



September, 2025

**TO:** Visual Arts Teachers, School Librarians, and Teachers in All Departments, Grades 3 - 12

**FROM:** Melissa Jacobs, Director of Library Services and Joy Pace, Director of Visual Arts

**RE:** The Annual Ezra Jack Keats Bookmaking Competition

## **EJK BOOKMAKING COMPETITION**

- Competition Guidelines
- Timeline/Important Dates
- Criteria
- Submission Form Instructions
- Resources

The Ezra Jack Keats Bookmaking Competition is **a collaboration among the NYC PS, the Ezra Jack Keats Foundation, and Brooklyn Public Library.**

Through **writing and illustrating their own fiction or nonfiction picture books**, students combine literacy with artistic skills to tell their own story. This activity gives students the opportunity to take pride in using what they've learned in school to create a book that reflects their unique perspective on the world.

# EJK BOOKMAKING COMPETITION GUIDELINES

## ELIGIBILITY

**Books are judged in the following three categories.** Districts 75 & 79 submissions are considered in all categories with the other submissions, and often are winners.

- **Elementary School: Grades 3-5**
- **Middle School: Grades 6-8**
- **High School: Grades 9-12**

## PROCESS

- One or more classes, or clubs, **engage in the book making process under the supervision of a teacher(s) or school librarian(s).**
- Each school convenes a team (principal, art teacher, school librarian, language arts teacher) **to select ONE entry as its School Winner.\*\***
- The **ONE School Winner is submitted to be considered** as a City Winner, City Honor or for a Special Recognition.
- **Books will be mailed back to the school** to be returned to students by mid-June, 2026.

### **\*\*SPECIAL EXCEPTIONS:**

- Schools with multiple-grade categories may submit one book per category. (Example: K-8 schools may submit a book for the 3-5 grade category, as well as the 6-8 grade category).
- Individual schools within one campus building, can each submit a book, per grade category (Elementary, Middle and High).

## EJK BOOKMAKING COMPETITION TIMELINE/IMPORTANT DATES

### **Tuesday, February 10, 2026 Submission Deadline**

- **Electronic submission form MUST be received by February 10, 2026**
- **Submitted books MUST:**
  - **be scanned or photographed** prior to mailing (all pages including the cover).
  - **be mailed and postmarked by February 10th.\***
  - **have this [Consent Form](#), printed, filled out and signed for each student and attached securely to the back inside cover of the book.**

- **Shipping Tips:**
  - **USPS - send via Priority Mail**
    - Monitor delivery by checking the Tracking number starting 3 days after posting
    - Follow up with USPS, if delivery isn't complete within 8 days
    - Tracking number will expire in 2 weeks
  - **FedEx or UPS:**
    - If possible use one of these two private companies
- **Mail to:**      **Ben Perry**  
                          **Brooklyn Public Library**  
                          **Central Library**  
                          **10 Grand Army Plaza**  
                          **Brooklyn NY 11238**  
                          **Re: EJK Bookmaking Competition**

## **February 27, 2026 Judging**

- Judging is based on quality of writing and illustrations, layout, and general presentation.
- The jury is composed of noted authors, school and public librarians, artists, educators and professionals from publishing and arts organizations.

## **Late March, 2026 Award Notification, by the Arts Office and Office of Library Services**

- **City Awards - EJK Bookmaking Medal & \$600\*** (Invited to Ceremony)
  - One elementary school prize
  - One intermediate school prize
  - One high school prize
- **City Honors - EJK Bookmaking Medal & \$200\*** (Invited to Ceremony)
  - Five elementary school prizes
  - Five intermediate school prizes
  - Five high school prizes
- **Special Recognition - EJK Bookmaking Medal** (Invited to Ceremony)
  - Up to 27 throughout the five boroughs
- **School Awards - EJK Bookmaking Medal**
  - All school winners receive medals with returned books
- **Teachers/School Librarians of winners & honorable mentions** (Invited to Ceremony)
  - Recognized for their work with their students
- **All students** who complete a book
  - Receive a Certificate of Commendation, even if the book was not chosen as the **school winner**.

\* **NOTE:** For books with 2 collaborators, monetary awards are shared equally.

### **May 15, 2026 Award Ceremony (4:00 - 5:30 pm)**

- **Student winners and honorable mentions AND their teachers/librarians** are honored during the ceremony and **receive a gift bag of new picture books donated by Penguin Random House**. Note: Gift bags cannot be mailed or held for those who do not attend the ceremony.
- The ceremony is held at Brooklyn Public Library, Central Library at Grand Army Plaza, Dweck Auditorium and Lobby.

### **May 2026 Exhibition TBD**

- All entries exhibited at Brooklyn Public Library, Central Branch at Grand Army Plaza, in the Youth Wing.

### **Mid June, 2026 Books Returned**

- Each book is returned to the teacher/librarian who submitted the book so it can be handed back to the student before the end of the school year.\*

**\*NOTE:** If two students created the book, one student must receive a photocopy of the original.

## **EJK BOOKMAKING CRITERIA**

- No more than **two students may collaborate** on a book.
- **All writing and art must be original and created solely by the student(s).**
- **No use of Artificial Intelligence (AI).**
- **No clip art** of any kind (electronic or hard copy).
- **The writing must be in English or Bilingual.**
- **There must be a story or narrative**, with a beginning, middle and end, or a discernible arc.
- **Book Cover must include:**
  - **Title and name of author and illustrator (if two students created the book BOTH must be credited on the cover and wherever the creators are mentioned).**
  - **An inviting image or graphic that relates to the story within.**
- Correct spelling and use of grammar, with clear and legible handwriting/printing.
- **All art media are accepted**, including **original** computer images created by student(s).
- **Photographs** are allowed, if taken or staged by students or used as an element in a collage.
- Books **must be created as part of ongoing class instruction**, or as a group (e.g. after school/before school extracurricular activity or club under teacher and/or school librarian supervision).
- Books **must be handmade** and firmly bound by the student. No pre-made books or components will be accepted.
- **Students are free to choose the subject of their book.**

## PHYSICAL SPECIFICATIONS

- Books must be **no smaller than 5.5" x 8"** and **no larger than 15" x 18"**.
- Books should have **at least 12 single side pages including the cover and no more than 32 including the cover**.
- Text should be **no less than 150 words and no more than 1,000 words**.
- **Text must be distributed throughout the book**, not necessarily on every page.
- **Wordless books are not accepted**.
- Platforms or stands for books are not accepted.
- All parts of the book must be securely fastened.

## ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS:

- Concise and condensed text (books with too much text will be at a disadvantage).
- Clarity of storytelling through words and pictures.
- Equal attention paid to every page, including the cover.
- Clear design concept for the whole book. Illustrations support and further the storyline.
- Text used as part of the illustration to add to visual interest.

## SUBMISSION FORM INSTRUCTIONS

Complete the entire [EJK Bookmaking Competition Submission Form](#)

- Submission Form Includes:
  - **Contact Information**
  - **Declaration of Originality and Student(s) Statement** - student(s)  
description of their creative vision and bookmaking process (minimum 150 words)  
Suggested Prompts
    - What did you like most about making a book?
    - What did you learn by making a book?
    - How did it change the way you look/read picture books?
    - What did you want to express/say/communicate with your book?
  - **Educator(s) Confirmation and Statement** (minimum 150 words)  
Suggested Prompts
    - In what ways did bookmaking enrich your curriculum?
    - How has your students' appreciation for books changed the most?
    - Why do you believe this program is valuable?
    - What did you enjoy most about participating in the EJK Bookmaking Competition?
  - **School Information**

## RESOURCES

The following **Guide and Tutorials** contain all the support information necessary to running a successful Bookmaking program in your classroom.

[EJK Bookmaking Teacher and Student Guide \(in process\)](#)

[Bookmaking Tutorials](#)

[EJK Foundation Bookmaking Information](#)

[Ezra Jack Keats Award Winners and Honorees](#)