

Power of the Pen believes that recognition, to have its maximum effect, should follow as quickly as possible upon accomplishment. For this reason, trophies, medallions, and certificates are presented on the day of the competition. Coaches take home with them: (1) all student work that was written in the three rounds of writing, and (2) Judges’ ballots containing the scores they awarded and their brief comments.

All schools that participate in the event receive email notification of their qualifiers, generally within two weeks after the tournament. Some contestants qualify automatically. The top twelve students at each grade level are qualifiers, as are Best of Round and Director’s Choice winners. Apart from these, approximately the top 50% at the District level and the top 18-20% at the Regional Level will qualify to proceed to the next level of competition.

This post-tournament report also includes the following:

1. A follow-up data report of the tournament.
2. A composite of that particular school’s individual and team performances. This individualized performance profile (aside from trophies and award winners) is not shared with other schools.
3. An official list of qualifiers for the next event.
Section III

Governance
Governance

Power of the Pen was incorporated in March of 1989 as an educational non-profit 501(c)(3) organization.

The Mission Statement of Power of the Pen
(Adopted by the Board of Trustees, September 1994)

Power of the Pen is committed to being the leading interscholastic program in written expression, designed for young writers at the 7th- and 8th-grade levels. It assists teachers in the on-going task of writing improvement by providing quality tools and resources to identify, challenge, and reward excellence. It provides teachers with an educational network that shares ideas and instructional materials to improve expressive writing skills. Power of the Pen inspires a love for the beauty and power of language for writing as a life skill. It encourages creative and critical thinking, and enriches and enhances the writing curriculum of schools. This is accomplished in a collaborative environment that includes community support and involvement at all levels.

Board of Trustees

At the helm of Power of the Pen is a Board of Trustees which draws its membership from the educational, corporate, and professional communities. The board has more than 200 combined years of experience with Power of the Pen!

Trustees of Power of the Pen, serving as of September 2019, are:

» Mary Anderson, Interim Executive Director, Regional Director. St. Vincent-St Mary H.S., retired. B.S. in Education, M.Ed in Curriculum and Education Specialist degree. Recipient of numerous Teacher of the Year awards from multiple schools. Tutor. Her 32-year commitment to Power of the Pen includes stints as Coach, Tab Room Supervisor, and State Committee President, as well as her present roles.

» Julie Lyberger, President, Regional Director. Currently an administrator at Lake Elementary School, former 7th grade Language Arts teacher, with 32 years in education. B.A. Education, M. Educational Leadership/Administration. Twenty years with Power of the Pen as Coach, Tab Room Supervisor, State Tournament Building Monitor, Member and Secretary of the State Committee.

» Robin Langlais, Secretary, Regional Director. Strongsville City Schools, retired. B.A. in Library Science/Educational Media, M.S. in Educational Technology. Retired after 35 years as media specialist in junior high and middle schools.Recipient of numerous grants for educational purposes. Thirty-year participant in various aspects of Power of the Pen including Coach, Computer Operator and Regional Coordinator.

» Nancy Sandlin, Treasurer/Fiscal Officer. Paralegal for United States District court Judge, retired. B.S. Paralegal Science. Volunteer Court-Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) through Summit County Juvenile Court for abused, neglected, and abandoned children, and created non-profit support group for Revere Local Schools to support students with learning differences. Joined Power of the Pen in 2018.

» Susan Cramer, Host School Coordinator, Guest Author Liaison, Book Sale Manager. Granville Village schools, retired. B.S. Design, Community Scholar scholarship winner, creative writing and non-fiction. Past president board of trustees, Granville Public Library. Author, 14-year Power of the Pen writing coach and Member of the State Committee.


Dave Hill. Currently the communications manager at FedEx Custom Critical in Green, Ohio. 15 years of experience in corporate communications. B.S. in Public Relations from Kent State University. Joined the Power of the Pen board in 2019.

Advisory Board

Dr. Joan Baker, Consultant, Author and Teacher, retired
George Bilgere, John Carroll University, Professor of Creative Writing and published poet, Power of the Pen State Tournament Annual Poetry Judge
Alex Campbell, General Counsel, Buckingham Doolittle & Burroughs, LLC

Tax-exempt Status

Power of the Pen was incorporated in March of 1989 as a non-profit organization. A copy of the letter of determination to document its tax-exempt status is available upon request. The FEIN number is 34-1620043.

Grants, gifts and fees are made to: Power of the Pen, Box 442, Richfield, Ohio 44286.

Equal Employment Opportunity Policy Statement

It is the permanent policy of Power of the Pen to recruit, hire, train, and promote its employees without regard to age, race, sex, color, religion, national origin, or handicap, in accordance with applicable Civil Rights Law; and it will fervently continue to hire and develop individuals, based on their job related qualifications as a moral and legal responsibility to support equal employment opportunities for all. Attitudes, biases, or prejudices will not be permitted to operate in matters of employment and personnel practices.

Therefore, Power of the Pen pledges to insure that all procedures for recruiting, hiring, training, promoting, transfer, layoff or termination are designed to further the principle of equal opportunity and that all valid requirements are imposed when promotional opportunities exist. Further, it will insure that all personnel actions related to compensation and benefits will be administered without regard to age, race, sex, color, religion, national origin or handicap.

Statement of Civil Rights Compliance

Power of the Pen will conduct its Programs in accordance with the policies and practices described below.

No individual will on the grounds of race, color, national origin, handicap, sex, or age be denied any services, aid or benefits in a manner different from that provided to others under the Program. Such services include all services under the Program including the quality of the services provided.

No individual will on the grounds of race, color, national origin, handicap, sex, or age be subjected to segregation or separate treatment in any manner related to the receipt of any service or benefits under the Program, nor will the individual be restricted in any way, in any advantage or privileges enjoyed by others receiving the services or benefits of the Program.

The Executive Director of Power of the Pen will have overall responsibility for insuring that Power of the Pen operates in accordance with its stated principles.
Policies

Policy on Plagiarism

The mission of Power of the Pen, as a creative writing program for Middle School students, is to awaken and strengthen the individual’s creative voice, and to foster and reward originality in written expression.

For this reason, an act of plagiarism – that is, the deliberate appropriation of someone else’s words and/or ideas and the attempt to pass them off as one’s own – is in direct conflict with the essential thrust of Power of the Pen.

Unlike contests where work is prepared by individual contestants who formally attest to the originality of their submissions, writing for Power of the Pen takes place in a public setting under careful supervision by one or more classroom Judge/monitors. It is not possible for parents or teachers to lend a direct or indirect helping hand in the Contestant’s writing. The only way that the originality of a Contestant’s work can be compromised is by the student 1) copying material physically carried into the classroom, or 2) adapting and retelling material that has been carefully and fully studied in advance.

Since it is at least theoretically possible for the work of one writer to resemble that of another – purely by chance and not by intentional modeling – the question may rightly be raised: How does Power of the Pen determine that plagiarism has, in fact, taken place?

From the time of the program’s founding, instances of plagiarism have been extremely rare. In all cases to date, an alert Judge or Teacher/Coach evaluating the work was able to trace the work in question to a specific source with which a direct comparison could then be made. To insure greater confidence in that determination, Power of the Pen requires that three other independent Judge/readers – none of whom are affiliated with the school of the contestant alleged to be in violation-concur that the writing is unequivocally an act of deliberate plagiarism.

On the basis of established precedents, Power of the Pen invokes the following penalties once an act of plagiarism has been established beyond a reasonable doubt:

» If the violation occurs at the any level of competition, the contestant is prohibited from advancing to any higher level of competition during that current tournament season.

» If the violation is detected after he or she has received an award based on plagiarized work, the contestant must relinquish that award and any right to publication of the plagiarized work.

» If the school, by virtue of the offending contestant’s scores, receives a Team award, that award must be relinquished to the next lower ranking school or school team – if a re-tallying of the scores so warrants.

Power of the Pen respects the privilege of the Writing Team Coach, or the School administration of the contestant in question, to impose any additional sanctions deemed appropriate.

Beyond these consequences, what is most important when plagiarism occurs is to discourage a recurrence of similar incidents by educating all students fully in matters of personal ethics, ownership and basic copyright law. Students of a young age should be made acutely aware that severe consequences inevitably result at the secondary level of education – as well as at the collegiate level – in matters that arise involving cheating on tests as well as copying work written by someone else.

In promoting pride of workmanship and rewarding examples of outstanding creative expression, Power of the Pen promulgates the importance of originality in building character as well as in building voice.

Lorraine B. Merrill, Founder, June 1, 1996
Policy on Self-Plagiarism

Normally, we think of plagiarism as targeting someone else’s work, and then attempting to pass it off as one’s own. Recently, Power of the Pen has had to address a somewhat murkier issue—one that, more often than not, revolves around “self-plagiarism.”

Consider the description of plagiarism. Plagiarism is described to include the “2) [deliberate] adapting and retelling [of] material that has been carefully and fully studied in advance.” Here the targeted work is not necessarily someone else’s—although it could very well be. It could also be one’s own.

For example, if a student—well-read in the history of the Holocaust—resorts to this subject matter repeatedly in his tournament writing, this in and of itself may be the result of an overly narrow focus or a preoccupation with one piece of subject matter but still be perfectly legitimate. Grounds for questioning its integrity arise, however, when the individual pieces of writing are lined up side by side and what begins to emerge is one story with minor variations rather than distinctly different narratives. The writer is plagiarizing one central theme to meet the particular requirements of more than one prompt. The crucial point, of course, is that the writer is guilty of making a tacit misrepresentation. He is inviting the teacher/judge/reader to accept each of his writing products as an authentic, “unrehearsed” response that is uniquely specific to the prompt at hand when, in fact, this is not at all the case.

In an attempt to prevent a contestant from carefully scripting a basic “story situation” (or “story line”) in advance and then modelling it—deliberately and with care—to the requirements of more than one prompt, the State Committee drafted the following ruling:

“The purpose of Power of the Pen is to challenge young writers. Prompts issued at the tournaments in each of the three rounds of writing (four or five at State) are designed to evoke different responses. Students who deliberately adapt a single response in a way that appears to meet the requirements of two or more different prompts, but in essence remains one response rather than two, shall

» receive default scores of 6 Rank Points, 75 Quality Points in the offending rounds

» be disqualified from receiving a Best of Round award

» be disqualified from advancing to the next higher level of competition during that current tournament season

If any such violation is detected after the tournament is over, penalties shall be applied by the State Office conjointly with the Writing Team Coach(es) of the student involved. Any team and/or sweepstakes award(s) thereby affected shall also be stripped and re-awarded.”

Policy on Censorship

The Writing Judge’s role is different from the Writing Teacher’s role. Every teacher certainly has the right to decide what is appropriate in his/her classroom, but this is not your classroom and the writers are not your students. They come from a wide variety of backgrounds and experiences in school and in life. That must be honored at this tournament.

Professional expertise, not personal bias, should guide each judge. The genre, subject, and even language of the piece should not be subject to the judge’s personal biases. Each piece should be judged on whether or not it thoughtfully and creatively addresses the prompt with quality writing.

Audience is important to any piece of writing. At the tournament, you are the judge and NOT the audience. The piece has been written for publication, and the audience is anyone who might read it.
Remember that these writers are seventh and eighth graders, often writing from their own personal experience. They have not seen or experienced the world as you have. What is “old hat” to you may very well be new and exciting to them. They have no idea that every middle school student in the state has studied the Holocaust. To them, their thoughts on this topic are “original.” And the adolescent issues with friends, parents, and school that we as teachers and adults have seen time and time again are “original” to someone going through them at the moment.

Many of the prompts lead the writers to produce a piece of fiction. The comment, “This is not believable,” may not apply. Soap operas are NOT believable. They are what they are... escape. Judge the writing for what it is... well-constructed and well-written or not.

If a judge finds a piece of writing is disturbing in any way, this should be brought to the attention of the Tab Room coordinator. The coordinator can then speak with the coach that knows the student. That coach is in a better position to make comments to the student who wrote the piece. (A Post-It note or something could be attached for those kind of comments rather than putting them in the comment section.) Coaches sometimes disagree with comments made by judges. We have to realize that we are all trying to do our best for these writers. We’re not perfect. Neither are our young writers.

The bottom line should be that we are looking for a well-constructed, well-written piece that addresses the prompt in a way that sets it apart from the other pieces. We are not there to judge these students. We are there to judge the merits of the writing they produce.

We must all remember that being a Power of the Pen judge does not grant one the right to critique the personal lives of the writers. Ours is a program that should focus instead on improving and celebrating their talent in written expression.

*Draft by Melanie Jerse based on thoughtful discussion by Members of the State Committee. Edited and approved unanimously by the State Committee on May 13, 2006*

**Policy on the Use Power of the Pen Name, Logo, Artwork**

Power of the Pen’s name, logo, and artwork are fully protected under copyright and trademark laws. Schools currently and actively enrolled in the Ohio Interscholastic Writing League (Power of the Pen), and which have paid their annual membership fee, may apply for full legal permission to employ the name, logo, and artwork belonging to Power of the Pen on T-shirt designs intended for use by their school’s Power of the Pen writing teams. Application is made by completing the application found in the Forms Section of this *Manual* and sending it with a $25 check to cover the cost of processing to: Executive Director, Power of the Pen, Box 442, Richfield, Ohio 44286. “Permission to Use” is granted for one school year/tournament season.

**Policy on Pre-District Mini-Meets**

Power of the Pen enthusiastically endorses the concept of local interscholastic mini-meets and pre-District competitions. Experiences such as these not only help prepare students for Power of the Pen tournaments, they provide a reliable way of identifying who the strong writers really are. Mini-meets, by committing a group of schools to a common educational project, foster a sense of joint purpose and camaraderie. In so doing, they reinforce Power of the Pen’s objective of encouraging the development of District structures that can conduct fully autonomous Power of the Pen District events.

At the same time, Power of the Pen must remain sensitive to the obligation it has to its family of student, teacher, and educational/administrative participants actively engaged in the program’s normal range of activities; to the friends of education in the corporate, business, and private sectors.
providing significant financial support on the basis of clearly formed expectations; to a Board of Trustees charged by law to certify the program’s integrity and authenticity; and to the growing number of parents, friends, and volunteers across Ohio committing their time and energies to an idea of what they believe Power of the Pen to be.

This obligation is to preserve – to the fullest extent possible – the integrity of Power of the Pen as a whole, and to discourage the misuse or abuse of those features and elements which have contributed so significantly to the program’s phenomenal success.

Accordingly, schools intending to sponsor an interscholastic writing mini meet or pre-District competition containing any element or feature of Power of the Pen tournament competition which is protected in whole or part by the organization’s legally registered trademark and/or copyright, is required to apply to Power of the Pen to do so.

The policy governing such permission is fixed for the current tournament season as follows:

1. To apply for permission to hold a mini-meet, complete the relevant form in the Forms section of this Manual. Return it with a check (or PO number) for the $25 registration/processing fee made out to Power of the Pen to: Executive Director, Power of the Pen, Box 442, Richfield, Ohio 44286.

2. Only schools currently enrolled in Power of the Pen and/or the Ohio Interscholastic Writing League may apply. Schools not enrolled in Power of the Pen and/or the Ohio Interscholastic Writing League are expressly forbidden the use of any element or feature protected in whole or part by the organization’s legally registered trademark and/or copyright.

3. Permission is granted for one mini tournament only, within the current school year. Schools wishing to sponsor more than one event, or a similar activity in a subsequent year must reapply. (This restriction is designed to permit other schools in the district the opportunity to hold similar mini-meets, and not jeopardize Power of the Pen’s local calendar in so doing.)

4. Schools receiving permission from Power of the Pen to organize and sponsor a local interscholastic mini-meet or pre-District competition, based in whole or part upon a Power of the Pen model or utilizing any (or all) of Power of the Pen’s protected features or elements, are expected to involve only those schools which are currently enrolled in Power of the Pen (or who intend to do so). The mini-tournament should not abuse the freely extended use privilege by competing against the standard program for school enrollments.

5. No mini-meet may be scheduled on a date which conflicts with a Power of the Pen tournament already scheduled in the same area.

6. No mini-meet may be scheduled after February 15.

7. Permission, when granted, is an extension of privilege accorded by membership in Power of the Pen and/or the Ohio Interscholastic Writing League. Power of the Pen reserves the right to refuse any school or school district, permission to register for any reason, without prejudice.

8. Power of the Pen reserves all use rights pertaining to its copyrighted prompts, which appear in various publications, for its own officially designated interscholastic activities. Power of the Pen prohibits their use in mini-meets, practice tournaments, and/or pre-District competitions of this kind.

9. Power of the Pen relies heavily upon corporate and community support throughout the State for its regularly scheduled activities. Fund-raising for mini-meets and/or pre-District competitions cannot conflict with fund-raising for Power of the Pen’s scheduled District and Regional tournaments.
a. Any fund-raising for a mini-meet must be conducted in the name of the school (or some other appropriate entity, e.g. the school’s “Seventh Grade English Class,” or the school’s “Writing Club”). *Under no circumstances can it be conducted in the name of “Power of the Pen.”*

b. Schools must report to Power of the Pen any fund-raising activity for POP-registered, locally sponsored, mini-meet or pre-District tournament that yields more than $350.

10. The administrative policy stated herein is to be regarded as in effect for the current Tournament Season, and/or until such time as it is formally modified or replaced by action of the State Committee, or by the appropriate committee of the Board of Trustees.

**Policy on Students with Special Needs**

We take great pride in the fact that since its inception, Power of the Pen has made every effort to include students with special needs fully in its activities – long before the practice of inclusion was mandated by legislation.

Over the years, ‘special needs’ has not been limited to signify only those students with an Individual Education Program (IEP). Power of the Pen has responded to logistical, religious and emergency situations. In every instance, Power of the Pen has made every good faith effort to accommodate special needs within a framework that supports the success of student writers, respects the integrity of the program, and acknowledges the unique spirit of the Power of the Pen experience.

With regard to students with IEPs, POP follows the basic guidelines as set forth in the Individualized with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Special needs writers are afforded the appropriate accommodations and modifications as spelled out in their IRPs. However, these modifications must fit within the structure that enables the program to be conducted successfully (e.g. no frequent breaks, doubled time).

It is the responsibility of the special needs student’s Writing Team Coach, acting on behalf of his school, to provide whatever supports are actually necessary, whether it is a laptop computer, printer, scribe, individual aide, et al. The reasons for this are twofold. First, consistent with State and Federal guidelines, it is the home district’s responsibility to fulfill the conditions of the student’s IEP. This includes providing whatever technological and staff supports are required by the student on a daily basis in his own classroom. The second, and more practical, reason is to insure the best possible outcome by providing aids in which the student has already established a level of comfort and confidence. Moreover, they can feel confident that going into the tournament their device is in good working order. Power of the Pen and the host school may not have ready access to the particular modifications or equipment that is required, nor is their staff necessarily trained to oversee its proper use.
Power of the Pen
State of Ohio State Committee Constitution

Article I – Name
The name of this organization shall be the Ohio Power of the Pen State Committee. This organization is the advisory committee for the State of Ohio branch of Power of the Pen (POP). In the state of Ohio it shall be known as the State Committee.

Article II – Governance
Power of the Pen is helmed by a Board of Trustees which draws its membership from the educational, corporate, and professional communities.

The State Committee is an advisory body for Power of the Pen, comprised of educators, school administrators, and others. The State Committee is accountable to the Executive Director, who, in turn, serves at the pleasure of the Board.

The State Committee, in its advisory capacity, acknowledges the mission of Power of the Pen and defines its own role and goals from the educational philosophy embodied in the mission statement governing the Board of Trustees:

“Power of the Pen is committed to being the leading interscholastic program in written expression, designed for young writers at the 7th and 8th grade levels. It assists teachers in the ongoing task of writing improvement by providing quality tools and resources to identify, challenge, and reward excellence. It provides teachers with an educational network that shares ideas and instructional materials to improve expressive writing skills. Power of the Pen inspires a love for the beauty and power of language for writing as a life skill. It encourages creative and critical thinking and enriches and enhances the writing curriculum of school. This is accomplished in a collaborative environment that includes community support and involvement at all levels.”

Article III – Objectives
The duties of the State Committee shall include:

» formulating the rules, procedures, and policies which govern all competitive events

» providing a forum for the annual review of the District, Regional and State scoring, awards, rules, policies, and structure of the tournament season

» planning and providing adequate staffing for the annual State Tournament

» providing a standing committee for appeal/mediation

Article IV – Membership
Members of the State Committee now include the Executive Director, members of the Board of Trustees (ex officio), Regional Directors, Tab Room Supervisors, and Host School Coordinators.

It is the responsibility of each member of the State Committee to attend the two annual State Committee meetings or to send a representative. Attendance records will be established by the Secretary.

Visitors (non-voting) to the State Committee meetings may include Power of the Pen coaches, judges, members of the Board of Trustees, and others invited by the Executive Director and/or President of the Committee.
Article V – Meetings

The State Committee shall meet twice each tournament season. Generally, the spring meeting will be held on the third or fourth Saturday of April at the discretion of the Executive Director and President. Generally, the fall meeting will be held the second or third Saturday of November at the discretion of the Executive Director and President.

Notice of said meetings shall be sent by the President or President-elect at least one month in advance.

Article VI – Leadership

The State Committee shall have an Executive Committee which shall be composed of the President, President-elect, Secretary, State Coordinator, and Executive Director. The President will preside over meetings of the Executive Committee; in the event of his/her absence, the President-elect will preside.

The Executive Committee is empowered to prepare agendas for the State Committee, prepare motions for action, and act on behalf of the State Committee as a whole between its scheduled meetings if circumstances, as determined by a quorum vote of the Executive Committee, require. When a quorum action is taken by the Executive Committee, the Secretary is required to send a written notification to the membership as a whole within two weeks of such action.

Executive Committee quorum actions are subject to review at the next regularly scheduled State Committee meeting; such actions may be revoked by a 2/3 vote of the membership in attendance.

The Executive Committee also functions as an Appeals/Mediation Committee. Issues relating to mediation will be determined by a simple majority vote. Executive Committee actions relating to mediation are not subject to reversal by the State Committee.

The President will serve a term of two years after having served two years as President-elect. The President will be responsible for presiding over the State Committee meetings, helping to set the agendas for the meetings, and listening to the concerns of State Committee members. The President will also arrange for the site, planning, and preparations for the State Committee meetings.

The President-elect will be elected at the spring meeting. The President-elect will spend the following two years serving as the Rules Committee Chair, assisting the President, and training to become President.

The Secretary will be elected at the spring meeting for a two year term. The Secretary may be re-elected to one additional two-year term.

The Secretary will keep an attendance record, be responsible for making a careful record of the proceedings at all State Committee meetings, and send a copy of those minutes to all State Committee members within one month from the time of the meeting. The original copy of the minutes will be maintained in a State Committee Log. The Secretary shall be accessible to review wording of any resolution, proposed rule changes, or actions of the body that will appear in any official Power of the Pen publication. The Secretary may also be called upon by the President to assist with official Committee correspondence.

Article VII – Standing Committees

Unless otherwise specified, any Standing Committees shall be appointed by the Executive Director and President.
**Article VIII – Voting**

Members in attendance at the State Committee meetings shall constitute a quorum.

A simple majority of those present is necessary to pass new rulings and to elect officers.

Only those duly designated as members of the State Committee (see Article IV) may vote on any measures brought before the Committee.

There will be no absentee voting.

**Article IX – Ratification and Amendments**

This Constitution may be ratified by a 2/3 vote of those present at the Fall meeting.

The Constitution shall be reviewed annually by the Rules Committee, which shall report at the fall State Committee meeting.

Amendments may be suggested by any State Committee member and must be presented in written form to the Chair (President-elect) of the Rules Committee. The Rules Committee will review suggested amendments and make recommendations to the State Committee.

No constitutional amendment may be presented to the State Committee as a whole that is not first reviewed and approved by the Rules Committee. Ratification of any constitutional amendment requires a 2/3 majority of those in attendance at a meeting of the State Committee.
Section IV

FORMS
A complimentary copy of the 2017 *Book of Winners* (published annually, at a cost of $30 per volume) is enclosed in the enrollment packet. Since this publication and the prompts and models it contains (as well as *Books of Winners* from earlier years) are excellent tools for preparing students for competition as well as for use in the classroom, teacher-coaches often want to place orders for additional copies. Publications available for the use of participating schools only appear below.

**The 2019-20 Power of the Pen Manual for Writing Team Coaches.** Printed copies of the Coaches’ Manual may be ordered at $25 each. Hard print copies of the *Rules* are also available at $5 per copy. These materials can be accessed free of charge on our website.

**Prompts that Put Power in a Pen.** All topics used in all tournaments over a twenty-seven year span. This publication, produced at the request of teachers throughout Ohio who have found POP topics beneficial for stimulating written expression, is available only through special order. Each volume contains over 100 prompts used by Power of the Pen at its District, Regional and State Tournaments over five year periods: 1986-1990 (Volume I); 1991-1995 (Volume II); 1996-2000 (Volume III); 2001-05 (Volume IV); Volume V (2006-10); Volume VI (2011-17). Writing models are not included in the first three volumes. Recommended use: as a companion to the annual *Book of Winners*, and for generating practice in written expression prior to competition.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Volume</th>
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<td>I</td>
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__Check here if you wish to order the complete 30-year library of the Books of Winners at the special rate of $300 (includes postage).__

**Book of Winners 2019** will be available in the spring of 2020. One copy of this book will be made available to each participating school free of charge at the beginning of the following tournament season.

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Check here if you wish to order the complete 6-volume set of Prompts that Put Power in a Pen for $60.
Shipping and Handling

For individual selections above, enclose check or P.O. number for total, plus $5 for Shipping and Handling on orders totalling $15 or less; $10 S&H for orders totalling $15.01-$50; and $15 for orders over $50.

Total for Items Ordered  $________________________
Shipping and Handling  $________________________
Total Amount  $________________________

Payment

☐ Check enclosed, payable to Power of the Pen, Box 442, Richfield, Ohio 44286.
☐ Please invoice for PO# __________________________
☐ Charge to Credit Card  ☐ Mastercard  ☐ Visa  ☐ Discover  ☐ AmEx
Print Name on card ______________________________________
Card # ____________________________ Expiration Date ______ Security Code ______
Signature __________________________
Billing Address (Street) ______________________________________
(City) ____________________________ (State) ______ (Zip) ________________

Delivery

School Name (even if to be delivered elsewhere) __________________________
Deliver to Name _____________________________________________
Street Address ______________________________________________
City ____________________________ State ______ Zip ________________
Phone ______________________________ Email ________________________

Return completed form to:

Power of the Pen, Box 442, Richfield, Ohio 44286
Note: Students must work with coaches to submit this form, since it requires accessing the team profile. Outstanding student compositions that emerge during the current Power of the Pen tournament season will be published and distributed in the spring of the next tournament season. It is from this body of published material that selections are made for all special awards and scholarships. Work eligible for selection in this publication is as follows:

1. Best of the Best winners from District, Regional, and State Tournaments.
2. Selections from the top three students at each grade level from the State Tournament. (Submission could be writing selected from any round at State.)

Eligible entries will be typed by the state office, and any corrections will be in mechanics and usage but not in content.

**POP Photo Submission for Publication**

Photos are optional but may be submitted electronically (digital images, saved at the original largest size) with the coach following these procedures:

1. Complete the form below, and save it to your computer.
2. Log in to your profile on the POP website, and click on “Edit profile.”
3. Directly beneath your phone number you’ll see a button “Choose files.” Click on this and navigate to the photo and the submission form on your computer to select them.
4. Click “Save,” then notify Robin Langlais at robin@powerofthepen.org of your submission.

**Required Information (complete and save this form to your computer for uploading)**

Contestant’s Name ________________________________

Contestant’s Address (Number and Street) ________________________________

City ________________________________ State ___________ Zip ___________

Home Telephone Number ________________________________

School ________________________________ Grade ________________________________

Coach ________________________________

Tournament Site ________________________________ Date ________________________________

Level: □ District □ Regional □ State

Prompt ________________________________

Title ________________________________

By submitting the materials referenced herein to Power of the Pen (POP), you hereby (a) grant to POP an irrevocable, worldwide, non-exclusive, royalty free right to copy, display, distribute, publish and/or publicly display said materials, as well as the student’s name, likeness and/or image in connection therewith, for any purpose whatsoever; (b) represent and warrant to POP that you have the right to grant such rights, and that POP’s use of the materials in connection with the rights granted in (a) above will not infringe upon the intellectual property rights of any third party; and (c) agree to indemnify, defend and hold POP, and its directors, officers, employees, agents, successors and assigns, harmless from any and all claims, losses, liabilities, damages, expenses and costs (including reasonable attorney’s fees) directly or indirectly arising out of the representations/warranties contained in (b) above.

Form revision 2.11.20
Instructions

1. Please make sure the contestant code number and title match the number and title of the paper you are evaluating.
2. Rank the compositions in this round holistically (highest to lowest).
3. Award Quality Points (see scale below).
4. Students value your comments. Please praise strengths and offer suggestions for improvement.

Score

Rank Points (circle one)   1   2   3   4   5   6

Quality Points (100-94=Superior  93-82=Honors  81-75=Merit)

Signature of Judge 1 __________________________ Code Number __________

Signature of Judge 2* __________________________ Code Number __________

*Judge 2 signature line will be used only for Regional Round 3 and State

Comments

_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
Guidelines for Evaluation

☐ The writer uses originality of thought in approaching the topic.
☐ The writer develops an appropriate composition based on the topic.
☐ The writer sticks to the topic without losing focus.
☐ The beginning arouses the interest of the reader.
☐ The writer has a strong voice that succeeds in communicating a message to the reader.
☐ The writer is expressive, using descriptive detail and concrete images.
☐ There is variety in the sentence structure of the writer.
☐ Ideas are well-organized and flow in proper sequence.
☐ The composition has an appropriate and effective conclusion.
☐ The vocabulary is effective. The writer avoids repetition and triteness.
☐ The spelling is adequate enough not to detract from the total effectiveness.
☐ Mechanics (capitalization and punctuation) are adequate enough not to detract from the total effectiveness.
OFFICIAL BALLOT

Tournament Site ____________________________________________________________

Contestant Code _______ Room Number _______ Round Number _______

Title of Composition ______________________________________________________

Instructions
1. Please make sure the contestant code number and title match the number and title of the paper you are evaluating.
2. Rank the compositions in this round holistically (highest to lowest).
3. Award Quality Points (see scale below).
4. Students value your comments. Please praise strengths and offer suggestions for improvement.

Score

Rank Points (circle one) 1 2 3 4 5 6

Quality Points (100-94=Superior 93-82=Honors 81-75=Merit)

Signature of Judge 1 _______________________________ Code Number _______

Signature of Judge 2* _______________________________ Code Number _______

*Judge 2 signature line will be used only for Regional Round 3 and State

Comments

_____________________________________________________________________

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Revised 9.11.19
Contestant Code ________________________________

Title of Composition ________________________________

**Instructions**

1. Please make sure the contestant code number and title match the number and title of the paper you are evaluating.

2. Make a Finalist Power Round Award of 1 to 10 Bonus Quality Points. (10 is High, 1 is Low). You may give as many – or as few – tie scores as you wish.

3. If the Finalist Bonus Awards of the two Judges vary by two or fewer points, the higher value will be entered by default. If the Finalist Bonus Awards of the two Judges vary by three or more points, a third Judge Referee will make the final determination.

**Power Round Bonus Score**

![Signature of Judge 1](signature_of_judge_1.png)

![Signature of Judge 2](signature_of_judge_2.png)

Indicate Bonus Award Points Here
Note to Coach: The copy below is suggested as a model – to be modified to the requirements of your particular school. It is recommended that copies of the contract be run off and sent home for parent as well as student signature before final team selections are made.

Being chosen to represent your school as a member of an interscholastic writing team is a high honor. It means that you show a high degree of creative talent in writing and that your teacher believes you will benefit significantly from this opportunity. The Writing Team is no different from a soccer or a basketball team. In sports, a team member knows that others are relying on his/her performance. Students who commit to representing the school on a Writing Team must make a commitment in advance that others know they can depend upon.

Before a final selection for the Writing Team is made, please study the following list carefully. Then sign the contract, have your parent or guardian sign it too, and return it to your Writing Team Coach.

If selected as a Writing Team member, here is what will be expected of you:

» Faithfully attend all practice sessions that are held for team members.

» Show a willingness to accept constructive criticism and a willingness to improve your writing in all pre-tournament meetings that are held.

» Edit your written work as required by your Writing Team Coach.

» Conduct yourself at all times in interscholastic competition as an official team representative for your school, and in a manner that will be a credit of your school, your coach, your fellow team members, and yourself.

» Be present at all tournaments that you are qualified to attend (except in the case of unexpected illness). The dates and locations for the District and Regional events are:

» District ____________________________

» Regional ____________________________

☐ I understand what is expected of me and will do my best to fulfill my responsibilities if I am selected by my Writing Team Coach as a member of the Power of the Pen Writing Team.

Student Signature ____________________________________________

Parent/Guardian Signature ______________________________________

Date _________________________________________________________
All teachers who become involved with their students in activities beyond the classroom know full well the importance of communicating with parents – and if possible – engaging their cooperation as volunteers.

The last pages of the Manual contain “Permission to Publish” forms which require signatures from parents or guardians. We recommend that you send copies of these forms home for each of your contestants and alternates as soon as possible so that they can be emailed to the Regional Director or brought to the initial Power of the Pen tournament to complete your on-site registration. Please have every runner complete a Runner & Student Volunteer Photo Release Form before the first tournament he/she attends.

We also recommend that you communicate with parents in the following ways:

1. Send a letter home that lets parents know of their child’s special talent in writing. Request at the same time a signature from parents that gives approval to the child’s participation. (This will reduce the number of contestant drops when the time of the actual tournament arrives.) Parents should be informed early of dates and the commitment that a student must make in order to participate.

2. Invite all parents of your team members to a meeting. Let them know how much their help is valued as active supporters of this enrichment program. Allow interested volunteers to sign up for a number of duties: fund-raising, assistant coach, tournament judge,* etc.

*Parents with college degrees are qualified to judge at initial tournaments provided they receive training in holistic evaluation by the school’s Writing Team Coach.

3. Obtain written permission for each contestant to attend an event that necessitates travel. A version of such a form follows:

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**Contestant Permission Form**

Return this form to ________________________________ by (date) ____________________

Student Name ________________________________ has my permission to participate in the Power of the Pen District/Regional Tournament on (date) ____________________

at (tournament) ________________________________

We understand that all precautions possible will be taken to insure the safety of students attending this event. We further understand that the teacher, school officials, Board of Education, and tournament staff are not to be held responsible in case of an accident. We also understand that photos and/or videos taken at tournaments may be used in POP communications and documents.

Parent/Guardian Signature ________________________________ Date ____________________
A copy of this entire page must be completed in advance for each contestant and alternate, and submitted before registration at the initial tournament, in order to insure his/her eligibility for participation. Please comply fully with this request.

This form must be on file for each contestant at the time of the initial tournament. Coaches should scan completed forms for all contestants and alternates into a single PDF document and email it to the Regional Director. If the forms have not been emailed, the coach should bring the form to the District Tournament.

We hereby grant to Power of the Pen permission to reprint any essays or other writing produced by the student named below in connection with his/her participation in the Power of the Pen program. This license to reprint shall be royalty-free, irrevocable, and shall remain in existence as long as the copyright is valid and subsisting and extends to distribution of the work by Power of the Pen throughout the United States and the world. We also give to Power of the Pen permission to publish any photographs taken during the tournament season.

Should the writing be selected for publication in any form, including the Book of Winners, Power of the Pen may request a digital, non-professionally taken photo. By submitting the materials referenced herein to Power of the Pen (POP), you hereby (a) grant to POP an irrevocable, worldwide, non-exclusive, royalty free right to copy, display, distribute, publish and/or publicly display said materials, as well as the student’s name, likeness and/or image in connection therewith, for any purpose whatsoever; (b) represent and warrant to POP that you have the right to grant such rights, and that POP’s use of the materials in connection with the rights granted in (a) above will not infringe upon the intellectual property rights of any third party; and (c) agree to indemnify, defend and hold POP, and its directors, officers, employees, agents, successors and assigns, harmless from any and all claims, losses, liabilities, damages, expenses and costs (including reasonable attorney’s fees) directly or indirectly arising out of the representations/warranties contained in (b) above.

PLEASE PRINT THIS INFORMATION CLEARLY IN BLACK INK ON WHITE PAPER

Name of School ______________________ County __________________

Name of Tournament Site ______________________

Name of Student ______________________ Grade __________________

☐ Contestant ☐ Alternate

Student’s Home Address (Number and Street) ______________________

City __________________ County __________________ State ______ Zip _____________

Signature of Student ______________________

Signature of Teacher ______________________

Printed Name of Parent ______________________

Signature of Parent ______________________

Parent Email ______________________

Date Signed ______________________

Coaches: Thanks for making duplicate copies of this form and obtaining the necessary signatures from each contestant and alternate. Since we publish winning essays and pictures taken at tournaments, it is necessary to maintain these releases on file.

Revised 9.1.19
A copy of this entire page must be completed in advance for each runner and student volunteer, and presented before registration at the first tournament of the season that the student attends, in order to insure his/her eligibility for participation. Please comply fully with this request. If the form has not been emailed to the Regional Director in advance, the coach must bring this form to the tournament.

We hereby grant to Power of the Pen permission to publish any photographs taken during the tournament season of the student named below, as well as to publish the student’s name, likeness and/or image, for any purpose whatsoever.

PLEASE PRINT THIS INFORMATION CLEARLY IN BLACK INK ON WHITE PAPER

Name of School ___________________________ County __________________

Name of Tournament Site ____________________________

Name of Student ___________________________ Grade __________________

Student’s Home Address (Number and Street) ____________________________

City __________________ County __________________ State _____ Zip __________

Signature of Student ____________________________

Signature of Teacher ____________________________

Printed Name of Parent ____________________________

Signature of Parent ____________________________

Parent Email ____________________________

Date Signed ____________________________

Coaches: Thanks for making duplicate copies of this form and obtaining the necessary signatures from each student. Since we publish pictures taken at tournaments, it is necessary to maintain these releases on file.
Power of the Pen’s name, logo, and artwork are registered and fully protected under copyright and trademark laws.

Schools currently and actively enrolled in the Ohio Interscholastic Writing League (Power of the Pen), and which have paid their annual membership fee, may apply for full legal permission to employ the name, logo, and artwork belonging to Power of the Pen on T-shirt designs intended for use by their school’s Power of the Pen writing teams.

Application is made by submitting the application below and a $25 processing fee to: Executive Director, Power of the Pen, Box 442, Richfield, Ohio 44286.

“Permission to Use” is granted for one school year/tournament season. Schools which violate this requirement may be disqualified from competition in Power of the Pen.

---

**Application**

Complete, and return with a check or Money Order for $25 to Power of the Pen.

School Name ____________________________________________

School Street Address ____________________________________________

City ___________________________ County ___________________________

Telephone ____________________________

Writing Team Coach ____________________________

We agree to pay Power of the Pen $25 as a processing fee for rights to use the name, logo, and or artwork that is legally registered to Power of the Pen on our School’s Writing Team T-shirts. We understand that this authorization does not include permission to use these properties in or on other products, merchandise, and/or publications.

Writing Team Coach’s Signature ____________________________

Date ____________________________
Policy allows participating schools to host one (only) pre-District mini-meet involving other schools in their area. Only schools enrolled in POP Districts may be invited to attend. Dates may not conflict with POP District events in the same area. No mini-meet may be held after February 15. Non-compliance with this policy may result in disqualification from District participation. A fee of $25 must accompany this application.

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<th>Mini-Meet Site (Name of School)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Street Address</td>
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<td>City</td>
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<td>Date and Time</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teacher/Coordinator and/or Sponsoring Coach(es)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Schools Invited to Attend</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prompts that will be used (Prompts must be original and not taken from Power of the Pen publications.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fund-raising must not conflict with Power of the Pen’s fund-raising in the area for its District and Regional events. Contact the State Office if funding for your Mini-Meet exceeds $350.</td>
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Funding Sources

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY: Permission ☐ Granted ☐ Denied

Comment: ____________________________________________
This award was established by the State Committee in 1998. It is not intended to be an annual Volunteer Award. Rather, it allows Power of the Pen to recognize – when it is appropriate to do so – an outstanding volunteer at the State Tournament whose dedication and service over the years has made a significant impact upon the program as a whole.

Nominations submitted for this award will be considered at the Spring Meeting of the State Committee prior to the annual State Tournament.

Candidate’s Name ____________________________
School Name ________________________________
School Street Address __________________________
City __________________________ County __________
Years served as a Teacher/Coach for Power of the Pen __________________________
from _________________ to _________________ Total _________________ years
Description of Service beyond role of Coach __________________________________________

Nomination submitted by (person or persons)
Name ________________________________
Title/School Affiliation __________________________
Name ________________________________
Title/School Affiliation __________________________

Note: In 2000, Tom Stafford of the Springfield News-Sun was recognized for volunteering more than 100 hours as a Best of Round Judge, providing consistent and comprehensive newspaper coverage for local tournaments, and for helping to secure funding for the program’s growth.

In 2003, Bob Headly, Professor of English at Southern State Community College, was honored for his significant contributions over a five-year span. Bob served as a Best of Round Judge at the District, Regional, and State levels; he judged the State Poetry Awards; and he made numerous presentations when his help was needed.

In 2004, Power of the Pen recognized Clyde Patterson of Lander Circle Kiwanis and Jim Sandegrin of Dayton Kiwanis for their dedicated long-term support.

No Volunteer Award was made in 2005.

In 2006, Power of the Pen recognized David Nedrich of General Motors for his long-time exceptional service on the Power of the Pen Board of Trustees.

In 2007, the recipients were Dr. Stan Hales, President of the College of Wooster, and Dr. Joan Baker, Distinguished Cleveland Educator/writer and long-term member of Power of the Pen’s Board of Trustees.

No Volunteer Award was made in 2008.

In 2009, Dr. George Bilgere of John Carroll University, our annual Poetry Award Judge at State, was so honored.
From the outset, Power of the Pen has recognized dedicated teacher-coaches whose enthusiasm for writing inspires students to write so well. Each year in the State Program, a Teacher Honor Roll is published, listing by name and school those teachers and administrators whose contribution to Power of the Pen is particularly noteworthy. Some of these outstanding educators have not only served as coaches to winning teams and individuals, but have made major contributions to Power of the Pen’s development Statewide.

Nominations submitted for his award will be considered at the Spring Meeting of the State Committee prior to the annual State Tournament.

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<th>Candidate’s Name</th>
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Years served as a Teacher/Coach for Power of the Pen from _______ to _______ Total _______ years

Description of Service beyond role of Coach

Nomination submitted by (person or persons)

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<th>Title/School Affiliation</th>
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Note: Special Teacher Awards were presented in 2001 to Dennis Gray (posthumous) of Bethel Middle School in Miami County; and both Pete Scriven and Marian Mittler of the Strongsville School system in Cuyahoga County.

In 2002 the recipients were Merry Anne Hilty of Heskett Middle School in Cuyahoga County and Mary Anderson of St. Sebastian School in Summit County.

In 2003, Susan Furlong of L T Ball, Miami County, and Polly Rudebusch, McBroom JHS in Auglaize County were honored.

Denise Hynick of North Royalton MS was honored in 2004 as was Ellen Arena of Field MS in Mogadore in 2005.

In 2006, Writing Team Coaches and Host School Coordinators Diana McFadden and Linda Sturgil, both of Unioto JHS, received Outstanding Teacher/Coach Awards.
Season Checklist

**August/September**
- Read the Power of the Pen Coaches’ Manual.
- Begin publicizing Power of the Pen to students.
- Hold an informational meeting.
  
  *Be sure parents and students know the dates of all three tournaments (District, Regional, State) before committing to the team.*

- If you have more than six students interested at each grade level, hold tryouts. Remember, each grade level can have up to 6 contestants + 2 alternates.

- Open a purchase order with your school treasurer prior to online registration. This purchase order number will be required in order to register online. This purchase order does not need to be mailed to POP.

**October**
- Register online by October 15 for Early Bird Pricing.
- Communicate with school office regarding payment to Power of the Pen.
  
  *Be sure to instruct your treasurer to include the school name and invoice number on the check.*

- Have students complete the “Commitment to Participate” form. Keep for your own records.
- Begin meeting once a week to practice.
- Writing mini-lesson.
- 40-minute writing session with prompt.
- Use the Coaches’ Manual (pages 20-23 and pages 33-55) along with online resources to help guide weekly lessons.

**November**
- Recruit colleagues to serve as additional judges.

  - You will need one judge per grade level at the District Tournament (for a total of up to 2 judges).

  - You will need one judge for every 1-3 qualifiers at each grade level at the Regional and State Tournaments (for a total of up to 4 judges).

  - Regional and State judges must have prior Power of the Pen judging experience. If you are a new school participating in the program, or if you will have new judges participating this year, please make sure all potential judges attend the judges’ orientation at the District Tournament and either participate in judging or shadow a qualified judge during the District Tournament. Please contact your Regional Director for more information about judging requirements.

- Enter student contestant names online before December 1 to avoid a late fee.
December

☐ Arrange transportation for the District Tournament.
☐ Distribute and collect forms.
☐ Tournament permission slips (per school/district policy)
☐ Permission to Publish forms from all writers and alternates along with runners’ forms (if applicable) must be completed before the District Tournament.
☐ Respond to communication from the Host School Coordinator and Regional Director about the District Tournament.
☐ Recruit parent volunteers for the District Tournament. Send volunteer names to the Host School Coordinator.
☐ Be sure registration fees are paid by December 1.

January/February

☐ Respond to communication from the Host School Coordinator and Regional Director about the District Tournament.
☐ Be sure to update all contestant names online at least one week prior to the District Tournament. Any changes made less than 96 hours prior to the tournament will incur a fee.
☐ Enter Permission to Publish forms into the online system at least a week before the District Tournament.
☐ On the day of the tournament, please bring all signed Permission to Publish forms with you to turn in at registration. Your Permission to Publish forms must be turned in to participate.
☐ Consider sharing a “practice grid” with your students prior to the day of the tournament.

February/March

☐ Arrange transportation for the Regional Tournament.
☐ Respond to communication from the Host School Coordinator and Regional Director about the Regional Tournament.
☐ Confirm all Regional qualifiers and judges online as soon as possible. Any changes made less than 96 hours prior to the tournament will incur a fee.

April/May

☐ Register for the State Tournament.
☐ Confirm all State qualifiers and judges as soon as possible, prior to the published deadline.
☐ Register for on-campus housing/meals, if necessary.
☐ Arrange transportation for the State Tournament.
☐ Begin practicing 35-minute writing prompts to prepare for the State Tournament rounds.
☐ Communicate with school office regarding all payments for the State Tournament.
   *Be sure to instruct your treasurer to include the school name and invoice number on the check.*
☐ All payments/fees must be made prior to participation in the State Tournament.
☐ Follow-up with your treasurer if any financial obligations remain after the State Tournament.