

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Who runs Poetry Out Loud and who may participate?

Poetry Out Loud is administered by the Mississippi Arts Commission. All schools in Mississippi (including home school groups) that teach students in grades nine through twelve are eligible to participate.

How can I get my school involved in Poetry Out Loud?

The first step is to register your school (or home school group) to participate by completing the Registration Form downloaded from the MAC website (www.arts.state.ms.us) – just click on the *POL* logo for instructions. Registration opens in August of each year with a deadline in early November. You must complete the In-School portions of the program before Winter Break.

How much does Poetry Out Loud cost?

The materials for *Poetry Out Loud* are **free**. Registering to participate in *POL* is **free**. You may use the online materials at no cost, and registered schools will receive hard-copy materials (including specially-created Mississippi DVD videos) from MAC. The only expense your school might incur would be in transporting your school champion to the Regional and State Contests.

How much time does Poetry Out Loud require?

This depends entirely upon how your school chooses to implement the program. *Poetry Out Loud* can be an extra-curricular activity, it can be an enrichment exercise, it can be a teaching methodology, or it can replace a regular poetry unit. The most successful *POL* teachers introduce the program in the beginning of the school year and spend a little bit of time on it every week – a few minutes out of one class period. This time increases as In-School contest approaches.

How many students must be involved in Poetry Out Loud?

The minimum number of participants is two students and one faculty advisor. Most schools “start small”, using *POL* in only one or two classes. They invariably expand the program in their second year, most frequently to include the entire English department.

Can students choose poetry outside of the poems in the anthology?

No. The *Poetry Out Loud* website includes an online anthology of nearly 600 poems that changes every year. The students **must** choose their poems from the Online Anthology.

How should the contest be organized?

A detailed description for how each school's competition should be organized can be found on the Organizing Contest Events page of the *POL* website. The MAC website (www.arts.state.ms.us) provides additional information about *POL* in Mississippi.

How will the competition be judged?

Official *Poetry Out Loud* competitions will be evaluated on specific criteria, which can be seen on the Evaluation Criteria page of the POL Manual. In-School Contests should be judged by three interested adults. Mississippi Regional Contests are each adjudicated by three trained judges from the region and the State Finals Contest is adjudicated by five trained judges from across the state.

Who should be judges?

It is up to each school as to who should judge the competition. In the past, teachers, poets, and dramatic professionals have been judges in school competitions. Even though the contest is literary in nature, not all judges have to have a literary background. Community leaders and event sponsors could serve as judges. Ultimately, the judges should be whomever the competition's organizers deem appropriate. Judges should NOT be the teachers or coaches of any of the contestants.

Can embellishment, e.g. movement (gestures, walking), be used to deliver the poems, or will participants be expected to stand and deliver the poems in one place? Can participants add any kind of sound or musical instruments for effect? Can participants costume themselves?

The recitation of poetry, in this context, is different than dramatic acting. Poetry recitation is about the poem, not the performance. Overacting, exaggerated movements, and odd voices and accents are generally not accepted. However, depending on the poem, gestures and some movement may be appropriate. Use of musical instruments or costuming are not permitted.

If students with disabilities wish to participate in the contest, can any accommodations be made for judging them?

Yes, detailed guidelines on how students with disabilities can participate can be found on the Students with Disabilities page of the POL website.

What are the prize amounts at the state and national levels?

As long as your school and district allows students to receive cash prizes, each winner at the state level will receive \$200 and an all-expenses-paid trip to Washington, DC, to compete in the National Finals. The state winner's school will receive a \$500 stipend for the purchase of poetry books. A runner-up in each state will receive \$100, with \$200 for his or her school library.

Prizes at the National Finals are as follows: 4th Place - \$1000.00 (9 winners); Third Place - \$5000.00; Second Place - \$10,000.00; Champion - \$20,000.00. Each of these awards comes with a \$500.00 stipend for the contestant's school library.