

The Original Poetry Contest

Alabama's **Original Poetry Competition** invites original work. The poems may be any length, in any style or form, and on any subject. Poems must be original, unpublished work created by the student who submits and recites the poem. The written poem will be judged on how compelling it is in form and structure, its creativity, and its effectiveness as a created object. Is this poem a fresh, interesting and insightful take on its subject? Does the poem's form enhance its meaning? Is the poem well-written? The recitation of the poem will be judged on delivery, how well the delivery conveys the meaning of the poem, and the overall quality of the performance. Judges will consider whether or not the performance is effective, if it enhances the meaning of the poem, and its overall quality. Poems **must be memorized** for the Original Poetry Competition.

Students should compete at the class and school level. One or more students from each school will advance from the school to the regional level, depending on the number of schools participating. This year, for the first time, individual students may submit as independent students and compete against other independent students in order to advance to the regional level.

2020 Social Challenge Poetry Competition

This year we also invite students to submit to Alabama's **2020 Social Challenge Poetry Competition**. You do **not** have to participate in the Original Poetry Contest or the National Anthology Competition to submit a poem to the 2020 Social Challenge Poetry Competition. Students may submit one poem of any length and written in any style or form, but the poem must address the unique social challenges we are currently experiencing. Poems must be original, unpublished work created by the student who submits and recites the poem. The written poem will be judged on how compelling it is in form and structure, its creativity, and its effectiveness in addressing the topic. Is this poem a fresh, interesting and insightful take on the subject? Does the poem's form enhance its meaning? Is the poem well-written? The recitation (or reading) of the poem will be judged on delivery, how well the delivery conveys the meaning of the poem, and the overall quality of the performance. Judges will consider whether or not the performance is effective, if it enhances the meaning of the poem, and its overall quality. The 2020 Challenge Poem does **not** have to be memorized, but memorization may enhance your delivery.

Students should compete at the class and school level. One or more students from each school will advance from the school to the regional level, depending on the number of schools participating. This year, for the first time, individual students may submit as independent students and compete against other independent students in order to advance to the regional competition.

There are many well-written poems which take on current social issues. Consider going to poets.org (American Academy of Poets) and poetryfoundation.org (Poetry Foundation) to find numerous examples. Here are a few examples of recently published poems which address issues of social justice:

Lauren K. Alleyne, "For My Brother(s)" <https://poets.org/poem/my-brothers>

Natasha Oladokun, "Black Credit," <https://poets.org/poem/black-credit>

Joy Priest, "Denial is a Cliff We are Driven Over," https://poets.org/poem/denial-cliff-we-are-driven-over?mc_cid=50e4dbbee8&mc_eid=7f04eb7468

Kortney Morrow, "American Girl Dolls Attend Mandatory Diversity Training," <https://poets.org/poem/american-girl-dolls-attend-mandatory-diversity-training>

Mahogany Browne, "Litany" <https://poets.org/poem/litany-1>

Alabama’s Original Poetry Contest Scoring Rubric*

The scoring rubric is meant to provide a consistent measure against which to evaluate poems and recitations. It is not intended to be comprehensive but serves as a companion to the evaluation criteria. We suggest you review it before the competition to get a sense of what you should look for in individual poems and performances.

Written Text	Weak	Below Average	Average	Good	Excellent	Outstanding
Prosody and structure	Poem demonstrates little or no understanding of the conventions of the poetry; May use language or style not appropriate to contemporary poetics. May attempt to write in a form, but fail to demonstrate an understanding of the conventions of that form.	Poem makes some brief nod to the task at hand; may use prosody in a clumsy or ineffective way.	Poem demonstrates some knowledge of conventions of contemporary poetry, but the writing may be inconsistent.	Poem demonstrates a solid command of conventions of contemporary poetry in a way that is appropriate to the subject matter.	Poem uses conventions of contemporary poetry in a way that is interesting and/or evocative. The form and content are seamless and enhance the subject matter or argument of the poem.	Poem is compelling in both form and content. The form may be used in a way that is fresh, highlighting a clear understanding of the form and contemporary poetics.
Creativity and Innovation	Poem is usual and unsurprising. May be clichéd or trite in subject matter or point or view. May not clearly communicate an idea or evoke a feeling.	Poem attempts to say something, but generally ends up rehashing a subject in a typical way.	Poem has a clear point or idea, but that point or idea may be conveyed in an ordinary way. May have some glimmer of insight, but that insight is either inconsistent or partial.	Poem demonstrates insight in a way that has moments of surprise, though those moments may only be flashes. Poem may not maintain the line of insight.	Poem demonstrates insight consistently throughout the text through language, form and/or approach to subject matter.	Poem is compelling and evocative in language, form and/or approach to an idea. Poem demonstrates insight which reverberates beyond poem.
Overall Effect	Ineffective. May be trite or unclear.	Lackluster. May present an idea that is clear but simplistic.	Adequate in every way, but lacks impact.	Enjoyable and interesting. Moments of inspiration here and there.	Inspiring. Espouses idea in a fresh way and invites the audience to consider what has not yet been considered in that way.	Enthralling. Fresh, inventive, interesting approach to an idea; Masterfully uses or expands or enhances the convention of contemporary poetry.
Performance	Weak	Below Average	Average	Good	Excellent	Outstanding
Presence and Delivery	Stiff or agitated; lacks connection with audience; appears uncomfortable	Timid; unsure; body language reflects nervousness	Body language is at times unsure; at times confident	Comfortable; confident body language	Poised; body language reveals strong stage presence	Authoritative body language; shows compelling stage presence
Conveys Meaning	Recitation does not enhance or clearly convey the meaning of the poem.	Recitation does not enhance or clarify the meaning of the poem.	A solid recitation. Neither enhances nor detracts from the meaning of the poem.	Recitation conveys the meaning of the poem clearly and deepens the listener’s understanding of the poem.	Recitation conveys the nuances of the poem’s meaning, and/or unpacks the layers of meaning	Recitation is compelling and conveys the nuances of the poem. The performance adds a new level of insight into the poem’s meaning.
Overall Performance	Ineffective or inappropriate	Uncertain; inadequate; lackluster	Adequate; sufficient; lacks impact	Confident; enjoyable; successfully delivers poem	Inspired performance; shows grasp of recitation skills and enhances audience experience of the poem	Captivating performance; whole equals “more than the sum of its parts”; shows mastery of recitation skills

*Note that all elements need not be present. Semicolons may represent “or” rather than “and.”

Competition Scoring Sheet
Alabama's Original Poetry Competition

Judges Name: _____

Name of Student:

Title of Poem:

WRITTEN TEXT	Weak	Below Average	Average	Good	Excellent	Outstanding
Prosody and structure	1	2	3	4	5	6
Creativity/Innovation	1	2	3	4	5	6
Overall	1	2	3	4	5	6
PERFORMANCE	Weak	Below Average	Average	Good	Excellent	Outstanding
Presence and Delivery	1	2	3	4	5	6
Conveys Meaning	1	2	3	4	5	6
Overall Performance	1	2	3	4	5	6