

# Literary Magazine Critique

Navigation/organization  
Theme/Feature elements

ESSENTIALS refers to the information that makes the literary/art magazine reader-friendly.

## **ESSENTIALS — CONCEPT**

1. The cover has visual appeal and creates a unique impression of the magazine.
2. The cover and title page relate visually to each other.
3. The verbal and visual content work together to create a unified, coherent publication.

### **STRENGTHS:**

### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

## **ESSENTIALS — ORGANIZATION**

4. The front cover includes the name of the magazine, name of the school, volume number as an Arabic numeral and issue number.
5. The magazine includes the publication's editorial policy and mission statement.
6. The editorial policy explains how the staff functions, whether the magazine is an extracurricular activity, part of the curriculum or a juried publication.
7. The editorial policy explains how the verbal and visual content is solicited and selected. It includes policies for editing submissions/art.
8. The mission statement includes a description of the philosophy of the magazine and its purpose.
9. The following information is included in the magazine on the title page, staff box or colophon: name of college/school, complete address, date published, volume number (in Arabic numerals), issue number, phone and fax numbers, email address, school population (broken down by students and staff) and web site address, if applicable.
10. There is a complete staff listing that includes staff names, positions/responsibilities and adviser's name.
11. The colophon/staff box includes publishing specifications, including font families used, computer hardware and software, paper stock and price of the magazine. If there is a theme, the colophon explains how it was chosen.
12. The table of contents listing is accurate and visually/verbally goes with the concept/look of the magazine.
13. The table of contents includes titles of all literary and visual content; page numbers where each is located; and names of artists and writers. It is organized by genre, i.e. poetry, fiction, non-fiction, photography, artwork.
14. Artists and writers title their works.

### **STRENGTHS:**

### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

## **ESSENTIALS — READER SERVICES**

15. The writer/artist/photographer of each selection has been properly credited and photos/photo illustrations are clearly designated.
16. Folios appear on at least one page of each spread.
17. Each verbal and visual work includes the writer(s)/artist(s)/designer(s)' name(s) in a distinctive format adjacent to the work. For visual works, the media used is specified; i.e. digital photography, pastel, mixed media, scratchboard, paint, etc.
18. Spread designers are credited on the spread or in the colophon.
19. Any content (photos, art, infographics) taken from the internet or other sources are properly credited. Permission to reproduce has been obtained and is indicated in the credit by "Reproduced by permission of \_\_\_\_\_"
20. The magazine includes a description of the distribution process, number of copies printed and scholastic/collegiate press affiliations.

**STRENGTHS:**

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

Verbal elements include all prose fiction and non-fiction in varied story formats, and poetry. All verbal work is in the voice of the student writer.

**VERBAL GENERAL**

1. All stories begin with an impact lead/opening that arouses curiosity.
2. Leads/openings vary so that no pattern is established.
3. Paragraphs are brief, featuring transitions that lead the reader smoothly from one paragraph to the next.
4. Transitions avoid repeating what is contained in a quote unless used for emphasis.
5. A new paragraph begins after each quote.
6. Run-on sentences or sentence fragments do not appear in any story except in dialogue or to convey a special tone.
7. Writers avoid redundancies such as using "I" repeatedly.
8. Subjects and verbs agree; pronouns and antecedents agree.
9. The vocabulary is precise and fresh.
10. The descriptions evoke all five senses and include visual imagery.
11. The themes are evident to the reader and are clearly developed.
12. The punctuation, word usage, capitalization and spelling are correct.
13. The staff uses apostrophes correctly for contractions and possession.
14. The titles, whether connotative or denotative, capture the tone, mood and purpose of the story/poem.
15. All verbal content has been meticulously proofread.

**STRENGTHS:**

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

**VERBAL — PROSE FICTION**

16. The prose fiction verbal element of the magazine emphasizes telling stories in a compelling, authentic manner. The point of view provides impact and interest.
17. Plots are logical with character conflicts resolved believably.
18. Characters are fully developed with descriptive details so the reader has a visual image of each character.
19. The protagonists and antagonists are believable.
20. Any literary devices used, such as exposition, alliteration, allegory, irony, satire, parody, personification, imagery, metaphor, simile, flashback, foreshadowing, point of view, etc. serve an obvious purpose.

**STRENGTHS:**

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

**VERBAL — PROSE NON-FICTION (SOME MAGAZINES HAVE ALL GENRE, SOME COMPLETELY SKIP NON-FICTION)**

21. The prose non-fiction element of the magazine emphasizes telling stories in a compelling, authentic manner. The point of view provides impact and interest.
22. The non-fiction writing communicates accurate, credible information about things, events, people, concepts and theories.
23. Non-fiction techniques such as angles, leads, research and interviewing are used effectively.
24. Craft elements such as description, structure, character and voice are used effectively.
25. Non-fiction shows rather than tells. Foreshadowing, timing and character development build the story.

**STRENGTHS:**

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

**VERBAL POETRY**

26. The poetry offers originality of thought, freshness of insight and variety of form.
27. The poetry lifts the reader out of the ordinary.
28. Every single word counts, with word choice that is precise and sensory.
29. The vocabulary is vivid and sensory.
30. Themes are evident to the reader and are clearly developed. Trite, “teenage angst” themes are avoided.
31. Any literary devices used, such as personification, metaphor and simile, create fresh visual imagery.
32. There is a “poetry of music” — alliteration, repetition, internal, but not necessarily end of the line rhyme.

**STRENGTHS:**

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

33. The poems encapsulate ideas with a minimum of words.
34. The use of ambiguity, symbolism, irony, and other stylistic elements of poetic diction create poetry that is open to multiple interpretations.
35. The reader feels an identification with the poetry.
36. Poems use lines and stanzas, not sentences and paragraphs.

37. There is a pattern of recurrences of ideas.
38. There is parallel phrasing with effective line breaks.
39. There is evidence of a broad spectrum of styles and influences in the poetry.
40. Specific styles may include free verse, blank verse, Haiku, rhyming couplet and quatrain, sonnet, limerick, villanelle, exquisite corpse poems, six word stories etc.

#### **STRENGTHS:**

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

Visual content, design and typography complement each other to present a visually attractive magazine.

#### **VISUAL CONTENT**

1. All images serve an editorial purpose.
2. All images communicate with the reader.
3. All images are presented so as to create a strong visual impact on the reader.
4. The images show evidence of adherence to the composition requirements of dominance, balance, variety and flow.
5. The leading line or curve brings the reader's eye straight to the center of interest ensuring the greatest visual impact.
6. The visual themes in the images are fresh, not imitative or trite.
7. The visual images supplement and work in concert with the verbal content.
8. The action of the image leads onto, not off, the page.
9. The pattern or repetition of key elements brings the reader's eye straight to the center of interest.
10. Every image is strong enough to stand on its own.
11. Staff uses a variety of media.
12. The images are conceptually interesting, offering unique angles, fresh viewpoints and provocative insights.
13. The images exhibit technical merit and creativity.
14. Images that cross the gutter do not split faces or key elements of an image.
15. The pages display a visual-verbal connection, visually showing it in images and verbally reinforcing it in copy.
16. Each visual element on the page connects to the others, always conceptually, sometimes physically.
17. Proper resolution for digital images has prevented pixilation.
18. The images work on more than one level with composition, angle, distance and point of view all contributing to the overall effect.
19. Color, including black and white, helps deliver a message, rather than detracting from it.
20. Photographs use several techniques such as rule of thirds, depth of field, leading lines, framing, patterns, panning, backlighting and silhouettes to draw the reader's attention.

#### **STRENGTHS:**

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

#### **VISUAL — DESIGN**

21. The cover creates a unique impression through the use of typography, color and graphics, and introduces the concept/look of the magazine.

22. A specific grid/modular plan has been used in the design.
23. In fiction and non-fiction the story is split into columns. The copy never runs across the page in one column.
24. A dominant visual element appears on each spread. Other elements/photographs/art contrast in size and shape; placement varies to avoid visual monotony.
25. Every spread has at least three points of entry for the reader.
26. Adequate and consistent framing margins have been maintained for the entire magazine.
27. The design has focus. Readers know where to look first.
28. The design has flow. The reader's eye flows naturally around the spread.
29. Grouped elements have a clear visual relationship. Unrelated elements are separate.
30. Each page has been linked to its facing page by one or more of the following: eyelines, photos/art across the gutter, graphics.
31. Color, including black and white, is used effectively to make an image or verbal content stand out, to evoke emotion, to communicate.
32. Color, including black and white, is used to group related elements or to enhance the design.
33. All color has a purpose in the design, and its use is planned and consistent.
34. Graphics help to develop the "look" of the magazine. They are purposeful and used to unify and separate content.
35. Graphics enhance, not distract, from the content. They do not interfere with readability of content. Staff avoids the overuse of gimmicks.
36. The repetition of graphic elements is used effectively throughout the magazine.
37. The font family for the magazine is repeated in the verbal content, titles, table of contents, colophon, folios and folio tabs.
38. The font family is easy to read. There is consistency in spacing and type selection in titles, headlines and credits.
39. Any overprinted or reversed verbal content is easily readable, since overprints appear only on solid, light backgrounds and reverses only on solid, dark backgrounds.
40. Long stories are broken up with meaningful subheadings, pulled quotes or art.

**STRENGTHS:**

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**