

NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS  
AND POETRY FOUNDATION PRESENT

**POETRY**

**OUT  
LOUD**



**2019–2020**  
**TEACHER'S**  
**GUIDE**

Additional copies of this publication can be downloaded at [www.poetryoutloud.org](http://www.poetryoutloud.org)

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Established by Congress in 1965, the National Endowment for the Arts is the independent federal agency whose funding and support gives Americans the opportunity to participate in the arts, exercise their imaginations, and develop their creative capacities. Through partnerships with state arts agencies, local leaders, other federal agencies, and the philanthropic sector, the Arts Endowment supports arts learning, affirms and celebrates America's rich and diverse cultural heritage, and extends its work to promote equal access to the arts in every community across America. Visit [arts.gov](http://arts.gov) to learn more.



The Poetry Foundation, publisher of *Poetry* magazine, is an independent literary organization committed to a vigorous presence for poetry in our culture. It exists to discover and celebrate the best poetry and to place it before the largest possible audience. The Poetry Foundation seeks to be a leader in shaping a receptive climate for poetry by developing new audiences, creating new avenues for delivery, and encouraging new kinds of poetry through innovative partnerships, prizes, and programs.

*Poetry Out Loud is a partnership among the National Endowment for the Arts, the Poetry Foundation, and the state and jurisdictional arts agencies of the United States.*



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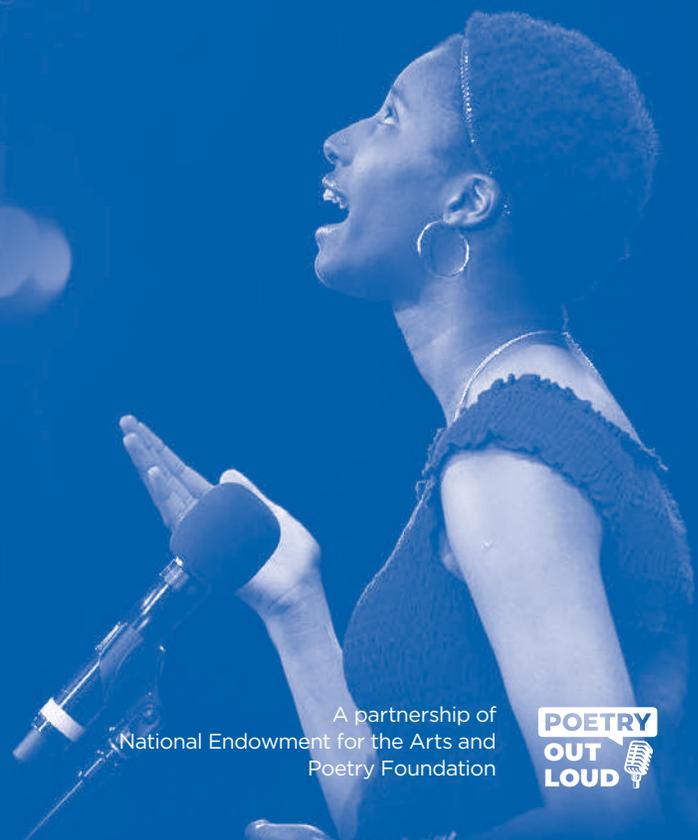
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\*Lesson plans are available at [poetryoutloud.org](http://poetryoutloud.org)



“From Poetry Out Loud, I learned that what you say in life matters not nearly as much as how you say it. The same words can have a hundred different meanings! It also taught me to try new things; I have never been one to act or study poetry, yet here I am competing at the National Finals.”

-Evan Reynolds, 2019 Connecticut Champion



“Not all poems written before the 1900s sound like the lyrics of a church hymn—some of them almost seem like they could have been written yesterday. I think the timelessness of this art form is something we often don't appreciate enough.”

-Maggie Harris, 2019 Nebraska Champion

“I learned how to be more appreciative of my surroundings. Going out to compete and meet different people after the same goal, to share poetry, has been eye opening because it's given me a chance to see different interpretations and meanings behind words. It's also taught me the power and weight that words hold.”

-Khadija Ceesay, 2019 Kansas Champion

# WHY POETRY OUT LOUD?

## Poetry Out Loud is a fun and dynamic way to introduce students to poetry.

- Poetry Out Loud builds self-confidence and helps develop social and emotional maturity.
- The thrill of competition encourages students to do their best and support their peers.
- Poetry Out Loud creates lifelong lovers of poetry and creative writing.
- Poetry Out Loud offers an opportunity for all types of students to succeed.

## Poetry Out Loud is easy to implement.

- Poetry Out Loud materials are completely free.
- The program does not require full class periods, can be folded into an existing curriculum, and meets NCTE and Common Core Standards.
- This Teacher’s Guide and online lesson plans contain everything you need to teach the program successfully and conduct a classroom contest.

## Poetry Out Loud inspires learning.

- Students improve their analytical skills through reading and interpreting a variety of poems.
- Students learn about literary history and contemporary life.
- Students are often motivated to write their own poems and share them with others.
- Poetry Out Loud promotes creativity and success in other disciplines.

# HOW DO WE GET INVOLVED?

- 1.** To register your school for Poetry Out Loud, get in touch with your state coordinator by visiting the “state contacts” section of poetryoutloud.org.
- 2.** Once you’ve registered, invite other classrooms and teachers at your school to participate and plan to host a schoolwide competition.
- 3.** Create a simple timeline that outlines your school’s Poetry Out Loud program, including deadlines and competition dates, and then get started!

## CONTEST STRUCTURE

Poetry Out Loud begins at the classroom level. Winners advance to a schoolwide competition, then to a regional and/or state competition, and ultimately to the National Finals. Awards and placements are determined solely by the judges’ scores based on the Poetry Out Loud Evaluation Criteria (pages 14-16).



### STATE AWARDS:

Each winner at the state level will receive \$200 and an all-expenses-paid trip (with an adult chaperone) to Washington, DC, to compete at the National Finals. The state winner’s school will receive \$500 for poetry materials. One runner-up in each state will receive \$100; his or her school will receive \$200 for the purchase of poetry materials.

### NATIONAL AWARDS:

A total of \$50,000 in awards and school stipends will be given at the Poetry Out Loud National Finals, including a \$20,000 award for the National Champion.

*Awards are offered for the official contests conducted by the state arts agencies, the Poetry Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Arts. The awards do not apply to unofficial contests. Awards will be made in the form of lump sum cash payouts, reportable to the IRS. Tax liabilities are the sole responsibility of the winners and their families. The Poetry Foundation provides and administers all aspects of the monetary prizes awarded in Poetry Out Loud.*



# IN THE CLASSROOM

## 1. Explore

**Have students browse the poems.** Poetryoutloud.org has an online anthology of more than 1,100 poems. Allow time for the students to explore the selections, as either homework or a classroom activity.

**Begin class with a poem a day.** Help students discover new poets by reading a poem at the start of each class period. Poetryoutloud.org has a poet of the day feature, including poems and poet biographies.

## 2. Understand

**Ask each student to select poems to memorize.** Allowing students to choose poems that resonate with them is key to helping them recite more effectively. The process of memorizing and performing helps students internalize the author's message and explore complex language and ideas. Find student videos about the selection and memorization of poems at poetryoutloud.org.

**Discuss the poems in class.** Understanding the text is the most important preparation for reciting poetry aloud. If a student doesn't understand the text, neither will the audience.

**Have students memorize the poems.** Share these memorization tips:

- Rewrite your poem by hand several times. Each time, try to write more and more of it from memory.
- Read your poem aloud before going to sleep at night, and repeat it when you wake up.
- Carry around a copy of your poem in your pocket or bag and find several moments throughout the day to reread or recite it.
- Practice your poem by saying it to family and friends.

## 3. Recite

**Model recitation skills in the classroom.**

- Recite poems yourself — this is a powerful way to show students it can be done.
- With the class, develop a list of bad habits that take away from the performance, such as inaudible volume, speaking too quickly or too slowly, monotone voice, fidgeting, excessive body language, and mispronunciations.
- Then develop a list of elements of a successful recitation, such as sufficient projection, good pacing with proper pauses, voice inflection, evidence of understanding, correct pronunciation, and poise.
- Play portions of the audio and the video examples at poetryoutloud.org and on our YouTube channel.
- Allow class time for students to practice their poems. Peers can offer constructive criticism, using the contest evaluation sheet and evaluation criteria as a guide.

## 4. Write

**Include creative writing exercises.** Creative writing is a natural complement to Poetry Out Loud. We have included a number of optional writing exercises and lesson plans for teachers at poetryoutloud.org.

*Note: Please let students know that they can request accommodations for a disability. Teachers may refer to the Accessibility page on poetryoutloud.org for more information or contact their state coordinator for further assistance.*

# SAMPLE CLASS SCHEDULE



- *Have students explore the anthology and choose poems to memorize.*
- *Read and discuss some of the poems in class.*
- *Model effective and ineffective recitation practices for the students.*



- *Have students practice their poems with different partners each day.*  
They should also work on their memorization and performance outside of school. Students should have their poems completely memorized by the end of the week.
- *Hold practice contests.*  
Break up the class into groups. Have 1 student at a time perform for the rest of the group, who act as judges. Encourage discussion about how the student interpreted and presented the poem.
- *Implement the lesson plans and writing exercises.*  
While reserving a portion of each class period for recitation practice, teachers may offer a more complete poetry unit by using the lesson plans provided at [poetryoutloud.org](http://poetryoutloud.org).
- *Hold the classroom recitation contests at the end of the week.*  
Bear in mind that it takes an average of 4 or 5 minutes to recite a poem and judge the recitation. Teachers should structure the contest in a way that best fits their schedules.



- *Hold the schoolwide recitation contest at the end of the week.*  
Winners of the classroom contests will prepare 2 or 3 poems for recitation and will compete in the schoolwide competition at the end of this week. Ideally, the schoolwide competition will take place at a campus assembly, thus enhancing the entire student body's exposure to poetry and giving the contestants a larger audience.

# THE CONTEST

## LEAD TEACHER(S)

We recommend that each participating school identify 1 or 2 teachers to serve as the Poetry Out Loud coordinators. Lead teachers will recruit fellow teachers to participate, distribute materials, organize the school events, and keep in touch with the state Poetry Out Loud coordinator.

Begin organizing your schoolwide contest as early as possible in order to ensure greater attendance by the school community. Please see page 17 for tips on promoting the event.

## NUMBER OF POEMS REQUIRED AT EACH CONTEST LEVEL

### *Classroom Level*

Students must prepare at least 1 poem to recite.

### *School Finals Level*

Students must prepare 2 poems to recite.

### *State and National Levels*

Students must prepare 3 poems to recite.

## POEM SELECTION

Eligible poems are available at [poetryoutloud.org](http://poetryoutloud.org).

Students must provide the titles and authors of their poems and the order in which they will be recited in advance to the contest coordinator. Students may not change their poem selections or order once they have been submitted.

## INTRODUCING AND RECITING THE POEM

Competitors will recite individually. The emcee should introduce students as they come to the stage to recite. It is the student's job to identify the poem by accurately announcing both the title and the author, and, if necessary, the translator. (For example, "Finale" by Pablo Neruda, translated by William O'Daly.)

- A student's own editorial comments before or after the poem are not allowed.
- Epigraphs included with the poem in the Poetry Out Loud anthology should be recited, and their omission will affect the accuracy score.
- Footnotes included with the poem in the Poetry Out Loud anthology should not be recited, and their inclusion will affect the accuracy score.
- Stanza numbers and dedications included with the original poem are optional, and their inclusion or omission should not affect the accuracy score.
- Students must include the name of the translator, if applicable.
- The poem must be delivered from memory.

## CONTEST VENUE

Classroom contests can be held during class periods. Reserve a school theater, auditorium, or other appropriate venue for your schoolwide competition. The ideal setting will have a stage and theater-style seating. Depending on the size of the venue, amplification may be appropriate. Use the POL Accessibility Checklist for Venue and Event Promotion found at [poetryoutloud.org](http://poetryoutloud.org) when considering venues.

## STAFFING THE SCHOOL COMPETITION

At the schoolwide competition, you will need volunteers to serve in a variety of roles:

**Coordinator** (1 or 2). The lead teacher(s) may be best suited for this role. The coordinator will ensure that the event runs smoothly, all volunteers are present, judges are briefed before the event, and scoring is accurate.

**Emcee** (1). An emcee will guide the competition from start to finish, providing welcoming remarks, introducing judges and students, and announcing winners.

**Judges** (3–5), **accuracy judge** (1). See page 9 of this Teacher’s Guide for advice on selecting and preparing judges.

**Prompter** (1). It is important to have someone following along with the recitations, ready to prompt a student who may get stuck on a line. Prepare a notebook with a large-font copy of each poem, in the order of recitation, for the prompter. Seat the prompter in the center of the front row, and have them follow along with the text as each student recites. Show the students where the prompter is sitting before the contest begins so they know where to look if they get lost during their recitation. If a competitor is stuck for several seconds and looks to the prompter for help, the prompter may provide the next few words of the poem to get that student back on track.

**Score tabulator** (1–2). While the competition is taking place, someone should input the judges’ scores in a database so that no time is wasted totaling scores after the recitations are finished. An Excel spreadsheet works well for this purpose. A template is available at [poetryoutloud.org](http://poetryoutloud.org). It may be helpful for the tabulator to have an assistant collect the contest evaluation sheets. Remember to test your tabulation system before the event.

*For accessibility requests for students, judges, or the public, please refer to the Accessibility page on [poetryoutloud.org](http://poetryoutloud.org). For further assistance or questions, please contact your state coordinator.*



# JUDGING

## *Classroom Level*

The teacher can serve as the sole judge for a classroom contest.

## *School Finals Level*

At the school finals, 3 judges should be sufficient — a group of teachers may serve as judges, or you may invite some community members to judge the contest. Appropriate judges might be local poets, actors, professors, arts reporters, politicians, or members of the school board. Judges should have some knowledge of poetry, although they need not be experts. Be sensitive to conflicts of interest — actual or perceived — with your judging panel. Make sure to choose judges who will conscientiously prepare for their roles in advance.

## PREPARING THE JUDGES

- Send the judges the students' poems ahead of time, so they are familiar with them and can consider students' poem choice in regards to range and complexity. No judge other than the accuracy judge should be following along with the printed text during recitations.
- Send them a copy of the Judge's Guide, available at [poetryoutloud.org](http://poetryoutloud.org), and ask them to review fully in advance.
- Invite them to ask questions. Encourage them to watch the archived Poetry Out Loud judge training webinar at [poetryoutloud.org](http://poetryoutloud.org).
- Encourage them to view the video examples of student recitations on the Poetry Out Loud website and the Poetry Out Loud YouTube channel; they should practice scoring these before the competition.
- Although they will score individually during the competition, it is useful to have judges discuss their scores in orientation practice rounds.
- During the competition, separate the judges a bit from the rest of the audience so they are not distracted. Judges should not have any interaction with the contestants or the audience until after the competition.
- Judges must not convene to discuss their scores. They should rate recitations individually and then immediately turn in their evaluation sheets. This practice not only keeps the contest moving, but also ensures that judges are scoring independently, based on merit only. Warn judges that they will not be able to revisit scores after they turn them in.



## ACCURACY JUDGE

Assign a separate person to serve as an accuracy judge. The accuracy judge will mark missed or incorrect words during the recitation. The accuracy score sheet can be found on page 19, and also can be downloaded from [poetryoutloud.org](http://poetryoutloud.org). Print out the accuracy score sheets before the contest, and fill in the names of the participants and the titles of the poems they will recite. Have these in order of recitation before the competition and give a set to the accuracy judge, along with a notebook with a large-font copy of each poem, in the order of recitation, so they may follow the recitations.

## SCORING

A copy of the Poetry Out Loud contest evaluation sheet may be downloaded at [poetryoutloud.org](http://poetryoutloud.org). Print the contest evaluation sheets before the school contest, and fill in the names of the participants and the titles of the poems they will recite. Have these in recitation order before the competition, with 1 set for each judge.

After each recitation, the score tabulator or an assistant will collect the completed contest evaluation sheets. The accuracy judge's score will be added to *each* evaluation sheet as scores are tabulated. Scoring is cumulative; the scores from each round should be totaled to determine the winner.

“I was surprised at how much I enjoyed diving into poetry written by others. I have always enjoyed creating and writing my own work but I really and truly loved getting to know each of my poems on a personal level. I felt like I was able to connect to each poet and their intention, which made it so special to be able to share that story during my performance of each poem.”

–Maggie Odom, 2019 Hawaii Champion



“Poetry Out Loud taught me how intentional words are. In poetry, every punctuation mark and syllable you emphasize matters, and how you use them can completely change meanings of phrases.”

–Kendall Grimes, 2019 Tennessee Champion



“Going into Poetry Out Loud, I was looking up videos of performances, trying to pinpoint ‘the right way’ to recite. What I’ve learned though — after getting to see so many great, effective recitations — is that there is no magic formula to ‘nail’ a performance. Rather, everyone brings something different to the stage, and realizing this was definitely incredibly liberating. In addition, the competition has really helped me enunciate and articulate more clearly, even in everyday speech.”

–Joseph Kim Sexton, 2019 New Jersey Champion

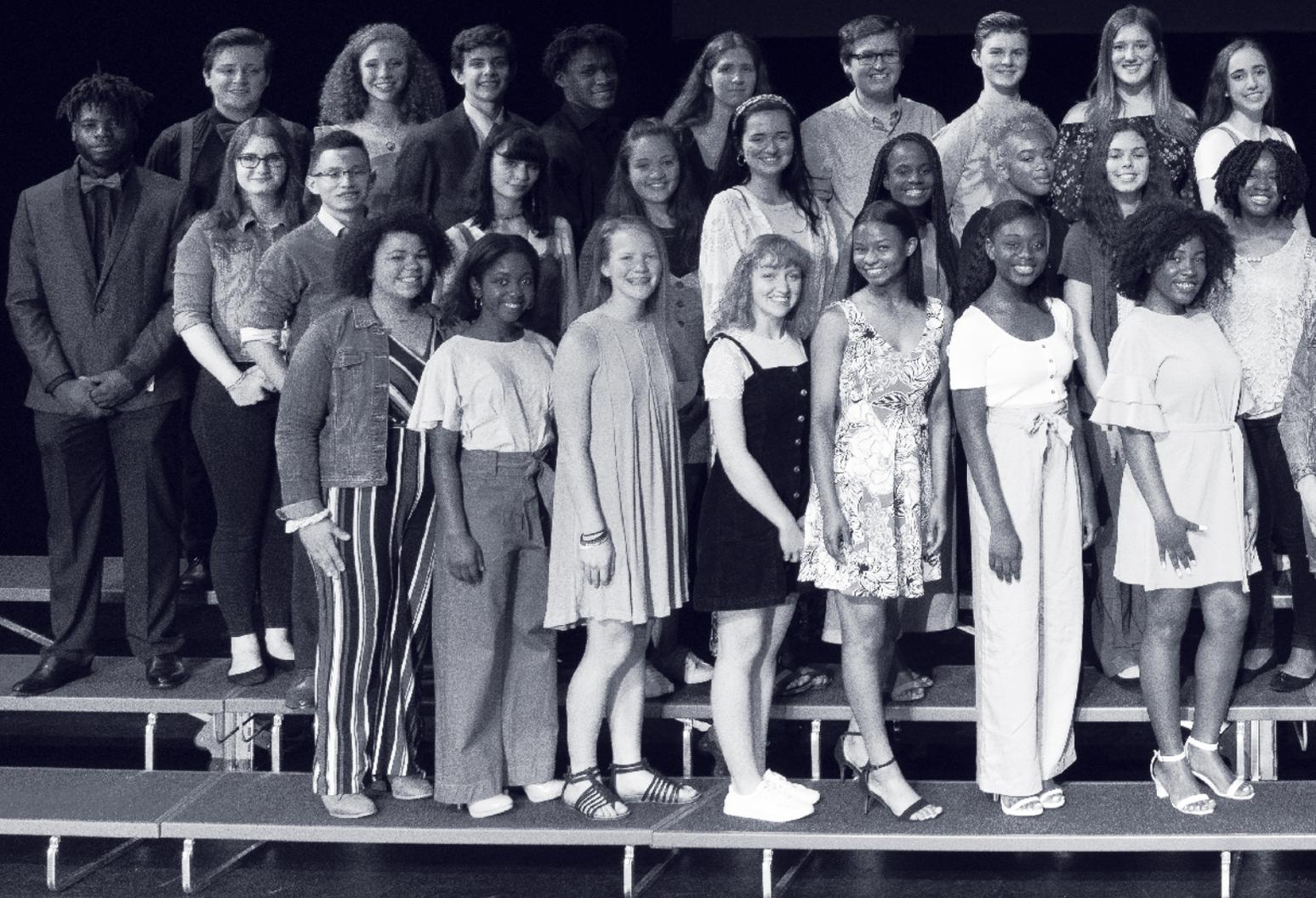
Poetry Out Loud Champions from all 50 states, the District of Columbia, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and Puerto Rico gathered for the 2019 National Finals on May 1 at the Lisner Auditorium in Washington, DC.

National Endowment for the

INSPIRING  
STUDENTS

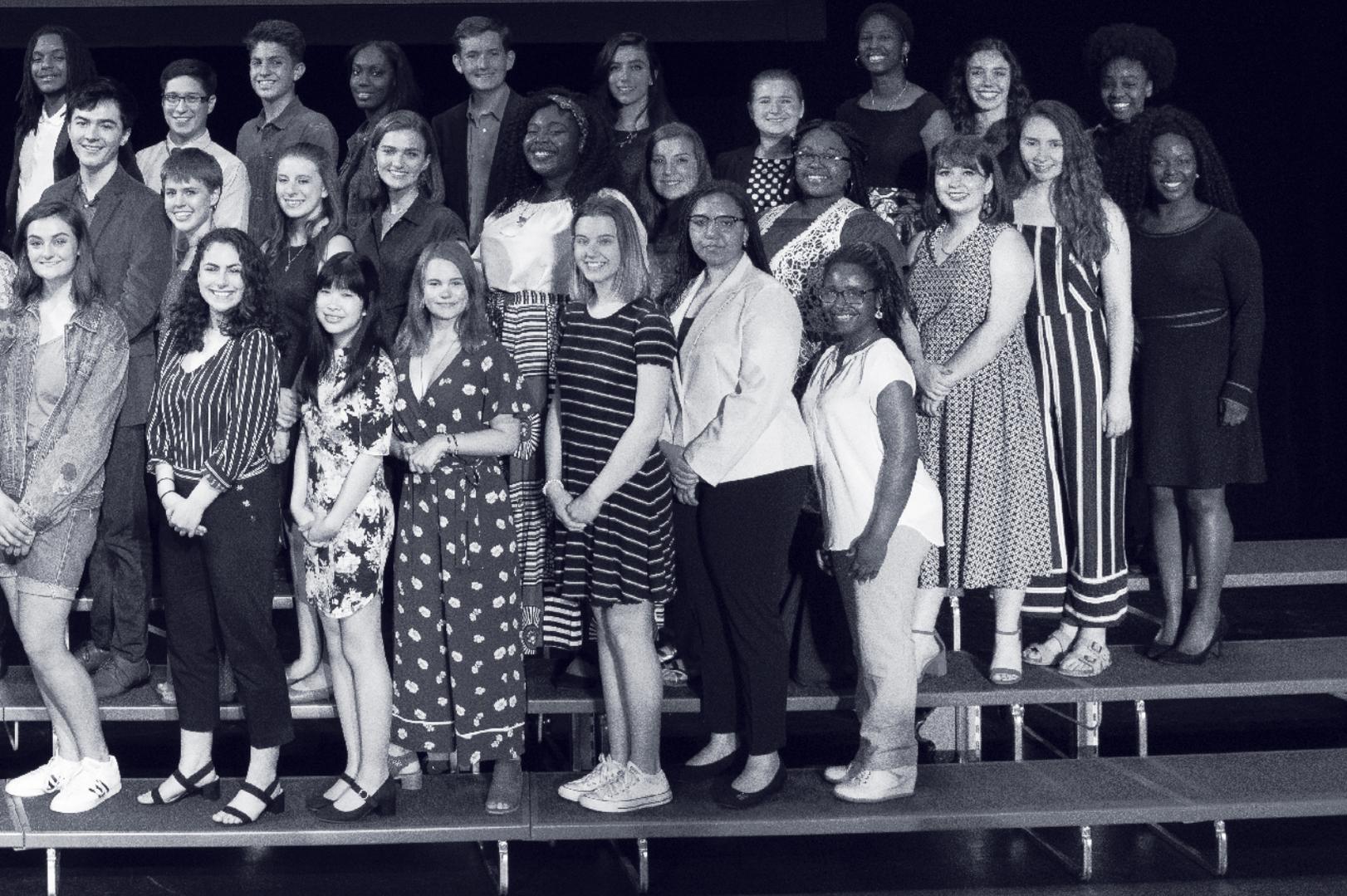


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# POETRY OUT LOUD



# EVALUATION CRITERIA AND TIPS FOR CONTESTANTS

For video examples of these tips, go to [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nL8syz\\_l7eY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nL8syz_l7eY)

## PHYSICAL PRESENCE

This category evaluates the physical nature of the recitation. Consider the student's stage presence, body language, and poise.

### ***Advice for the student:***

- Present yourself well and be attentive. Use good posture. Be confident and make a direct connection with the audience.
- Nervous gestures and lack of confidence will detract from your score.
- Relax and be natural. Enjoy your poem; the judges will notice.

### QUALITIES OF A STRONG RECITATION:

*The student appears at ease and comfortable with the audience. They engage the audience through physical presence, including appropriate body language and confidence. All qualities of the student's physical presence work together to the benefit of the poem.*

## VOICE AND ARTICULATION

This category considers the student's projection, pace, rhythm, intonation, and proper pronunciation.

### ***Advice for the student:***

- Project to the audience. You want to capture the attention of everyone, including the people in the back row. However, do not mistake shouting for good volume or projection.
- Proceed at a fitting and natural pace. People may speak too quickly when they are nervous, which can make a recitation difficult to understand. Do not speak so slowly that the language sounds awkward or unnatural.
- With rhymed poems, be careful not to recite in a sing-song manner.
- Make sure you know how to pronounce every word in your poem. Articulate.
- Line breaks are a defining feature of poetry, with each one calling for different treatment. Decide whether a break requires a pause and, if so, how long to pause.

### QUALITIES OF A STRONG RECITATION:

*All words are pronounced correctly, and the projection, rhythm, and intonation greatly enhance the recitation. Pacing is appropriate to the poem.*

## DRAMATIC APPROPRIATENESS

This category evaluates the interpretive and performance choices made by the student. Recitation is about conveying a poem's sense through its language. This is a challenging task, but a strong performance must rely on a powerful internalization of the poem rather than excessive gestures or unnecessary emoting. Appropriate interpretation enhances the audience's understanding and enjoyment of the poem without overshadowing the poem's language. The Learning Recitation videos at poetryoutloud.org will help illustrate this point.

### **Advice for the student:**

- Movement must not detract from the poem's voice.
- You are the vessel of your poem. Have confidence that your poem is strong enough to communicate its sounds and messages without a physical illustration. Let the words of the poem do the work.
- Depending on the poem, occasional gestures may be appropriate, but the line between appropriate and overdone is a thin one. When uncertain, leave them out.
- Avoid monotone delivery. If you sound bored, you will project that boredom to the audience. However, too much enthusiasm can make your performance seem insincere.

### QUALITIES OF A STRONG RECITATION:

*The interpretation subtly underscores the meaning of the poem without becoming the focal point of the recitation. A low score in this category will result from recitations that have affected accents and character voices, inappropriate tone and inflection, singing, or unnecessary emoting.*

## EVIDENCE OF UNDERSTANDING

This category evaluates the student's comprehension of a poem. The poet's words should take precedence, and the student who understands the poem best will be able to voice it in a way that helps the audience to understand the poem better. To do this, a student must effectively use intonation, emphasis, tone, and style of delivery.

### **Advice for the student:**

- In order for the audience to understand the poem fully, you must understand the poem fully. Be attentive to the messages, meanings, allusions, irony, tones of voice, and other nuances in your poem.
- Be sure you know the meaning of every word and line in your poem. If you are unsure about something, it will be apparent to the audience and judges. Don't hesitate to ask your teacher for help.
- Think about how you should interpret the tone and voice of your poem. Is it a quiet poem? Is it a boisterous poem? Should it be recited more quickly or slowly, with a happy or mournful tone? Your interpretation will be different for each poem, and it is a crucial element of your performance.

### QUALITIES OF A STRONG RECITATION:

*The meaning of the poem is powerfully and clearly conveyed to the audience. The student displays an interpretation that deepens and enlivens the poem. Meaning, messages, allusions, irony, tone, and other nuances are captured by the performance. A low score is awarded if the interpretation obscures the meaning of the poem.*

## OVERALL PERFORMANCE

This category evaluates the overall success of the performance, the degree to which the recitation has become more than the sum of its parts. Has the student captivated the audience with the language of the poem? Did the student bring the audience to a better understanding of the poem? Did the recitation honor the poem? Judges should also consider the range of a student's recitations with this score; a student is less likely to score well in overall performance when judges note that a student's style of interpretation remains the same regardless of poem choice. In addition to range, judges should consider the complexity of the poem, which is a combination of its content, language, and length. A low score will be awarded for recitations that are poorly presented, ineffective in conveying the meaning of the poem, or conveyed in a manner inappropriate to the poem.

### ***Advice for the student:***

- For competitions beyond the classroom level, select poems of various styles, time periods, complexities, themes, and tones. When considering the range and complexity of your poems, remember that a longer poem is not necessarily a more difficult one.
- Make sure each poem you choose is one that speaks to you. If you are able to connect with a poem, that internalization will ripple positively throughout all of your scores.

## ACCURACY

A separate judge will mark missed or incorrect words during the recitation, with deductions for each. If the contestant relies on the prompter, points also will be subtracted from the accuracy score from each judge. Eight points will be added to *each* judge's contest evaluation sheet for a perfectly accurate recitation.

*Note that Overall Performance and Accuracy are weighted slightly more than other criteria.*

“From participating in Poetry Out Loud, I learned that poetry is surprisingly engaging and relatable. No matter who you are, where you come from, or what your story is, there is some poem out there you can connect with.”

—Mary Kate Godfrey, 2019 Kentucky Champion

# PUBLICITY TIPS

Since 2005, Poetry Out Loud has reached more than 3.8 million students and 60,000 teachers from 16,000 schools nationwide. Poetry Out Loud is a great way to raise school spirit and generate positive visibility for your school. Here are some simple ways to increase awareness of Poetry Out Loud and share your students' achievements with the community at large.

- Publicize the schoolwide competition on the school website and in the student newspaper.
- Announce classroom winners and the schoolwide competition in the daily PA broadcast or at assemblies.
- Include a “poem-a-day” poetry recitation in the daily PA broadcast, or at assemblies.
- Remember to use the Poetry Out Loud hashtags— #POL2020 and #iampoetryoutloud— to be part of the larger conversation about Poetry Out Loud throughout the school year.
- Use your school’s social media accounts to share information about Poetry Out Loud at your school.
- If your school allows video sharing websites such as YouTube, use them to highlight videos that complement Poetry Out Loud learning objectives.
- Invite a prominent member of the community or local media to serve as a judge or emcee for the schoolwide competition.
- Use the PR toolkit found at [poetryoutloud.org](http://poetryoutloud.org) for additional tips and sample press materials to share information about your schoolwide competition.



# CONTEST EVALUATION SHEET

NAME OF STUDENT:

TITLE OF POEM:

	Weak	Below Average	Average	Good	Excellent	Outstanding
Physical Presence	1	2	3	4	5	6
Voice and Articulation	1	2	3	4	5	6
Dramatic Appropriateness	1	2	3	4	5	6
Evidence of Understanding	1	2	3	4	5	6
Overall Performance	1	2	3	5	7	9

TOTAL: \_\_\_\_\_ (maximum of 33 points)

ACCURACY JUDGE'S SCORE: \_\_\_\_\_ (maximum of 8 points)

**FINAL SCORE: \_\_\_\_\_ (MAXIMUM OF 41 POINTS)**

# ACCURACY SCORE SHEET

NAME OF STUDENT:

TITLE OF POEM:

Maximum Score	8	points
Inaccuracy Deduction (subtract)	- ____	points
Prompt Deduction (subtract)	- ____	points
<b>FINAL ACCURACY SCORE</b>	____	points*

\*Lowest possible score is 1 point

**Accuracy judge:** Follow along with the text of the poem as the competitor recites. Mark the text each time there is an error in accuracy. You should mark all minor inaccuracies the same (since each is worth a 1 point deduction), and flag the bigger mistakes differently. Be consistent. After the recitation, use the guidance below to assign a point deduction to each mistake. To get the final accuracy score, count up the point deductions, and subtract them from the maximum score of 8 points. *Remember that the accuracy score is added to the contest evaluation sheet of each judge.*

**Example:** If the competitor repeated a word (-1 point), confused an article (-1 point), and skipped one line (-3 points), that would be 5 points subtracted from the maximum score of 8. The final accuracy score would be 3 points.

**Minor inaccuracies**, resulting in a 1 point deduction per occurrence, include:

- Confusing a pronoun (“he” instead of “she”)
- Confusing an article (“a” instead of “the”)
- Pluralizing a word or vice versa (“horses” instead of “horse”)
- Replacing a word with a similar word (“jump” instead of “leap”)
- Omitting the poem title
- Omitting the author
- Omitting the translator
- Confusing the order of words (“hops and skips” instead of “skips and hops”)
- Skipping a word
- Repeating a word
- Adding a word

**Major inaccuracies**, resulting in larger deductions per occurrence, include:

- One line out of order -2 points
- Repeating a line -2 points
- Omitting an epigraph -2 points
- Including a footnote -2 points
- Skipping 1 line/skipping 3 or more words in the same line -3 points
- Reversing 2 stanzas -5 points
- Skipping 1 stanza -6 points

**Use of prompter:** Each time a student uses the prompter, 3 points will be deducted from the final accuracy score.

*The inclusion or omission of stanza numbers or dedications should not affect scoring. Likewise, the addition of a “Thank you” at the end of the recitation, while discouraged, should not affect the accuracy score.*



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National Endowment for the Arts and  
Poetry Foundation

# RULES

*Only schools registered with their state Poetry Out Loud coordinator are eligible for the official competition.*

## STUDENT ELIGIBILITY

- **Grade Level:** Only currently enrolled students in grades 9-12 are eligible, with an exception made for 8th-grade students participating in a 9th- through 12th-grade class.
- **State Finals:** A student may not advance to the state finals without competing in a lower-level competition.
- **Legal Participation Requirements:** No student may be excluded from participating in Poetry Out Loud on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, disability, or national origin. Schools may determine eligibility for classroom and school level Poetry Out Loud programming pursuant to local and state law.
- **Prize Requirements:** The Poetry Foundation provides and administers all aspects of the monetary prizes awarded in Poetry Out Loud. State champions and runners up will need a valid tax identification number or social security number at the time that monetary prizes are issued by the Poetry Foundation. Prizes are not transferable.
- **Travel and Accommodations Requirements:** The Poetry Foundation provides and administers all aspects of the travel for State Champions to the Poetry Out Loud National Finals. State Champions (or their legal guardians) and their chaperones must complete the Poetry Foundation's Poetry Out Loud Attestation Form and submit it to the Poetry Foundation. (The attestation form is available here: [poetryoutloud.org/attestation](http://poetryoutloud.org/attestation).) If you are unable to submit the completed Attestation Form, the Poetry Foundation will be unable to provide any travel and accommodations for the Poetry Out Loud National Finals.
- **Homeschooled Students:** Homeschooled students may participate by competing in a contest at a local school (at the school's discretion) or with other local homeschooled students. Contact your state coordinator for specific guidelines.
- **School Not Participating?** Students unable to participate at a local school should contact their state Poetry Out Loud coordinator to discuss other opportunities for inclusion in the state's official competition.
- **Repeat Champions:** Only National Champions are ineligible to compete in subsequent years.

**Since 2005, Poetry Out Loud has reached more than 3.8 million students and 60,000 teachers from 16,000 schools nationwide.**

## POEM ELIGIBILITY

- **Poem Anthology:** All poems must be selected from the Poetry Out Loud print or online anthology, which is updated every summer. Check [poetryoutloud.org](http://poetryoutloud.org) after September 1, 2019, to view the official Poetry Out Loud anthology for the current school year. Only versions of poems from the official anthology may be used in the contest.
- **Can't Find a Poem?** Poems may be removed from the online anthology before September 1, 2019. These poems are no longer eligible for competition. However, any poem in the printed anthology is eligible even if it is not online.
- **Poem Criteria:** At the state and national finals, students must have 3 poems prepared. One must be 25 lines or fewer, and one must be written before the 20th century. One poem may be used to meet both criteria, and may be the student's third poem.

## COMPETITION

- **School Competition:** Schools must hold a competition of at least 2 students to select their champion. If that champion is unable to attend the next level of competition, the runner-up should be sent.
- **Evaluation:** Students must be judged according to the Poetry Out Loud evaluation criteria (pages 14-16).
- **Rounds:** State and national finals consist of 3 rounds of competition. Competitions at lower levels may have fewer rounds, but students must recite only 1 poem in each round.
- **Poem Order:** The order in which the poems are recited is up to the student, but poem order may not be switched once submitted to the competition organizer. Competition organizers may not dictate poem order.
- **Judging:** Rankings are based solely on evaluation sheets submitted by judges. Judges should not convene to discuss performances during the competition. Judges may not reconsider their scores after they are submitted. Judges' decisions are final.
- **Scoring:** Scoring is cumulative. The scores from all rounds should be added together to determine the winner.
- **Ties:** In the event of a tie, the tied student with the highest overall performance score should win; if that also results in a tie, look to the highest accuracy score. If scores remain tied, consider having students pick 1 poem to recite again as a separate score to break the tie.
- **Memorization:** Students must recite their poems from memory.
- **Props:** Students may not use props or wear costumes during their recitations.

# NCTE ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS STANDARDS

Poetry Out Loud fulfills the following NCTE Standards: 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 8, 9, 11, 12.

Teachers who make use of the optional writing activities and lesson plans found at [poetryoutloud.org](http://poetryoutloud.org) will also satisfy Standard #5.

1. Students read a wide range of print and non-print texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace; and for personal fulfillment. Among these texts are fiction and nonfiction, classic and contemporary works.
2. Students read a wide range of literature from many periods in many genres to build an understanding of the many dimensions (e.g., philosophical, ethical, aesthetic) of human experience.
3. Students apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts. They draw on their prior experience, their interactions with other readers and writers, their knowledge of word meaning and of other texts, their word identification strategies, and their understanding of textual features (e.g., sound-letter correspondence, sentence structure, context, graphics).
4. Students adjust their use of spoken, written, and visual language (e.g., conventions, style, vocabulary) to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes.
5. Students employ a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes.
6. Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions (e.g., spelling and punctuation), media techniques, figurative language, and genre to create, critique, and discuss print and non-print texts.
7. Students conduct research on issues and interests by generating ideas and questions, and by posing problems. They gather, evaluate, and synthesize data from a variety of sources (e.g., print and non-print texts, artifacts, people) to communicate their discoveries in ways that suit their purpose and audience.
8. Students use a variety of technological and information resources (e.g., libraries, databases, computer networks, video) to gather and synthesize information and to create and communicate knowledge.
9. Students develop an understanding of and respect for diversity in language use, patterns, and dialects across cultures, ethnic groups, geographic regions, and social roles.
10. Students whose first language is not English make use of their first language to develop competency in the English language arts and to develop understanding of content across the curriculum.
11. Students participate as knowledgeable, reflective, creative, and critical members of a variety of literacy communities.
12. Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information).

# COMMON CORE STANDARDS

Poetry Out Loud aligns with the following Common Core Standards depending on each individual teacher's lesson plan.

## Anchor Standards for Reading (RL.9-10, RL.11-12)

### *Key Ideas and Details*

1. Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.
2. Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.
3. Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

### *Craft and Structure*

4. Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.
5. Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text (e.g., a section, chapter, scene, or stanza) relate to each other and the whole.
6. Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.

### *Integration of Knowledge and Ideas*

7. Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse formats and media, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.
8. Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, including the validity of the reasoning as well as the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence.
9. Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.

### *Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity*

10. Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.

## Anchor Standards for Language (L.9-10, L.11-12)

### *Knowledge of Language*

3. Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening.

### *Vocabulary Acquisition and Use*

4. Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases by using context clues, analyzing meaningful word parts, and consulting general and specialized reference materials, as appropriate.
5. Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.





2019 2nd Place Finalist Scottlynn Ernestine Ballard  
2019 National Champion Isabella Callery  
2019 3rd Place Finalist Alejandro J. Campo

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