

Yearbook Critique

Kettle Moraine Press Association
University of Wisconsin – Whitewater
Continuing Education Services
2005 Roseman Hall
Whitewater, WI 53190

Yearbook Name _____ Year _____
Adviser's Name _____
School _____
Address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____

TOTAL POINTS

	Max Score	Your Score		Max Score	Your Score
Theme	(75)		Photography	(230)	
Design/Typography	(200)		Style/Appeal	(90)	
Copy/Editorial	(230)		Bonus Points	(20)	
Coverage	(230)		TOTAL	(1055)	

RATINGS	
All-KEMPA	1,055–935
First Place	934–834
Second Place	833–734
Third Place	733–633

Introduction

High school yearbooks have been around for over 100 years and have become the treasured possessions of those who own them and often are the only written/printed history in their community. Because people look at their books often in their lifetimes, especially before reunions, yearbook staffs have a responsibility to be accurate and thorough as they gather the years' memories for publication.

The Kettle Moraine Press Association (KEMPA) is dedicated to educating and assisting students and advisers in the production of yearbooks that combine quality photos, exciting designs, accurate copy, complete coverage, and responsible editing. This critique is one of the ways in which KEMPA promotes quality journalism.

• Scorebook

This score-book serves two purposes. First, and most importantly, the score-book is a teaching tool. It gives yearbook staffs an objective analysis of how well their publications exemplify the fundamentals of scholastic journalism. Secondly, the score-book rewards a yearbook staff for everything the staff members have done well. Any criticism is constructive by its very nature.

• Scoring decisions

Scoring decisions are made against basic standards of scholastic journalism. Occasionally, yearbook staffs choose to ignore certain standards. That editorial decision is the privilege of the staff. In evaluation of a publication, however, a judge cannot make a scoring exceptions because a staff made a decision to follow a certain "tradition" of the school. The judge is obligated to score each newspaper against set standards.

• Responsibility

The students who create their school's yearbook and the adviser who oversees the process have a heavy responsibility to put together a product that covers the year completely and ethically, with every effort to act professionally. The permanence of the product makes their job even harder and more important. This evaluation can point out any problem areas so that the staff can make the necessary improvements in the next yearbook.

• Copyright

Simply attributing work to its creator is not the same as receiving consent to publish. Photos, graphics and art republished with permission should be credited with "Photo used with permission of..." or a similar statement. Using "Photo courtesy of..." does not tell readers of judges whether you have permission. Do not use "Used with permission" unless you have permission.

Use of apparently copyrighted materials without permission will result in disqualification from receiving an ALL-KEMPA rating.

• Plagiarism

Plagiarism might be as unintentional as failing to attribute a quote to its source or as deliberate as submitting a photo downloaded from the Web.

If a judge finds evidence of plagiarism in an entry, he or she will reduce the score in that area with an explanation noted. Furthermore, that publication is disqualified from receiving an ALL-KEMPA rating.

Judges should note that high quality student work with a range of expert sources does not necessarily point to plagiarism.

• Judges

KEMPA judges are qualified journalists, or past or present advisers of top-rated publications. A publication's evaluation is likely to be helpful, fair and well-substantiated.

• Questions/Comments

If you have concerns or comments about the scoring you received or suggestions for improvement of this scoring booklet, please go to www.kempajournalism.org to find the current board of directors and send an email to the current president.

Acknowledgements

This critique booklet was created by drawing from the previous KEMPA booklet, as well as from the booklet used by the Maryland-District of Columbia Scholastic Press Association, with its permission (07-2007)

Theme

- (10) 1. The book's theme is obvious, a natural extension of the year's events and issues. The concept is unique and fresh. The theme gives the book a distinctive personality.
 - (5) 2. The front cover includes the name of the book, the year and the theme
 - (5) 3. The cover's spine includes the name of the book, the name of the school, the city and state, the year, and the volume number.
 - (5) 4. The title page includes the name of the book, the year, the name of the school, the complete school address, the school's phone number, the school's population and the volume number.
 - (5) 5. The table of contents is located on the front end-sheet or opening pages of the book.
 - (5) 6. The opening theme copy includes specific examples from this school year only and explains how the theme applies to this school and this year only.
 - (5) 7. All division spreads include theme copy, and this copy is specific to this year only.
 - (5) 8. The closing is located at the end of the book, after advertising and index. The closing copy includes specific examples from this year only.
 - (5) 9. All theme spreads include headlines that reinforce the theme's concept.
 - (5) 10. If printed, the endsheets support and promote the book's theme.
 - (10) 11. Photographs on the title page, opening, division pages, closing (and cover/endsheets if applicable) promote the book's theme. Captions are provided for those photos, and they promote the book's theme.
 - (10) 12. Design of the theme pages is contemporary, eye-catching, and unlike designs in other parts of the book. Division page design is similar but not identical to the design of the opening and closing.
- (75) **TOTAL**

Judge's comments and suggestions for improvement.

Contemporary yearbook themes are drawn from a variety of sources, such as slogans, advertising, games, television, movies, and music as well as from current trends and slang. Avoid dated, worn-out, and overused phrases.

Often staffs start with the main theme, then continue for each section of the book. Graphic element used to promote the theme on the cover and endsheets should be carried throughout the book to tie the entire book together.

Design and Typography

Judge's comments and suggestions for improvement.

- (10) 1. Each section has its own column/grid plan and elements follow plan consistently.
- (5) 2. Placement of elements varies from spread to spread within each section (variety).
- (5) 3. Captions are next to, above, or below the photos they identify.
- (5) 4. Designer has, when possible, avoided clustering or numbering captions and has stacked no more than two captions.
- (10) 5. Each spread contains a copy block with a headline. Any sidebars have similar headline style. Copy may be traditional or alternative story forms.
- (5) 6. Page margins are consistent within sections.
- (10) 7. Facing pages are treated as a unit, and there is a pleasing balance of white space, photos, and copy, with white space and copy typically towards the outside of the page/layout.
- (5) 8. Spreads typically contain 5-7 candid photos. Spreads using additional photos are panelized or modular in layout.
- (10) 9. Every spread contains a dominant element that is 2 – 2½ times larger than other photos on the spread; there is a variety of rectangular shapes on all spreads. Odd-shaped photos are avoided or used with design restraint.
- (10) 10. There is consistent 1-pica spacing between elements. (Designers may use isolated elements or contemporary negative spacing without deduction)
- (10) 11. The designer has used horizontal eyelines. If an eyeline is broken, it is broken by 6–8 picas.
- (10) 12. The designer has avoided carrying copy or headlines across the gutter.
- (15) 13. In the people section, portraits are paneled in rectangular blocks, identifications are placed to the outside, candid photos and copy are included on each spread, and senior's portraits are only slightly larger than underclass portraits.
- (10) 14. Portraits are rectangular in shape.
- (10) 15. Faculty portraits are part of the People section; faculty identification includes courses taught and coaching/advising assignments.
- (10) 16. All spreads within a section use the same caption and headline style; headline style may be modified for sidebars or alternative copy.
- (5) 17. Fonts are consistent, and size and weight of headlines, body copy, and captions are consistent within sections.
- (5) 18. Appropriate point size is used throughout; 12 or 14 point for theme copy; 10 point for other body copy; 8 point for captions; headline point sizes vary from section to section.

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- (10) 19. Captions include a lead-in phrase and/or graphic element to draw visual attention to theme; captions fill the allotted space; when placed side-by-side, captions are equal in length to avoid awkward white space.
 - (5) 20. Headlines appropriately incorporate magazine-style and sentence style for visual interest and a contemporary look; designer avoids single-line and label headlines.
 - (20) 21. Sports section/pages includes scoreboards for each team. Team photos may appear on the sport's spread or in the index or advertising sections.
 - (15) 22. The Clubs/Organizations section includes group photo or group photos appear in index, advertising or separate section.
 - (200) TOTAL**

Judge's comments and suggestions for improvement.

Copy/Editorial Content

Judge's comments and suggestions for improvement.

Body Copy

- (20) 1. Body copy has been included on all spreads including people section, advertising, and index. (Body copy may include traditional stories, as well as alternative approaches.)
 - (5) 2. In most cases, body copy is written in past tense. (Personality features may use present tenses) Tense remains consistent within stories.
 - (5) 3. Copy is written in the third person and is consistent within stories. (Theme copy may vary in person)
 - (5) 4. Pronouns agree in number with antecedents (team/its; players/ they).
 - (5) 5. Punctuation is used correctly, including commas, colons, quotation marks, and apostrophes.
 - (5) 6. Sentences and paragraphs are kept short.
 - (5) 7. Writers use appropriate summary or feature leads which are generally one sentence in length; writers avoid question and quote leads.
 - (5) 8. Copy is lively, interesting, and well written, using strong verbs and nouns.
 - (10) 9. Copy includes many direct quotes from a variety of appropriate sources.
 - (10) 10. Copy is based on good interviewing and first-person reporting, and avoids the writers opinions.
 - (10) 11. Writers have made an effort to find new ways to cover topics and events, have avoided the phrase *this year*, and have focused on this year only.
 - (5) 12. Adults' names are complete, including terms such as *Coach Tom Smith* or *math teacher Sue Mason*.
 - (5) 13. Individuals are identified with first and last names, and appropriate titles on first mention.
 - (5) 14. Theme copy is well written, explains how the theme applies to the year, and includes specific information about the people and events of the year.
 - (20) 15. There is evidence of strong, consistent editing.
- (120) **SUBTOTAL**

Captions/Identifications

- (10) 1. Complete captions have been included for every photograph in the book.

- (5) 2. Captions include two or more sentences, and may also include direct quotes.
- (5) 3. The first sentence, describing the photos action, is written in present tense. Additional sentences are written in past tense and provide other pertinent information related to the photo.
- (5) 4. Captions provide the complete names of all people pictured, including opponents athletes.
- (5) 5. Writers use consistent style with regard to titles and class designations.
- (10) 6. Captions answer *who, what, where, why, and how* and avoid stating the obvious.
- (5) 7. Captions do not include the opinion of the writer.
- (10) 8. Gag captions are never used.
- (5) 9. Identification of group photos include identification of rows (*Front Row, Row 2, Back Row*).
- (5) 10. Identification of group shots includes first and last names, titles for adults/officers/team captains.
- (5) 11. Captions and group identifications omit phrases such as from *left to right*; people are identified from left to right.
- (70) **SUBTOTAL**

Headlines

- (10) 1. Headlines identify the page content but are more than just a label of the team, topic or group.
- (10) 2. Headlines incorporate both attention-getting feature headlines and summary headlines, using a variety of point sizes or other techniques for visual appeal.
- (10) 3. Each copy block has its own headline.
- (5) 4. Sentence headlines use present tense; feature headlines are capitalized appropriately.
- (5) 5. Headlines fill the allotted space and use correct punctuation.
- (40) **SUBTOTAL**

COPY/EDITORIAL CONTENT SCORES

Body Copy	(120 possible)
Captions	(70 possible)
Headlines	(40 possible)
Section Total	(230 possible)

Coverage

Judge's comments and suggestions for improvement.

General Coverage

- (20) 1. The staff made a concerted effort to cover as many people as possible throughout the yearbook; the staff avoided quoting or picturing the same people again and again.
- (10) 2. Theme copy incorporates specific events, facts, trends, and people that made this year unique.
- (5) 3. All copy, photos, captions, and headlines work together to cover a wide variety of activities, events, facts, trends, and people that made the year unique..
- (5) 4. Through student life, sports, people, and academics the book covers a 12-month period, not just the school year.
- (5) 5. Theme coverage includes table of contents, title page, opening spread(s), division spreads, and closing(s) spreads that present the theme, show how it applies to the year, and is specific in nature.
- (45) **SUBTOTAL**

Sports Coverage

- (10) 1. All sports have been given fair coverage.
- (5) 2. Varsity, junior varsity, and freshman levels have been covered fairly.
- (5) 3. The Sports section comprises 18-20% of the book, excluding advertising and index sections.
- (10) 4. Photos and copy cover athletes fairly; photos are action-oriented but also include sideline activities.
- (10) 5. Copy uses featurized approach and avoids rehashing the entire season; focuses on the most memorable or exciting aspects of the season, record setting events, etc.; copy avoids predictions for next season.
- (5) 6. Post-season events receive adequate coverage.
- (5) 7. Copy avoids editorializing and instead uses quotes from a variety of people to express opinions; writers are objective and non-apologetic.
- (5) 8. Each team's season is accurately presented through scoreboards that include team scores and final season's records; scoreboards appear on each sport's spread.
- (5) 9. All sports captions tell the entire story of the pictures, including contests' scores, individual scores (if applicable), all player's names, and outcome of the pictured action.
- (60) **SUBTOTAL**

Student Life Coverage

- (5) 1. The Student Life section (or coverage in a chronological book) covers a variety of events and activities, both inside and outside the regular school day; this section comprises 18-22% of the book, excluding the index and advertising sections.
- (5) 2. Coverage reflects events beyond the school, into the community, the state, the nation, and the world. (These topics may appear in other areas of the book)
- (5) 3. Organization of this section is logical, lively, and interesting, and appeals to a wide variety of interests.
- (5) 4. The yearbook covers a 12-month period; coverage appears in both copy and photos.
- (20) **SUBTOTAL**

Academic Coverage

- (5) 1. All academic areas have been covered.
- (5) 2. The Academic section/pages comprises 10-12% of the book, excluding the index and advertising sections.
- (5) 3. Photos and copy reflect a variety of classroom activities, with a focus on what was new or different in each academic area.
- (10) 4. Copy is student oriented and tells the story of the academic year, using specific examples, photos, activities, events and quotes; field trips and other out-of-school academic events are covered.
- (25) **SUBTOTAL**

Club/Organization Coverage

- (5) 1. All clubs and organizations are covered; the section comprises 12-15% of the book, not including the index and advertising sections.
- (5) 2. Action photos dominate each spread and show members involved in meaningful club related activities.
- (10) 3. Copy focuses on new/unique events of the year, avoids purposes/goals, avoids listing members/officers, includes significant quotes and facts and remains objective.
- (20) **SUBTOTAL**

People Coverage

- (5) 1. The People section/pages comprises about 25% of the book, excluding index and advertising sections.
- (10) 2. Feature stories or alternative copy appears on each spread and includes significant quotes; stories cover a wide range of topics appropriate to the section.

Judge's comments and suggestions for improvement.

- (5) 3. Portrait identification given with first names first.
- (10) 4. Staff has made an effort to include all students, faculty, and support staff; if individuals are not pictured, their names are listed at the end of appropriate section. (No black boxes to represent missing individuals or comments such as *camera shy*.)
- (10) 5. Items such as senior predictions, superlatives, quotes, and wills are omitted; if included, senior summaries appear in the senior section or with seniors' index entries.
- (40) **SUBTOTAL**

Judge's comments and suggestions for improvement.

Other Elements

- (10) 1. A complete index appears near the end of the book; all people, sports, major events, activities, clubs, and student life topics are included in the index.
- (5) 2. The index includes copy and candid photos; point size is readable but not too large.
- (5) 3. Advertising pages, if present, include copy and candid photos; display ads vary in size.
- (20) **SUBTOTAL**

Coverage Scores

General	(45 possible)
Sports	(60 possible)
Student Life	(20 possible)
Academics	(25 possible)
Clubs	(20 possible)
People	(40 possible)
Other Elements	(20 possible)
Section Total	(230 possible)

Photography

- (25) 1. All photos are in focus, show proper contrast, and have a center of visual interest.
 - (25) 2. Staff has chosen candid photos that tell the story of the year; staff avoids posed and smile-at-the-camera photos; baby pictures and then-and-now pictures have been avoided (except in the case of grad ads).
 - (15) 3. Photos have been cropped effectively; photos do not face off the page; dominant photos have been used and have been chosen wisely.
 - (20) 4. Candid photos, not group photos, are the dominant photos on the spreads.
 - (15) 5. Group photos are arranged in orderly rows with neutral backgrounds, have been cropped appropriately, and have omitted props such as balls, bats, pompoms, musical instruments, etc.
 - (15) 6. Head sizes in group shots are large enough to recognize students; extremely large group shots have been avoided by breaking large groups into two or more smaller groups.
 - (20) 7. All formal portraits have consistent head sizes, lighting, and backgrounds. Backgrounds are plain. Conservative poses are used, omitting suggestive poses, angles, profiles, tilts, animals, flowers, etc.
 - (10) 8. The staff has included photos of the school and community to provide a historical view.
 - (25) 9. The staff has included a wide range of activity and action photos; sports photos emphasize competition interaction but also provide sideline and reaction shots.
 - (25) 10. Photos show a variety of shots, including close-up and medium range shots; staff has avoided photos that do not contain people.
 - (20) 11. Photographers have cropped photos in a way to enhance the center of visual interest; action has been cropped tightly enough to eliminate wasted spaces but still allows for photos to “breathe.”
 - (15) 12. Bleeds are limited to pictures that deserve special emphasis because of their quality and content; the staff has not bled group photos and avoids trapping faces in the gutter.
- (230) SECTION TOTAL**

Judge's comments and suggestions for improvement.

Group photos are provided for identification of members as part of the historical and reference purposes of yearbooks. The inclusion of props detracts from these purposes.

Crop group photos just above the tallest person in the back row, tightly on either side, and at the waist of students in the front row

The purpose of portraits in a yearbook is to provide identification of individuals. Busy backgrounds, differing head sizes, and sexy poses interfere with that purpose, as well as detract from the overall look of the book. If possible, all senior photos should be taken by the same photographer. However, if that is not possible, your staff should establish a list of specific criteria for senior portraits and provide this list to the seniors, parents and area photographers.

Style and Appeal

- (30) 1. It is evident that the staff has consistently used style-book rules for titles, names, numbers, dates, title, and scores. Winning scores are always listed first. Titles are used in the identification of all adults, although courtesy titles are not required, based on each school's style rules.
- (30) 2. The book's cover is appealing, contemporary; it introduces and harmonizes with the book's theme; cover material is durable and attractive.
- (10) 3. End sheets, if printed, continue the visual ideas of the theme and harmonize with the cover; the table of contents may appear on the front endsheets.
- (20) 4. Artwork is professional in appearance and contemporary; graphic elements are contemporary and logically go with the theme. If photos are used on the cover/endsheets they promote the book's theme.
- (90) SECTION TOTAL

Bonus Points

The judge may award bonus points based on these criteria:

- (5) 1. Special content is tastefully handled and contributes to historical purposes of the book. (Anniversaries, community or school milestones, outstanding achievements, local tragedies and/or controversies)
- (5) 2. Student photography is outstanding.
- (5) 3. Superior work in writing, design, photography or theme development is present throughout the book.
- (5) 4. Coverage is superior.
- (20) SECTION TOTAL

Publications follow a stylebook to guide writers and ensure that a variety of elements are consistently used in a prescribed way. Also, many style rules have come about as a way to economize space.

While most professional newspapers adhere to the rules provided in the AP Stylebook, it is not the only "correct" stylebook. The important thing is for yearbook staffs to establish rules for consistent use of numbers, symbols, monetary units, dates, titles, scores and so forth, and follow those rules consistently.

Judge's Summary Comments