

# Tampa Bay Times Newspaper in Education 2026 Science Fiction and Fantasy Writing Contest Rubric

Category	Exceptional (5)	Good (4)	Fair (3)	Poor (2)
<b>Adherence to 2026 theme: First Contact</b>	First Contact is integral to the plot.	First Contact is a major factor in the plot.	First Contact is a minor factor in the plot.	The story has no clear connection to First Contact.
<b>Creativity</b>	<p>The story is filled with creative and descriptive language. The writer engages the reader with an entertaining tale of an event that the audience can relate to.</p> <p>The author has really used his/her imagination.</p>	<p>The story contains some creative details and/or descriptions that contribute to the reader's enjoyment.</p> <p>The author has used his/her imagination.</p>	<p>The story contains a few creative details and/or descriptions.</p> <p>The author has tried to use his/her imagination.</p>	<p>There is little creative language in the story.</p> <p>The author does not seem to have used much imagination.</p>
<b>Characters</b>	<p>Main characters are well developed through description, dialogue, actions and thoughts.</p> <p>Main characters change or grow during the story.</p>	<p>Main characters are somewhat developed through description, dialogue, actions and thoughts.</p> <p>Main characters change or grow during the story.</p>	<p>Main characters are minimally developed. They are described rather than established through dialogue, actions and thoughts.</p> <p>They show little growth or change during the story.</p>	<p>Main characters are lacking development.</p> <p>They do not change or grow during the story.</p>

Category	Exceptional (5)	Good (4)	Fair (3)	Poor (2)
<b>Organization</b>	<p>The plot is thoroughly developed.</p> <p>The story is very well organized. One idea or scene follows another in a logical sequence with clear transitions.</p> <p>The story has a clear resolution or surprise ending.</p>	<p>The plot is adequately developed.</p> <p>The story is arranged in logical order. Clear transitions are used.</p> <p>The story has a clear beginning, middle and end.</p>	<p>The plot is minimally developed.</p> <p>The sequence of events is sometimes confusing and may be hard to follow.</p> <p>The story does not have a clear beginning, middle, and end.</p>	<p>The story lacks a developed plot line.</p> <p>Ideas and scenes seem to be randomly arranged. The relationship between events is often confusing.</p> <p>The story is missing either a beginning or an end.</p>
<b>Conventions</b>	<p>The story contains few or no errors in grammar, usage, mechanics or spelling.</p>	<p>The story contains some errors in grammar, usage, mechanics or spelling.</p>	<p>The story contains many and/or serious errors in grammar, usage, mechanics or spelling. These sometimes make the story hard to understand.</p>	<p>The story contains so many errors in grammar, usage, mechanics or spelling that it interferes with the meaning of the story.</p>