

## Frequently Asked Questions

### How do I enter?

Please read our complete entry guidelines [here](#).

### How should I prepare my manuscript?

Please read our complete entry guidelines here and see our sample manuscript pages [here](#).

### What font/margin/size should I use?

As described in our guidelines, your manuscript must be double spaced and submitted on white paper in black, 12-point type. We prefer Word documents (standard 8.5 x 11-inch size, with “portrait” page layout) with one-inch margins in readable fonts. Times New Roman is recommended. A clear sans-serif font such as Arial or Candara is also acceptable. If you strongly prefer another font, please make sure it is a clear, legible font. To ensure that your submission is accepted, be certain to check that the 12-point size in whatever font you choose is very comparable in size with 12-point Times New Roman. Easy readability is essential. Double spacing is required. Work that is not double-spaced will be discarded, and the entry will not be judged. Please see our [Sample Manuscript Pages](#) for the proper page set-up and further instruction.

### How should I prepare my book dummy?

Please read our Helpful Tips for Illustrators [here](#).

### Will I be notified when my entry is received?

No. At this time, with hard-copy print submissions by regular mail, you will not be notified that your entry has been received by SAA—unless you wish to provide, with your entry, a self-addressed stamped postcard that says, “Your submission to the Tassy Walden Award competition has been received.” SAA will return your postcard upon receipt of your entry.

### Is the contest only open to Connecticut residents?

Yes. This contest is open only to unpublished writers or illustrators, aged 16 or older at the time of submission, whose primary residence is in the state of CT.

### Since this is a competition for CT writers and illustrators, do the submissions have to be about Connecticut or set in Connecticut?

No. Your work can be about any topic set anywhere in the world, and your images may depict any kind of setting anywhere in the world.

### Can I submit someone else’s material?

No. The manuscript must be your own original work.

### Can I submit my entry after the posted deadline?

No. All entries must be postmarked either before or exactly on the date of the posted deadline. All late submissions will be discarded, and late entrants will not be notified that their entry arrived too late for submission.

### Can I enter this contest more than once?

Yes. Each year, as long as you remain unpublished, you can submit up to two manuscripts in each of these four categories: Picture Book Text Only, Illustrated Picture Book, Middle Grade Novel, and Young Adult Novel. You may also submit one or more manuscripts and an Illustrator’s Portfolio, our fifth category. Each entry is considered separately. You will need to pay an entry fee for each entry. The first entry fee is \$20; any additional submissions have an entry fee of \$15.

### I have submitted my manuscript and/or artwork to the Tassy Walden competition in the past and it has not been named a winner or a finalist. Can I resubmit the same work?

If a manuscript or art has previously been submitted, you may certainly resubmit the same work. While our judges are tops in the industry and adept at appraising all entries, their professional decisions are also subjective and may reflect changing trends. New judges will review your work this year, and you may find favor with one of these new judges. (We hope you do!) We also recommend that you review, reflect on, and revise older work in hopes of improving it. We also encourage you to try new work.

### I have submitted my manuscript and/or artwork to the Tassy Walden competition in the past, and I have been named a winner, an honorable mention, or a finalist. I remain unpublished. Can I resubmit the same work?

**If your manuscript or artwork has previously been submitted and you have been named a finalist (and you remain unpublished), you may certainly resubmit the same work** in hopes of being recognized as a winner. This circumstance of abundant good news may help confirm to you that your work is of considerable quality, and this information may be of interest to a prospective publisher. **However, we also encourage you to try a submission of new work.** Should the new work also prove noteworthy to our judges, you would then have two *separate and different* Tassy successes to help you assess your work – and to impress prospective publishers. But the choice is yours: you may resubmit the same work, or you may prepare and submit new work.

**If you have already been named a winner (and you remain unpublished), you *must* submit a new work.** A second win on the same manuscript would surely be an embarrassment of riches for you, especially at the Tassy Awards Celebration, when a) you would be congratulated for the same work a second time, b) you would collect a second prize for the same work, and c) you would be invited to read the same initial chapter or show the same illustrations to your peers. So, if you are previous winner and yet remain unpublished and thus are *absolutely* eligible to submit with our *full and enthusiastic* support, **we require you to submit a new manuscript or a new set of illustrations.**

**I wrote my picture book text, and my friend, child, grandparent, partner illustrated it—or vice versa. May I submit this work as an author-illustrator?**

No. You cannot submit this work as an author-illustrator. You must be both the author and the illustrator; no author-illustrator collaborations are permitted in this competition. The author and the illustrator must be the exact same person.

**I am published as a picture book illustrator but not as an author. Am I still eligible for the picture book text category or for the illustrated picture book category?**

No. If your work as an illustrator has been published in book form, you are ineligible for this competition. For the list of possible exceptions, please see the eligibility chart at the end of this document.

**I have co-authored my picture book text or my novel with another author. May we submit this work as a single entry?**

No, you may not submit a co-authored work. You must be the sole creator of this work.

**Can my picture book text be nonfiction?**

Yes. We receive many nonfiction picture book texts and nonfiction illustrated picture books. Keep in mind, however, that the target audience should be generally young (toddler through perhaps age 8) and the text can be no longer than 1200 words.

**I have illustrated a picture book that has no text. Can I enter this submission, in the Illustrated Picture Book category, without a manuscript?**

Yes. If your illustrated book is a wordless picture book, it is still eligible. Along with your illustrated book dummy, please include a single sheet of paper that includes your contact information and states, “This submission is a wordless picture book. It has no text.” If your illustrated book has very few words, please be sure that the words appear in your bound dummy and please submit a manuscript that includes that brief text, plus, if necessary for clarity, the page numbers upon which those words appear.

**In the Middle Grade Novel and Young Adult Novel categories, can I submit fiction only?**

Yes. In the Middle Grade and Young Adult categories, we are asking for the first 25 pages (plus a synopsis) (plus a synopsis) of novel-length fiction manuscripts. We do not offer a nonfiction category for an older target audience. **NOTE:** We do not accept graphic novels: that is, novels that feature and/or rely on an illustrated component.

**How long does my novel need to be?**

Along with a complete synopsis, we are asking you to submit only the first 25 pages of your completed novel, but your full-length manuscript for a middle-grade (MG) or Young Adult (YA) novel should be finished and available upon request. Novels can be of any length. You may wish to research the typical lengths of novels for these target audiences, but, in general, the industry does seem to embrace exceptional novels of varying lengths.

**I am submitting a middle grade or young adult novel to the competition. How long should my synopsis be?**

You may choose. Every synopsis should tell the complete plot and character development arc of your story, from beginning to end. Your synopsis may be somewhat length (three to five pages is fairly typical but fewer or more pages are permissible). Or, with very careful crafting, it may also be a powerful single page. Other competitions and many agents and editors have strict limits (such as 1 page or 250 words), so you may wish to craft a synopsis that you may use again for other purposes. For the Tassy competition, you may choose to write several detailed paragraphs that summarize the action as well as the themes and character elements, or you may choose to create a chapter-by-chapter outline that briefly describes the principal work of each chapter from start to finish. In addition to its most important work of fleshing out your plot and characters, the full synopsis helps to assure the judges that you have completed your novel. Your complete novel must be available immediately upon request. Our judges will be reading for “Story” and will not be critiquing your synopsis format, so feel free to choose the format that works best for your work. Your synopsis may be a single-spaced document (in black, 12-point, Times New Roman), and you may place it before or after your 25 manuscript pages.

**Should I submit a cover letter?**

No. No cover letters of any kind are necessary for any submissions; should you include one, it will not be sent to the judges.

**What if I feel that I must explain my work?**

Your intentions should be obvious in the work itself. Please do not add explanatory or personal notes to the judges, either in a cover letter or at the beginning of or at the end of your picture book or novel manuscript. Any notes that are found by the submission team will be removed or obscured.

**What are the differences between a MG novel and a YA novel?**

The target audience for Middle Grade novels is generally 8 to 12-year-olds; the readers of Young Adult novels are generally 12 to 18-year-olds. For general guidelines as to length, subject matter, and other elements, you may wish to read the information and opinions posted on such blogs and websites as:

Mary Kole: <http://kidlit.com/2010/11/20/is-it-mg-or-ya/>

Laura Backes Children's Book Insider: <http://write4kids.com/feature6.html>

Claire Legrand: <http://writeoncon.com/08/15/differences-between-ya-and-mg-and-the-challenges-of-writing-both-by-author-claire-legrand/>

Hannah Moskowitz: <http://hannahmosk.blogspot.com/2010/09/mg-vs-ya.html>

Other voices: <http://www.sfwa.org/2013/02/an-introduction-to-middle-grade-and-young-adult-fiction-part-1-definitions/>

Mixed Up MGs: <http://www.fromthemixedupfiles.com/2010/10/differences-between-middle-grade-and-young-adult/>

### **Can I submit a manuscript that I am still working on?**

No—at least not exactly. While you may significantly revise your work even after you submit your picture book text or your novel's first 25 pages to the Tassy Walden competition, we require that your work on your full-length manuscript is both complete and polished at the time of submission.

### **Do I have to submit my work in English?**

Yes, all works must be submitted in English. However, if the purpose of your book is to reach a bilingual market or to teach or expose young readers to a second language, parts of your text can be in another language.

### **Are translations eligible?**

Yes, but the author and the original work are subject to the same terms and conditions as all other entries.

### **Do I keep my copyright if I enter?**

Yes. Each submission remains the intellectual property of the entrant, as protected by U.S. copyright law.

### **Will you accept a manuscript that does not conform to one of the five listed categories?**

You should not enter the competition if your work does not conform to one of our five listed categories. At this time, we do not award a prize for poetry anthologies or short stories, for instance, and we do not award a prize for graphic novels. (Note: Graphic novels—that is, novels that feature or rely on an illustrated component—should not be submitted in the MG or YA categories.) If you submit and pay the entry fee for an entry that does not conform to one of the competition categories, your work will be discarded. Your entry will not be returned to you, and your entry fee will not be refunded.

### **I'm an agent. Can I submit my client's work to this competition?**

No. This competition is for writers and illustrators only. Agents should pitch and submit the projects of their clients to publishing houses in the usual manner. You may certainly urge your client to independently submit an entry to the Tassy Walden competition.

### **I have an agent who submits my work to publishers. Can I still enter the competition as an individual?**

Yes. If you are an agented—but still unpublished—writer or illustrator, you may submit your work to the Tassy Walden competition on your own.

### **Can I submit if my manuscript or my portfolio is under consideration with a publisher or agent?**

Yes. Manuscripts and illustrations that are being considered by publishers remain eligible for submission. However, if your work is accepted for publication and you have signed a contract before the competition entry deadline of February 3, you must notify Shoreline Arts Alliance. You must withdraw your entry from consideration by our judges; your entry fee will not be refunded. If your submitted entry should come under contract after the competition deadline (but before the May announcement of winners and finalists), your entry remains eligible and does not have to be withdrawn from consideration by our judges.

### **Should I address my submission to a particular judge?**

No. Our volunteer judges remain anonymous, so there is no need to specify a name. Keep in mind that we do not want you to submit a cover letter or any other explanatory notes, biography, resume, or curriculum vitae, so there is no need to address your entry to anyone in particular. Your submission must stand on its own two feet. Any additional materials will be discarded. Please submit only your entry form, your entry fee, and your work. Your entry will be directed to the correct judge with a specialty in the category of submission.

### **Are the submissions blinded?**

No. The judges will be aware of the entrants' identities. Please do not use a pseudonym. You must submit using your real name. Please keep in mind that all entrants must be individuals; organizations, companies, or corporations cannot submit.

### **On what criteria are the submissions judged?**

In general, editors are always looking for writers with a fresh voice, strong storytelling abilities, original ideas, and a compelling storyline. Art directors are looking for strong drawing and painting skills, polished techniques, and the ability to portray and expand

the narrative in illustrations that are also fresh, original, and compelling. To discover what may help your work stand out, please explore the Tassy Walden Award main page to read about the criteria our judges use to evaluate the submissions.

**Can you offer any more detail about the ways that the judges look at the illustrator's portfolio submissions?**

In the portfolio category, the Tassy judges look for a consistent level of quality throughout the ten required pieces of art. All pieces should be at the same level of completion, and a consistent style should carry through the entire array of samples. (If you have two kinds of illustrations to offer, we advise that you have 5 strong pieces of art in one style and 5 strong pieces in the second style). Judges are looking at your technical strengths: strong drawing skills; sharp grasp of perspective; strong sense of composition; good use of value structures; and accomplished examples of difficult elements such as facial expressions, hands, and feet. Especially because this is a children's book illustration competition, the judges look for a strong child-appealing point of view or a sense of humor or wit or whimsy as you attempt to interpret the world for young readers. Since three pieces must focus on a single narrative, you will need to have a theme or story in mind so that you can demonstrate that you can show story progression and can take characters from one scene to another.

**Once in a while, no winner is chosen in a particular category, even when several finalists have been named. Can you tell us why this might happen?**

One special aspect of the Tassy Walden competition is that each and every submission is judged individually on its own merits, according to standards that are common and highly regarded in the children's book publishing industry. This means that your work is being individually assessed for its own qualities. Your submission is not being judged in comparison to the other submissions. The judges look for fresh, original, creative work that has been finely polished and has been presented in a professional manner. They do not look at the entire set of submissions as a whole and simply choose the best of the bunch or the cream of the crop. In selecting finalists, they are searching for submission that a) demonstrate a clear understanding of childhood and childhood interests and issues; b) have a clear point of view and a clear target audience suitable to the category; and c) have been submitted in a manner that reflects industry guidelines for professional submissions. In selecting winners from the group of finalists, judges are looking for outstanding work that shows exceptional potential - - and again, each submission is assessed on its own merits. In these ways, the Tassy award has meaning that offers entrants valuable information about their own particular work. Finalists, honorable mentions, and winners can feel confident that their work has individual merit - - and is not merely the best among the particular field of entries in one particular year.

**Do the judges offer any feedback?**

Unfortunately, due to the volume of submissions, our judges are not able to provide individual feedback or comments on each submission. On occasion, some judges may offer a brief note of praise, encouragement, or advice to finalists or winners.

**Will Shoreline Arts Alliance tell me the name of the judge who evaluated my work?**

No. All judges remain anonymous. The chair of the committee, however, does remind each judge that he or she is welcome to contact winners, finalists, and other entrants at his or her own discretion.

**Will I ever hear from the judge who evaluated my work?**

If you were not named a winner or a finalist, it is highly unlikely that you will hear from one of our judges. Entries are not blinded, however, so judges may certainly take notes on entries that intrigued them. In the past, several of our entrants have been contacted by the judges who evaluated their work or by a judge who heard or saw their work at our annual awards ceremony. Some of that work has been requested by the judge, who may be a literary agent, an editor, or an art director. Some of the requested work has gone on to publication.

**Will Shoreline Arts Alliance publish my work?**

No. Shoreline Arts Alliance is not a publishing company. We will not publish your work. We will not post your work online. A possible exception is that we may use illustrator artwork, with the illustrator's permission, on the Tassy Walden Award web pages or in press releases sent to regional newspapers.

**When will you announce the winners or honorable mentions?**

All announcements are made at the same time. We do not announce the names of the finalists before the judges have made their final decisions regarding winners or honorable mentions in each category. As soon as all results are in from the judges, each winner (and any honorable mentions) will receive a personal phone call from the Chair of the Tassy Walden Award competition. Those calls typically are made in the first week of May. We will publicly announce the names of the winners (and/or honorable mentions, if any are named) and the finalists by email and on the Shoreline Arts Alliance website by May 15. To receive the email notification, be sure to write your email address on your entry form.

**If I am named a winner or a finalist or receive an honorable mention, will I benefit from any publicity efforts?**

Shoreline Arts Alliance will announce the results through a wide variety of local and regional media outlets, particularly newspapers. In addition, the Alliance will post the results of the competition on its website. On several occasions, newspapers and regional and community-access television stations have done features on the competition, particularly if a local resident has been the recipient of an award or if the work has soon come under contract by a publisher. If you wish to promote your own success in the competition, we encourage you to initiate contact with a local news outlet such as newspapers, radio programs, or local community access television programs. Local chapters of the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators also are notified of the winners and finalists, and,

at each chapter's discretion, those announcements may be passed on to local members. Shoreline Arts Alliance may also invite you to participate in its educational outreach workshops for prospective entrants; these fall workshops offer an opportunity for our winners and finalists to share their expertise and their Tassy experiences with unpublished writers and illustrators throughout the state.

**I have sold or produced some of my creative work in a few kinds of ways and places. I have read the Tassy Walden Award guidelines and the FAQs, but I still have some questions about eligibility. Is there someone I can talk to about this topic?**

We'll try to answer your questions below. If you have a very unusual case, please send the specifics in an email to [tassy@shorelinearts.org](mailto:tassy@shorelinearts.org), and we'll get back to you quickly.

**Rules of Eligibility:**

It is important to first note that:

- the competition is not open to employees of Shoreline Arts Alliance or to their family members;
- the competition is not open to members of the judging panel or to the family members of the judging panel;
- the Tassy Walden Award is open to unpublished writers and illustrators only: it is dedicated to helping new voices emerge .

**You are eligible if:**

- you have never published anything;
- you have published poetry, fiction, or nonfiction pieces (including memoirs, essays, or feature articles) in a magazine, newsletter, newspaper, literary journal, or trade journal; or have contributed in a minor way to an anthology.
- you have published such nonfiction works as a master's thesis or doctoral dissertation, or a technical manual or handbook;
- your written work has been produced on stage but has not been published;
- your illustration work has been published in a print magazine or newsletter or in an online magazine or newsletter;
- your illustrations or other artwork have been shown or sold in a gallery or museum or other artspace (including online);
- your written or illustrated work has been produced on calendars, greeting cards, bookmarks, or as similar printed material.

**You are ineligible if:**

- you have had any book of fiction (novel, novella, short stories), poetry, or nonfiction published (in print or e-book format);
- you have self-published (in print or e-book format) and offered for sale a book of either fiction, poetry, or nonfiction. \*
- you are the named editor of any published books (for instance, anthologies of poetry, short stories, or essays).
- you are the illustrator of any published illustrations in any book form (e-books, children's books, or adult fiction or nonfiction).

**\*So, exactly what kinds of self-published work make me ineligible to submit?**

If your work has ever been printed and bound and has been given an ISBN number and/or has been offered for sale anywhere at any time, either in print or electronically, you are published and are not eligible to enter this competition.

**\*And so, exactly what kinds of self-published work can I have produced that make me still eligible?**

If your work has been hand-printed, hand-lettered, or printed in small quantities as a bound book and has not been offered for sale anywhere at any time, you remain eligible.