

# Story Evaluation Rubric

In the US, the initial target for Scriptive is homeschooling parents. Homeschooling is a direction taken for a number of reasons (more effective education, protection from influences, learning or cognitive challenges, physical or mental disabilities, etc.). In the US, one common reason is the desire to inculcate doctrines, religious principles and practices into daily learning. In India, Hinduism, Islam, and other religions value literature that teaches principles of morality and virtue. Scriptive and StoreLane needs to be sensitive and respectful to these needs.

The other thing to consider in stories for WriteStories is that the children need to be able to have fun and figure out a reasonable story just from what they are seeing in the pictures alone - no dialogue, and not really expositing thinking either unless there is a clever way to do that in the pictures.

Because of the above, Scriptive and StoryLane have developed the following rubric as points of consideration when evaluating a story for the platform.

1. Slide from State A to State B: Are there discontinuities in the storyline or characters that would be hard to represent in just images? To the child, they would be moving along getting to know characters and situations, and then things change, and they don't know why. It could be because of unrepresented dialogue or some epiphany that is difficult to capture. Example: a child thinks through that if you combine clues 2 and 3, and combine that with 4 but ignore 1 that her father must be the one sneaking cookies at night.
2. Universality: The books in WriteStories will be used in the countryside and the city, in the US and in India, and more to come. Fantasy is fine, and even learning new contexts are fine, but if being able to make sense of the sequence of illustrations depends on knowledge either cultural or more advanced than elementary school, there could be problems. Say, for instance, your villain in the story makes counterfeits of real archeological artifacts and sells them on the black market, or broadcasts fake bad news about a company to make the stock crash. Tricky for the 3rd grader in Chennai or the 4th grader in the US to track with, especially with simple pictures without words.
3. Evil as Evil: Not all stories can or should be sunshine and unicorns. Conflict as part of the story arc can come from a number of sources (natural, bad personal choices, ...), but sometimes people choose evil and that creates issues for characters having to deal with it. It is ok, within elementary school-level reason, to depict evil in the story, but it needs to

be portrayed as evil and not good, or neutral. If girl 1 makes girl 2 upset because she goes to school in the latest fashion and is proud because of it, and at the climax, girl 2 trips her and girl 1 falls in the mud and girl 2 is the hero. That is returning evil for evil, and the evil is portrayed as praiseworthy. Another common problem is an 'ends justify the means' scenario. An example here might be that a child suspects their neighbor is stealing newspapers, so they break into his house to find a fingerprint to compare with one that they have.

4. Misinterpreting Evil: The story may follow the Evil as Evil concept, but when it is rendered just in pictures, it might make evil look like good. For example, say Girl 1 wants the attention of Boy, and asks Girl 2 to trip her in the hall when boy is close to get Boy's attention. This could easily be interpreted as Girl 2 is doing away with competition trying to get Boy attention as we don't know the planning conversation to set up the scene where Girl 2 is trying to help her friend. This could get worse if Boy gives attention to Girl 2 after Girl 1 has the embarrassing incident.
5. Library Promise: Scriptive and StoryLane has a statement about library content that we give to teachers, parents, and guardians. One question we'll ask is 'How well does the story fit the promise?':
  1. Scriptive believes that books can have a profound influence on the lives and development of all of us, including our children. Because of this, Scriptive is very careful with what books are chosen for the Scriptive library and are vetted by our team of experts. Scriptive guarantees selections in our library to be family-friendly and age appropriate.
  2. As to content, there are also things that we actively seek. We enjoy books with powerful messages that teach kindness, respect, bravery, trustworthiness, helpfulness, cheerfulness and hard work. We enjoy beauty in writing and illustrations, positive messages, and wholesome fun.
  3. However, there are things we actively stay away from. We avoid inappropriate and sexual content, and profane language and innuendos. We avoid stories that are disrespectful or have inappropriate behavior to any group or individual. We also stay away from political messaging.
6. Visible Legs to the Story: Basically, in WriteStories, children need to be able to create a cohesive story from the pictures they are given. If the story depends on dialogue and understanding thoughts or feelings to understand, it might be difficult for the students. Example: Let's say two girls are playing tennis. One starts trash talking and the other feels bad. The first girl realizes her mistake and apologizes and starts being encouraging. The pictures would essentially show a tennis game of two girls with some mouth shape changes and facial expression changes - and that is about it.
7. Story Arc: A generally recognized template that most stories follow is that they begin with some kind of exposition/introduction to situation and characters. There is some sense of rising action or conflict. Things come to a head in a climax, and then action falls and there is a full resolution. Example of issue: if there is a character that visits farm animals one by one, and that is it, that could work for young children, but might not be engaging enough for older children.

