



# 2023 Yearbook Critique Booklet

**SCHOOL NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_

**PUBLICATION NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_

**YEAR:** \_\_\_\_\_

**THEME:** \_\_\_\_\_

**ADVISER:** \_\_\_\_\_

**CLASSIFICATION:**      1A                      2A                      3A                      4A

This critique booklet is designed to be an educational device to improve the quality of your yearbook. It is intended to point out positive aspects of your publication as well as to suggest areas for improvement.

Judging comments are designed as suggestions for improvement. Keep in mind that these comments represent just one individual's opinion. Comments should represent current trends in yearbook production. A judge's comments may not apply to all school situations. Please understand that it would be impossible for your judge to be aware of the specifics of each school.

Each of the five sections contained in this guide book has an overall evaluation where the judge must rate the section according to an overall set of criteria. The final evaluation is based on an average of the five section evaluations. Each section calls for a specific ranking with a (+) for strong work in the area; a (√) for being adequate and a (-) for needing improvement.

An overall open-comment critique space is included on the final page of this document.

**THEME**

- + √ - Evaluate how well an obvious theme concept is utilized to create unity throughout the publication
- + √ - Evaluate how well a concept is introduced on the front cover and carried throughout the book via an opening section, dividers and a closing section.
- + √ - Evaluate how well the theme concept helps to set an overall tone or impression of the book, the year and the school.
- + √ - Evaluate how well the theme concept employs a unique flavor that helps set it apart from other publications.
- + √ - Evaluate how distinctive, appealing and unique the design of the theme concept is.
- + √ - Evaluate how well the reporting found on theme concept pages carries the theme forward in the book
- + √ - Evaluate how specific the reporting is to this school, to this theme and to this year.
- + √ - Evaluate how well photographs show the relationship of the theme to the book.
- + √ - Evaluate how well the captions supplement the action of the photos and help to carry the theme forward through the book.

**SERVICES**

- + √ - Evaluate how well the book indicates the staff's awareness of a definite concern for readability.
- + √ - Evaluate how well the title page contains a distinctive and dramatic design that includes name and year of book, school name, school address, enrollment and other pertinent data.
- + √ - Evaluate the location and information of the table of contents.
- + √ - Evaluate how well the table of contents gives the useful and common name for each section, rather than simply an expression of the theme.
- + √ - Evaluate how well the folios include page number and page content.

- + √ - Evaluate how well folios are designed to be informative without being effusive.
- + √ - Evaluate how well the book includes a complete index of people, organizations, activities and advertising with appropriate page numbers.

**LEVELS OF DISTINCTION**

**Golden Pony:**

Staff has created an exemplary publication in the areas of Theme and Services. Staff obviously understands the need to provide readers with elements that enhance readability of the publication.

**Silver Spur:**

Staff has done an adequate job in the areas of Theme and Services. Staff demonstrates an awareness of these elements and utilizes most all essentials for enhancing readability of the yearbook despite some obvious inconsistencies.

**Bronze Star:**

Staff needs to work on providing greater reader services. Improvement is necessary in this area and staff would do well to incorporate a plan for future years.

**Concepts Overall Comments:**

**STUDENT LIFE**

- + √ - Evaluate how well the yearbook provides full-year coverage of the school year including summer activities.
- + √ - Evaluate how well coverage indicates the unique elements of this school during this school year.
- + √ - Evaluate how well the student life section is organized logically and topically.
- + √ - Evaluate how well feature coverage helps to show the reader the uniqueness of this school.
- + √ - Evaluate how well feature coverage avoids stale and over-used coverage ideas.
- + √ - Evaluate how well coverage is selected: does it provide something for everyone in the audience?
- + √ - Evaluate how well coverage of standard school events such as homecoming, school musical and graduation covered.
- + √ - Evaluate how enticing coverage presentation is to students
- + √ - Evaluate how well sidebar stories or alternative coverage been included to enhance the overall coverage concept.

**SPORTS**

- + √ - Evaluate if sports coverage is appropriate for the size of the book and the size of the school.
- + √ - Evaluate how well the staff provides equal and adequate coverage for both boys and girls athletics.
- + √ - Evaluate how well the staff supplements athletic coverage with coverage of intramurals (if offered) and non-organized and outside-of-school athletic involvement.
- + √ - Evaluate how well coverage includes complete scoreboards with overall win/loss records.
- + √ - Evaluate how well sports coverage documents the highlights of each athletic season.
- + √ - Evaluate how well sports features are incorporated into coverage.
- + √ - Evaluate how well sports coverage emphasizes — through reporting and photography — the unique aspects of the season.

Evaluate how adequately all sports are covered.

+ √ -  
**ACADEMICS**

- + √ - Evaluate how well this section features unique aspects of the academic side of school.
- + √ - Evaluate how well academic topics chosen have a meaning for the book’s readership.
- + √ - Evaluate how well the section avoids the typical academic coverage like frog dissection, etc.
- + √ - Evaluate how well the staff has avoided using this section to feature the faculty rather than placing them in the people section.
- + √ - Evaluate how well lively and illustrative the section is.
- + √ - Evaluate the staff’s coverage of topics unique to this academic year.
- + √ - Evaluate how well the academic coverage goes beyond the walls of the building to feature learning in other arenas such as workshops, conventions and seminars.
- + √ - Evaluate how well the coverage gives a complete view of the school year by covering electives, required courses and vocational offerings.

**PEOPLE**

- + √ - Evaluate how well this section includes mug shots of faculty as well as of students.
- + √ - Evaluate how well faculty information is compiled adjacent to the photos?
- + √ - Evaluate how appropriate portrait head sizes are to the size of the book as well as to the size of the school.
- + √ - Evaluate how well each portrait spread includes a copy feature or other coverage.
- + √ - Evaluate how well the section includes coverage of the support staff in addition to faculty.
- + √ - Evaluate how well the section allows for coverage of the administration without allowing it to dominate the section.
- + √ - Evaluate how well reporting emphasizes unique talents, personalities and individuals.

+ √ - If blended with another section (such as Academics), evaluate how well the people section provides proper coverage

+ √ - Evaluate how well the special section blends into the overall flow of the book.

**ORGANIZATIONS**

+ √ - Keeping in mind that some schools have a limited number of clubs, evaluate whether organizations coverage seems appropriate to the size of the school.

+ √ - Evaluate if the staff made it clear why the special section is included.

+ √ - Evaluate how well all school-sponsored clubs are included in the coverage.

+ √ - Evaluate how appropriate the size of the special section is to the size of the school and to the book.

+ √ - Evaluate how well the coverage emphasizes the unique aspects of the school year.

+ √ - Evaluate how well this section features topics that are common to all school organizations (such as fundraising).

+ √ - Evaluate how well the reader obtains a complete overview of the organization offerings at the school.

+ √ - Evaluate how lively the coverage is and how much emphasis is placed on activities from the year.

+ √ - Evaluate how well coverage shows the diversity of school clubs.

**LEVELS OF DISTINCTION**

**Golden Pony:**

Coverage is complete and thorough and helps to tell the story of the school year in both words and photos. Staff indicates an obvious awareness of coverage ideals. Staff approaches coverage with an emphasis on the unique and unusual.

**Silver Spur:**

Coverage is generally complete and adequately serves the readership. Staff shows an awareness of unique coverage concepts and is generally able to incorporate them throughout the book.

**Bronze Star:**

Coverage tends to be a bit shallow and lacks a creative spark that will set this book off from other books. The contemporary book should emphasize the unique and unusual. Staff would do well to place greater emphasis on these elements of coverage.

**ADS/COMMUNITY/SPECIAL SECTIONS**

Judge's Note: Not all yearbooks will incorporate these three elements, but most schools will have at least one. Evaluate the book on the basis of what is there and do not penalize a school for that which is not included.

+ √ - Evaluate the ads designed to sell a specific product or business.

+ √ - Evaluate how contemporary staff-created ads are in their approach.

+ √ - Evaluate how appealing ads are to a teenage audience.

+ √ - Evaluate how completely community coverage might serve as a reminder to a reader 25 years from now.

+ √ - Evaluate how well the community coverage emphasizes the locale's uniqueness.

+ √ - Evaluate how well community coverage highlights community-sponsored activities for student readers.

Coverage Overall Comments:

**CAPTIONS**

- + √ - Evaluate how well captions supplement the action of the photos throughout the book.
- + √ - Evaluate how well captions answer reader questions of who, what, when, where, why and how.
- + √ - Evaluate how well captions avoid stating the obvious.
- + √ - Evaluate the editing and clarity of captions.
- + √ - Evaluate the appropriateness in length of the captions.
- + √ - Evaluate how well captions identify all recognizable people photographed.
- + √ - Evaluate the attractiveness and effectiveness of the caption style.
- + √ - Evaluate how well the ongoing action of the photo is recorded in the caption: in present tense at the start and with subsequent information in past tense.
- + √ - Evaluate how well captions avoid road sign directions such as “pictured above” and “left center.”
- + √ - Evaluate how well group photos follow a specific and helpful style.
- + √ - Evaluate how well subjects are identified within the caption.

**HEADLINES**

- + √ - Evaluate how well headlines draw the reader to the coverage.
- + √ - Evaluate how well headlines for news topics follow a S-V-O format.
- + √ - Evaluate how well headlines avoid passive voice writing.
- + √ - Evaluate how well display (or “showcase”) headlines paired stories provide easy access to the reader for thencopy.
- + √ - Evaluate how well the staff avoids label headlines.
- + √ - Evaluate how appealing headlines are to readers.
- + √ - Evaluate how well headlines conform to grammar conventions.

- + √ - Evaluate how well headline writers place emphasis on accuracy and summary.
- + √ - Evaluate how well headlines inform the reader without overwhelming

**WRITING**

- + √ - Evaluate how well the staff demonstrates an obvious awareness of the need for sources in copy.
- + √ - Evaluate how well copy “leads” draw the reader into the reporting.
- + √ - Evaluate how well the staff demonstrates use of a recognized stylebook or greater consistency.
- + √ - Evaluate the consistent use of past tense.
- + √ - Evaluate how colorful the copy is, without being effusive.
- + √ - Evaluate whether the coverage relies on source quotations
- + √ - Evaluate whether paragraphs are kept short for greater readability.
- + √ - Evaluate how well reporters remain objective and avoid including personal opinion.
- + √ - Evaluate how specific the writing of copy is in detail.
- + √ - Evaluate how tight and careful the editing is
- + √ - Evaluate how well the staff has used subtle and smooth transitions.
- + √ - Evaluate how focused the writing is throughout the book.
- + √ - Evaluate how unique and unusual the anecdotes and reporting are.
- + √ - Evaluate how well the book incorporates alternative copy features.
- + √ - Evaluate how well writers attribute information to sources.

**LEVELS OF DISTINCTION**

**Golden Pony:**

Reporting supplements the photographic action in the book. Each spread includes a specific and complete report. Reporting demonstrates quality writing skills by student staff members. Reporting is free of typos, spelling errors and grammatical mistakes.

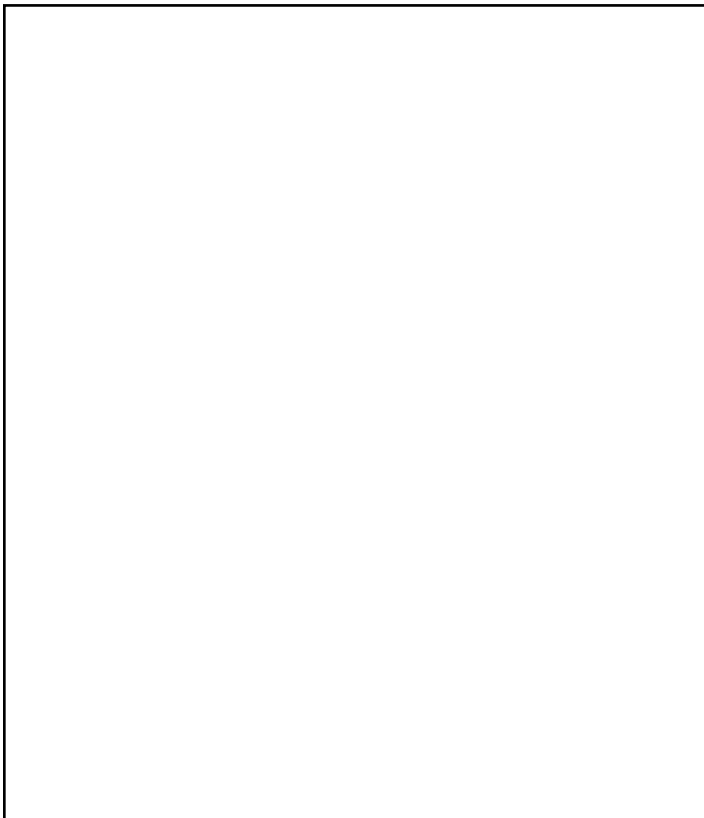
**Silver Spur:**

Reporting is sound but could use more color. Staff has indicated an awareness of the need for sound reporting. Copy tends to lack a spark that is essential to drawing the reader interest.

**Bronze Star:**

Copy is a bit flat and not available throughout the book. Copy that is included tends to be stiff and stilted. Typos, spelling errors, editorializing and grammatical miscues are apparent.

**Reporting Overall Comments:**



**COMPOSITION**

- + √ - Evaluate how well photographs demonstrate advanced planning by the photographer.
- + √ - Evaluate how well photos tell their own specific story.
- + √ - Evaluate how well the photography selected in each section of the book helps to enhance the coverage.
- + √ - Evaluate how well photos reveal a variety of camera angles.
- + √ - Evaluate how well the staff attempted to avoid posed photos.
- + √ - Evaluate how well the staff made effective use of dominant photography.
- + √ - Evaluate how well the photos showcase a broad range of emotions.
- + √ - Evaluate how well photos have been planned to include people.
- + √ - Evaluate how well photos have been cropped.
- + √ - Evaluate how well head sizes remain consistent in portrait panels.
- + √ - Evaluate how representative the selection of photographed students is for the student body.

**TECHNICAL QUALITY**

- + √ - Evaluate how well photos show a technical quality.
- + √ - Evaluate the focus or meaningful use of blur in photos.
- + √ - Evaluate how the tonal qualities of the photos match real life appearances.
- + √ - Evaluate the digital image processing of the photos.
- + √ - Evaluate how well the photos have been adjusted for proper contrast.
- + √ - Evaluate how well depth of field and center of visual impact have been considered.
- + √ - Evaluate the cropping of photos on portrait panels.
- + √ - Evaluate the overall crisp appearance of photos by avoiding pixelation.

+    √    -    Evaluate how well group photos have been cropped.

**LEVELS OF DISTINCTION**

**Golden Pony:**

Photography throughout the yearbook indicates staff has an awareness of the critical role quality photography plays in telling the complete story of the school year. Sound composition and strong technical quality are apparent throughout the book with few lapses.

**Silver Spur:**

Photography is generally strong throughout the yearbook. There are some technical problems but these are kept to a minimum. Staff shows evidence of appropriate photo selection.

**Bronze Star:**

Photography quality is low and hampers reader understanding of the year's events. Technical quality, as well as composition of photos, tends to break down consistently in the publication, creating a negative dominance throughout the book.

**Photography Overall Comments:**

**DESIGN**

**TYPOGRAPHY**

- +    √    -    Evaluate how well the typefaces blend throughout the book.
- +    √    -    Evaluate how well the type helps to communicate to the reader.
- +    √    -    Evaluate how well typography provides effective contrast within each section or spread.
- +    √    -    Evaluate how well the start of captions provide a function and attractive entry to captions.
- +    √    -    Evaluate how well type adds to the coverage by drawing in the reader.
- +    √    -    Evaluate how well the staff avoided the use of overly decorative typefaces that draw attention to themselves.
- +    √    -    Evaluate how well theme development spreads have a distinctive type styling that helps separate them from the rest of the book.
- +    √    -    Evaluate how well the staff utilized a consistent style for headlines.
- +    √    -    Evaluate how well headlines lead the reader to the coverage through effective placement.
- +    √    -    Evaluate how well typographical points of entrance such as large initial letters, pulled quotes and fact boxes have been incorporated.

**GRAPHICS**

- +    √    -    Evaluate how well graphics have been included to complement the overall design concept.
- +    √    -    Evaluate how consistent the design pattern is from spread to spread, and section to section.
- +    √    -    Evaluate how well pages are unified as spreads as opposed to singular pages (unless consistent design dictates the use of single pages).
- +    √    -    Evaluate how well the staff utilized consistent internal and external margins.
- +    √    -    Evaluate how well graphic devices are incorporated for accent without being overly effusive.
- +    √    -    Evaluate how effectively color and gray tones have been used.
- +    √    -    Evaluate how well each spread features a dominant center of visual interest.

- + √ - Evaluate the effectiveness of white space.
- + √ - Evaluate how well captions and reporting blocks are set in one consistent width within a spread.
- + √ - Evaluate how well the staff made effective use of logos to identify page information.

**LEVELS OF DISTINCTION**

**Golden Pony:**

Yearbook shows staff understanding of basic design concepts with graphic accent. Spreads reveal unity of purpose with balance, dominance and perspective. Design helps communicate the message of the spreads without dominating that message. Design is clean, clear and appealing.

**Silver Spur:**

Design is clean and appropriate to the message the book is attempting to deliver. There are occasional problems with design elements but generally the design is simple, creative and effective for reader appreciation.

**Bronze Star:**

There are some serious design flaws noted in this book. Staff exhibits little understanding of basic design concepts. Poor quality of design tends to get in the way of reader communication. More emphasis on design techniques is necessary.

**Design Overall Comments:**

**IN SUMMARY  
CONCEPTS**

**Golden Pony**

**Silver Spur**

**Bronze Star**

**COVERAGE**

**Golden Pony**

**Silver Spur**

**Bronze Star**

**REPORTING**

**Golden Pony**

**Silver Spur**

**Bronze Star**

**PHOTOGRAPHY**

**Golden Pony**

**Silver Spur**

**Bronze Star**

**DESIGN**

**Golden Pony**

**Silver Spur**

**Bronze Star**

**FINAL EVALUATION**

**Golden Pony**

**Silver Spur**

**Bronze Star**



**Golden Pony:**

This is a quality yearbook that would compete well at any level. Staff demonstrates a solid understanding of the yearbook and its purpose. Book features well-written copy, attractive design and story-telling photography. This book obviously was produced to serve a readership. Staff and adviser should be most proud of their efforts. Staff goes above and beyond the typical to produce a book that sets the tone of the school year and does so with a unique approach.

**Silver Spur:**

This yearbook represents a work in progress. Staff members indicate an awareness of what a quality yearbook should include but fail to consistently carry out that mission. There are flashes of brilliance in all areas of yearbook production but this book lacks a necessary consistency to be readily effective. This book is about to break out and make its mark on the scholastic journalism scene once the staff can garner a greater consistency in quality and that extra spark that top yearbooks exhibit.

**Bronze Star:**

Too many flaws keep this publication from higher recognition. Staff and adviser should concentrate their efforts on basic yearbook production concepts. This book has obviously been produced as a labor of love but lacks the essential ingredients for a quality publication. Start with the basic considerations, and then once those have been mastered, the staff will be ready to ascend to the next rung. Strive to tell more of a complete story of your school year in both words and photos.

**Letter from the judge** - each school receives letter from its judge that is more free-flowing and open-ended than the rest of the critique. Judges may choose to use the same headings that are used in the critique booklet (concepts, coverage, etc.). Or, perhaps the judge has his or her format that would work well. This letter is intended to give judges more freedom in commenting than the “check, plus, minus” system in the critique book.

