



ALABAMA PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Phase I: Class Competitions (August-September)

High Schools (Grades 9-12) in Alabama are invited to participate in the Poetry Out Loud National Recitation Contest. It is recommended that schools agree to at least 5 separate classes of students (usually 20-30 students in a class). Those that do include five classes will be eligible to receive a \$75.00 grant to support Poetry Out Loud activities. Schools may wish to consider these funds in support of teacher/student travel to workshops and competitions.

Participating classes may be in any field of study, but most often are from English, Theatre, Creative Writing and Speech classes. Often Poetry Clubs are involved. Teachers are asked to make the process a required part of their courses, with every student participating. We encourage schools to include as many classes as possible, without restricting it to AP courses. **Teachers are not to pre-select students for the program.**

Each participating teacher receives materials supplied by the National Endowment for the Arts and the Poetry Foundation. Additional resources are available on the Poetry Out Loud website, including lesson plans, eligibility requirements, and judging guidelines. Visit www.poetryoutloud.org for a complete guide to the program.

Each student selects one poem from the anthology available from the Poetry Out Loud website, following the instructions in the Teacher's Guide. It is recommended that the student research the poet, and analyze the poem with support from the teacher. Poet biographical information is available on the POL website. Students memorize the selected poem and recite it in a class competition, taking into consideration the discoveries learned through research and analysis. Class competitions are evaluated according to the criteria in the Teacher's Guide. The teacher decides how to judge the winner in each class, trying to be as impartial as possible. Class winners move forward to a school-wide competition.

Alabama's Original Poetry Recitation Contest

The Alabama State Council on the Arts is committed to the individual creativity of students. For this reason, Alabama's Poetry Out Loud program includes an opportunity for students to recite original poems, and to compete with other students statewide for an award in the recitation of original poetry. The evaluation criteria for this competition is exactly the same as the evaluation criteria for the National program, with one exception: "Evidence of Understanding" the poem is replaced with "Craft and

Creativity.” We encourage teachers to require all students participating in Poetry Out Loud to participate in the Original Poetry Competition and not self-select to do one or the other at the classroom level. This will encourage individual creativity and the celebration of every student voice. Just as in the National Program, all students in the class will memorize and recite an original poem. The winner of the Original Poetry Recitation Competition in each class will move forward to a school-wide Competition. It is possible that a different student from each class will move forward to the school-wide competition, or it may be the same student as the one who moves forward for the National Program.

Phase II: School Competitions

The Alabama State Council on the Arts recommends two separate competitions at the school level: One for the National Program following the Guidelines on the Poetry Out Loud website; and one for the Alabama Original Poetry Recitation Contest with Guidelines available on the ASCA website. It is our hope that these two school competitions take place during full school assemblies to allow everyone to experience both competitions. Many teachers have noted that English Language Arts and Poetry have been elevated to the same status as competitive sports in the eyes of entire student bodies when the school invests in this type of exposure for these students. Each student in the **National Competition** recites **two poems** for the school wide competition. Each student in the school-wide **Original Poetry Competition** recites **one poem**. Schools with many classes participating may elect to hold semi-finals in each grade level before the school final. This will help keep competitions from being too lengthy. Competitions with over 25 participating students can become cumbersome.

School-wide competitions should be judged by impartial judges. It is recommended that schools solicit qualified volunteers beyond school personnel. Professional poets, actors and retired teachers or university personnel make good candidates. Teachers at the school could appropriately serve as accuracy judge and/or prompter as scoring in these areas is entirely objective. One student is identified as the winner from each participating school in both the National Competition and the Original Poetry Competition. (Exception: depending on space availability, a regional coordinator may opt to accept more than one student from each school for the Original Poetry Competition. This will depend on the total number of schools participating in the Original Poetry Competition. Please check with your Regional Coordinator before your school-wide competitions to determine the number of winners that may come to the regional competition.)

School Champions and often their alternates are then prepared to participate in the Regional Competition at a ***Finding Your Voice*** Workshop held by Regional Coordinators. Teachers should support winning students through the rest of the competition process by helping them rehearse, write, attend the Finding Your Voice workshop, and participate in the Regional event. Support is defined as organizing rides and arranging for permission to allow students to attend events. At least one adult must come with the student(s), but that adult may be a parent, teacher or volunteer.

Phase III: Regional Competitions (November/December)

Each Regional Coordinator will invite school winners, their teachers, and the school coordinator to attend ***Finding Your Voice***, a four-hour intensive poetry workshop. If space is available, Coordinators may invite additional teachers and students. This workshop is designed to prepare students for the Regional, State and National competitions.

Each Region will hold the Regional Competition. This is a full day event. At the regional level each student in the National Competition is required to select **three poems** from the Poetry Out Loud anthology or website to recite. One of these poems must pre-date the 20th century, and one must be less than 25 lines in length. Each student in the Original Poetry Competition must recite **two original poems**, one of which must be 25 lines or less. The top five winners in each region from both the ***National Poetry Out Loud*** competition and the ***Alabama Original Poetry*** competition will move forward to the State Finals. Winners will be invited to attend an intensive coaching session in December/January to prepare them for the State Finals.

Phase IV: State Competition

The State Finals will be a full day event, similar to the Regional Competitions. Students will be competing against the top five winners in all Alabama State Regions. The number of poems required will be the same as for the Regional Competition: **three (3) for the National Competition** and **two (2) for the Alabama Original Poetry Competition**. Students competing in the National Competition will have an opportunity to compete for the role of State Champion. The *State Champion* and a designated chaperone will travel to Washington D.C. to compete in the National Semi-Finals, and perhaps Finals. The winner of the Original Poetry Competition is declared the State Champion of the Original Poetry Recitation Contest. Original Poetry Winners do not compete nationally. Students and teachers interested in competing on the National level for the writing of poetry are encouraged to visit <http://www.artandwriting.org/>

State Prizes: All students that become State Finalists in the State competition receive awards in a special awards ceremony at the end of the Competitions. The State Champion in the National Competition wins \$200. His or her school receives \$500 for the library. The first runner up wins \$100, and the school receives \$200 for the library. These prizes are provided by the Poetry Foundation. The State Champion in the Original Poetry Competition wins \$200. The first runner up wins \$100. These prizes are provided by the Alabama Writer's Forum.

Phase V: National Competition

Each State Champion competes against every other state champion at the National Finals in Washington D.C. There are two levels of competition at the National Finals. There are three Regional Semi-Finals. The top 3 scoring students from each of these semi-finals moves forward to the finals. Nine finalists compete for the National Championship. A total of \$50,000 is awarded in scholarships during this last competition. The National Champion receives a \$20,000 scholarship and the rest receive \$5000 & \$1000 scholarships.