



Annotated History of Poetry and Prose Categories

2023 – 2026 Poetry Categories

- A. **Recognizing Joy: Focusing on the Little Things.** Recognize joy in even the simplest of things. The overall tone of the performance should be joyful. The contestant may read one single poem, an excerpt of a poem or poems, or may create a program containing no more than six literary works of poetry. If a program is used, one poem from an unpublished source is allowed to be included in the program, but it may not be self-authored. The majority of the performance must be *published* poetry. The performance should evoke *an appreciation of finding joy*.
- B. **Inspiring Change: Striving for a Better Tomorrow.** the contestant shall create a program containing no fewer than two poetry selections and no more than six poems that shines a light on how our world has evolved for the better, empowering us to move toward a better tomorrow. The program may, *but is not limited to*, examine progress in medicine, mental health, women’s suffrage, technology, family relations, science, education, societal roles. **Students may use poems from one or more poets.** Co-authored and anonymous works are permissible but self-authored pieces shall not be used unless published in hard copy.

2023 – 2026 Prose Categories

- A. **Recognizing Joy: Focusing on the Little Things.** Recognize joy in even the simplest of things. The overall tone of the performance should be joyful. The contestant may read a single literary work of prose, an excerpt of a work of prose or may create a program containing no more than four literary works of prose. If a program is used, one prose selection from an unpublished source is allowed in the program but may not be self-authored. The majority of the performance must be *published* prose. The performance should evoke *an appreciation of finding joy*.
- B. **Inspiring Change: Striving for a Better Tomorrow.** The contestant shall create a program containing no fewer than two prose selections and no more than four prose selections that shines a light on how our world has evolved for the better, empowering us to move toward a better tomorrow. The program may, *but is not limited to*, examine progress in medicine, mental health, women’s suffrage, technology, family relations, science, education, societal roles. **Students may use prose selections from one or more authors.** Prose Category B includes fiction, nonfiction, news sources, speeches, essays, letters and diaries. Co-authored and anonymous works of prose are permissible but self-authored pieces shall not be used unless published in hard copy.

2019 – 2023 Poetry Categories

- A. **This is Me.** Examine the performer’s ancestry, origin, heritage, and/or dreams and aspirations. The performer should explore their own personal background and/or what their future may hold. May be one single poem, an excerpt of a poem or poems, or may create a program containing no more than six literary works. If a program is used, one poem from an unpublished source is allowed to be included in the program. The majority of the performance must be *published* poetry. The intent of this category is not to encourage an entirely originally-authored program.
- B. **This Speaks to Me.** Select poetry that speaks to the performer. This category is reader’s choice. Read a single literary work of prose, an excerpt of a work of prose or may create a program containing no more than four literary works. *For this category*, prose includes fiction, nonfiction, news sources, speeches, essays, letters and diaries. Co-authored works are permissible. Anonymous works are prohibited. The introduction and/or transitions shall include all titles and authors read and should relate to the audience why the literature was chosen. If the program is woven, the contestant shall state it in the introduction, and the different works should be distinguishable through interpretation.

2019 – 2023 Prose Categories

- A. **This is Me.** Examine the performer's ancestry, origin, heritage, and/or dreams and aspirations. The performer should explore their own personal background and/or what their future may hold. May be a single literary work of prose, an excerpt of a work of prose or may be a program containing no more than four literary works. The intent of this category is not to encourage an entirely originally-authored program.
- B. **This Speaks to Me.** Select literature that speaks to the performer. This category is reader's choice. Read a single literary work of prose, an excerpt of a work of prose or may create a program containing no more than four literary works. Prose includes fiction, nonfiction, news sources, speeches, essays, letters and diaries. Co-authored works are permissible. Anonymous works are prohibited. The introduction and/or transitions shall include all titles and authors read and should relate to the audience why the literature was chosen. If the program is woven, the contestant shall state it in the introduction, and the different works should be distinguishable through interpretation.

2016 – 2019 Poetry Categories

- A. **Examining Our Changing World.** Examine his or her changing world in order to *inform* the audience about a societal change and its impact on the performer. Societal change refers to a significant alteration *over time* in behavior, cultural values and norms. May be one single poem, excerpt of a poem or poems, or a program of poetry that may be woven or may incorporate verbal and/or nonverbal transitions. The purpose of the performance is to *inform*, not persuade.
- B. **Taking a Stand.** Develop a thematic program that supports a position by using poetry to make a *persuasive* argument. Must be a minimum of two different selections by different authors but no more than six selections; however, the majority of the program must be poetry. Poetry includes published, online and transcribed poetry such as, *but not limited to*: slam, spoken word, chapbooks, novels in verse. One of the selections, may be a play written in verse, a single song, including a song from a musical, or one poem included in a Podcast. All selections shall be by different authors. Literature by co-authors is allowed. One anonymous author is allowed. The purpose of the performance is to *persuade*.

2016 – 2019 Prose Categories

- A. **Examining Our Changing World.** Examine his or her changing world in order to *inform* the audience about a societal change and its impact on the performer. Societal change refers to a significant alteration *over time* in behavior, cultural values and norms. Contestant shall perform a single literary work (fiction or non-fiction) written by one author of prose or excerpt of a work designed to increase the audience's knowledge of a contemporary societal change occurring in the performer's world such as, *but not limited to*: education family, personal relationships, career choices, minority struggles, or community issues. No co-authored or anonymous authors. The purpose of the performance is to *inform*.
- B. **Taking a Stand.** Develop a literary program that supports a position by using different types of literature to make a persuasive argument. Must be a minimum of two different types of literary sources by different authors but no more than four sources; the majority of the program must be prose. Prose types include fiction, nonfiction, news sources, speeches and essays. For one of the sources, contestants may use a script from a movie, documentary, television show/movie, radio show, play or monologue. All selections must be by a different author. Literature by co-authors is allowed. Only one anonymous author is allowed. Selections may be woven. The purpose is to *persuade*.

2013 - 2016 Poetry Categories

- A. **Journey Through Time.** Examine a decade(s) and/or social/political movement. Perform a program centered on a time period and/or movement. Shall include at least two poems or excerpts by two or more poets. May be woven.
- B. **Journey With Poets.** Perform a poem, multiple poems or excerpts of poems, written by one or more poets whose biography appears on the website *PoetryFoundation.org*. Blogs, essays, prose and other non-poetic material found on this website shall not be used.

2013 – 2015 Prose Categories

- A. **Inspiring My Journey.** Explores the concept of past or present heroes/heroines or survivors. Perform a single prose selection. The selection may be fiction or non-fiction, written by one author or a single work written by two or more authors or written anonymously.
- B. **Expanding the Journey.** Develop a thematic program using different types of literature. Minimum of two different types of sources by different authors but not more than five sources.

2010 – 2013 Poetry Categories

- A. **A New Voice in Poetry.** Explores contemporary poetry; Perform a published poem, multiple poems or excerpts of poems - no more than 6 - written by one poet born 1960 or after. Poetry can be woven.
- B. **My Voice Through Poetry.** Perform a theme-centered program using at least 2 poems by at least two poets. No more than 6 poems. May be woven. No anonymous.

2010 – 2013 Prose Categories

- A. **Generation X, Y and Beyond.** Perform a single prose selection by one author born in 1960 or after.
- B. **In the News.** Perform a single prose selection or program of prose related to a significant news story – fiction or nonfiction, written by one author or a collaborative work by 2 or more authors. Can be woven but no more than 4 prose selections used.

2007 – 2010 Poetry Categories

- A. **Exploring Excellence in Poetry.** Perform a published poem, multiple poems, or excerpts of poems, written by an award-winning poet. Approved award lists designated by the League.
- B. **Exploring Poetry.** Perform a single poem or excerpt of a poem by one poet; or perform a thematic collection of up to six poems by one or more poets. The thematic collection may be woven or it may incorporate transitions without weaving.

2007 – 2010 Prose Categories

- A. **Exploring the Southern Experience.** Author shall be born in one of the following states: Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, or West Virginia.
- B. **Exploring Prose Fiction.** Piece of prose fiction and the literary work may be written by a single author or be a collaborative work by two or more authors.

2004 – 2007 Poetry Categories

- A. **American Reflections.** Thematic program of two or more published poems by one or more poets, exploring a specific historical event that has influenced the US.
- B. **Twentieth Century Reflections.** Published poem or poems or excerpt of poems all written by a single poet born in or after 1900.

2004 – 2007 Prose Categories

- A. **True Reflections: Non-Fiction.** Work by single or collaborative author(s) published from: biographies, autobiographies, diaries, journals, letters, essays or memoirs. The goal is to examine experiences of real people in real events.
- B. **Contemporary Reflections.** Selection that has been honored as an American Library Association Best Books for Young Adults from 1996 to present.

2001 – 2004 Poetry Categories

- A. **Celebrate the Poem.** Perform either one published poem, or an excerpt from only one published poem.
- B. **Celebrate the Poet.** Perform two or more poems, or two or more portions of poems, by one poet

2001 – 2004 Prose Categories

- A. **Celebrate Non-Fiction: First-Person Narratives.** Piece from first-person point of view drawn from either: memoirs, autobiographies, letters, diaries, journals, or essays.
- B. **Celebrate Fiction.** Work of fiction, may be drawn from a novel, novella, novelette or short story.

1998 – 2001 Poetry Categories

- A. **Voices Beyond the Americas.** Perform a poem (or poems) by one poet from outside the Americas. No poets from North America, Central America and South America and their territories within the Western Hemisphere.
- B. **Diversity and Human Experience.** Perform two or more published poems by one or more poets to incorporate the voices, experiences, and struggles in our multicultural society, presenting an awareness or perspective that recognizes the political, social, and/or economic realities that individuals experience in culturally diverse and complex human encounters. No anonymous poetry.

1998 – 2001 Prose categories

- A. **Celebrating Authors of the Southwest.** Perform piece by author born in Southwestern United States, SW includes: Texas, Oklahoma, New Mexico, Arizona, Colorado, California, Nevada, and Utah.
- B. **Performer's Choice.** One selection, fiction or non fiction; a co-authored work is permissible if each author is specifically identified.

1995 – 1998 Poetry Categories

- A. **Voices of the Americas.** Perform a published poem by one poets from the Americas (Countries within North America, Central America, and South America)
- B. **Performer's Program.** Perform two or more published poems by one or more poets.

1995 – 1998 Prose Categories

- A. **Award-Winning Writer.** Perform a work written by an author who has been the recipient of a literary award or prize.
- B. **Performer's choice.** Perform a published work, fiction or non-fiction.

1992 – 1995 Poetry Categories

- A. **Poets born outside the US and its Territories.** Poem or poems by one poet born outside the US and its territories. Biographic info showing the birthplace of the writer must accompany each selection.
- B. **A Thematic Program.** Perform two or more poems or portions of poems by different poets; should all have a central principal of organization stemming from the literature (subject matter, historical or social perspective, or contrasting points of view).

1992 – 1995 Prose Categories

- A. **World Literature.** One prose selection whose author was born outside the US. Biographic info showing the birthplace of the writer must accompany each selection.
- B. **An American Experience.** One prose selection whose author was born in US territories; piece about American people and experiences. Biographic info showing birthplace of writer required.

1990 – 1992 Poetry Categories

- A. **Performer's Choice.** Contestant will perform one published poem. Performer may discuss any aspect of the poem's language, form, style, content or meaning, introducing why this poem is the performer's choice. Demonstrate skills in literary analysis and contestant's discoveries about the selection.
- B. **Poet-Centered Program.** A student can choose any poet and perform at least three poems, or portions of poems, by that one poet and feature some aspect of the poet's work: it's diversity, development over the years, thematic or technical emphasis, even the poet's life. Audience should leave with an increased awareness of the poet's work.

1990 – 1992 Prose Categories

- A. **Works by 20th Century Writers.** Fiction or non-fiction piece by an author born during or after 1990.
- B. **Works by 19th Century Writers.** Fiction or non-fiction piece by an author born in or between 1800 and 1899.

1987 – 1990 Poetry Categories

- A. **Pulitzer Prize-Winning poets.** Perform a poem or poems by one Pulitzer Prize-winning poet. Selections are not limited to the collection named for the prize; if an author has one, a contestant can perform any piece by that author.
- B. **Performer's Choice.** Contestant shall perform one published poem.
- C. **A Poet-Centered Program.** A student can choose any poet and perform at least three poems, or portions of poems, by that one poet, featuring some aspect of the poet's work.

1987 – 1990 Prose Categories

- A. **Pulitzer Prize Winning Fiction Winners.** Selections are not limited to the collection named for the prize; if an author has one, a contestant can perform any piece by that author.
- B. **Works by 20th Century Women.** Can be fiction or non-fiction, written by a woman born during or after the year 1900. (In 1990 cat. Changed to both men/women authors)
- C. **Works by 19th Century Men.** Can be fiction or non-fiction, written by a man born in or between the years of 1800 and 1989. (In 1990 category changed to both men/women authors)

1984 – 1987 Poetry Categories

- A. **Poet Born Before 1800.** Must be a published poem or number of poems written by a single author born before 1800.
- B. **Poet Born After 1920.** Selection must be a published poem or number of poems written by a single author born before 1920.
- C. **Program of Poetry Selections.** Must be a program of at least three published poems, or cutting of poems, each by a different poet, which are developed around a central theme.

1984 – 1987 Prose Categories

- A. **Cutting from a Novel.** Prose fiction. A novel is defined as a book length work of prose usually divided into chapters or sections. Characteristics: plot, setting, and character representation.
- B. **Celebrating the Sesquicentennial: Texas in Fact, Fiction and Folklore.** Selection must be a published work of prose that is about Texas people, places, or things OR is written by a native-born Texan.
- C. **Non-Fiction Prose.** Should be from either: essays, articles, journals, editorials, letters, diaries, biographies, autobiographies.

1981 – 1984 Poetry Categories

- A. **Narrative poetry or Dramatic Monologue.** Purpose of the Narrative poetry is to tell a story, and the purpose of the dramatic monologue is to develop characterization in first person.
- B. **Lyric poetry.** Lyric poetry is subjective, sometimes brief and strongly marked by imagination melody and emotion and creates for the reader a single unified impression. Primary purpose of this is to appeal to the emotions or senses.
- C. **Program of Poetry Selections.** Equal balance of at least three poems or cutting of poems.

1981 – 1984 Prose categories

- A. **Cutting of a Novel.** A novel is defined as a book length work of prose fiction.
- B. **Twentieth Century Short Stories.** A short story is defined as a brief fictional narrative in prose.
- C. **Humorous Essays.** This category should be viewed as an open category for humorous essays. (later changed to personal essays, and then later to non-fiction prose)

1979 – 1981 Poetry Interpretation Categories

- A. **United States. Poets from the US.** Choose from list of 20 American Poets provided by UIL.
- B. **International. Poets from Across the World.** Can choose from list of 20 International poets provided.
- C. **Must be a program of poetry selections.** Must consist of at least three poems and/or cuttings of the poems. Cannot be any poets listed in categories A or B.

1979 – 1981 Prose Interpretation Categories

- A. **United States. Authors from the US.** Can choose from a list of 20 American authors provided by UIL.
- B. **International. Authors from across the world.** Can choose from a list of 20 International authors provided by UIL.
- C. **Legends, Myths, Fables, & Tales.** Any piece from an author who may be referenced as author, editor, or compiler. (In 1981, changed category where students choose from list of 24 authors provided by UIL.)

1974 – 1979 Prose Categories

- A. **Modern American Short Stories.** Selected authors from the list: Donald Bartheleme, Kay Boyle, Ray Bradbury, Bruce Jay Friedman, George Garrett, John Graves, Tille Olsen, James f. Powers, Issac Singer, Peter Taylor.
- B. **Modern American Short Stories IV.** Selected authors from the list: James Baldwin, Ralph Ellison, Roland R. Hinojosa, William Melvin Kelley, John Jacob Matthews, N. Scott Momoday, Estela Portillo, Thomas Rivera. Jean Toomer, Sabine R. Ulivarri
- C. **Modern International Stories.** Selected authors from the list: Heinrich Boll, Adolfo Bioy Casares, Sean O’Faolain, Hugh Garner, Nadine Gordimer, Hermann Hesse, Kawabata, Tomasso Landolfi, Gabriel Garcia-Marquez, R.K. Narayan.

1976 – 1979 Poetry Categories

- A. **Modern Commonwealth Poets III.** Selected authors from the list of authors: James Baxter, Allen Curnow, Kamala Das, Joe de Graft, William Keoapetse, Kghostitsile, Abraham Moses Klein, David Malouf, Mahapatra Jayanta, P’Bitek Okot, Derek Wolcott
- B. **Modern American Poets VI.** From the same list of author from MAP V.
- C. **Modern Latin American Poets II.** Selected authors from the list of authors: Homero Aridjis. Carlos Drummond de Andrade, David Escobar Galinda, Isabel Frairie, Alberto Girri, Carlos Isola, Henriquetta Lisboa, Nicanor Parra, Jaime Torres Bodet, Ceasar Vallejo

1974 – 1976 Poetry Categories

- A. **Modern American Poets V.** Selected authors from the list: Alurista, Nikki Giovanni, Etheridge Knight, Don L. Lee, Clarence Major, Alex Posey, Ricardo Sanchez, Sonia Sanchez, Gerald Vizenor, James Welch.
- B. **Modern American Poets VI.** Selected authors from the list: A.R. Ammons, Charles Bukowski, Carolyn Kizer, Maxine Kumin, Josephine Miles, Adrienne Rich. Mark Strand, William Jay Smith, James Tate, Diane Wakoski.
- C. **Modern International Poets.** Selected authors from the list: Yves Bonnefoy, Padraic Colum, Bruce Dawe, Irving Layton, George Macbeth, Christopher Middleton, Edwin Morgan, Nicanor Parra, Jacques Prevert, Nelly Sachs.

1967 – 1974 Poetry Categories

- A. **Modern Austrian/Canadian Poets.** From the list: Australian: Robert D. Fitzgerald, Rodney Hall, Kenneth Slessor, Douglas Stewart or Judith Wright. Canadian: Earle Birney, Leonard Cohen, A.W. Purdy, Raymond Souster, or Miriam Waddington.
- B. **Modern American Poets II.** From the list: Gwendolyn Brooks, Donald Hall, Randall Jarrell, Denise Levertov, Ogden Nash, Kenneth Patchem, Muriel Ruykeyser, Ann Sexton, William Stafford, or Reed Whittemore.
- C. **Modern European Poets I.** From the list: Gottfried Benn, Gunnar Ekelof, Gunter Grass, Alberto de Lacerda, Jules Supervielle, Salvatore Quasimodo, Ranier Maria Rilke, St. John Perse, Giorgos Seferiades, or Eugenio Montale.

1967 – 1974 Prose Categories

- A. **Modern American Short Stories II.** From the list: Saul Bellow, John Cheever, Carson McCullars, Bernard Malamund, Joyce Carol Oates, Flannery O’Connor, Dorothy Parker, Reynolds Price, Jean Stafford, or Richard Wright.
- B. **Modern Common Wealth Short Stories I.** From the list: China Achebe. Morley Callaghan, Cyprian Eke ski, Graham Greene, High Hood, V.S. Naipaul, James, Nugget, Frank O’Connor, Hal Porter, or Patrick White.

- C. **Modern Latin American Short Stories I.** From the list: Jorge Luis Borges, Enrique del Campo, Verna Carleton Millau, Julio Cortazar, Jose Donoso, Mariano Latorre, Eduardo Mallea, Horacio Quirogo, Juan Rulfo, Arturo Uslar Pietri.

1964 – 1967 Poetry Categories

- A. **Works by selected Poets.** (list of 4 poets): Conrad Aiken, Louis MacNeice, Sarah Teasdale, or William Carlos Williams.
- B. **Works by selected Poets.** (list of 6 poets): Joaquin Miller, Edwin Markham, Sidney Lanier, Walt Whitman, Edgar Lee Masters, and Louis Untermeyer.
- C. **Performer's Choice of Poet.**

1964 – 1967 Prose Categories

- A. **Public Address.** Selection will come from any serious public speech dealing with significant affairs or problems, either contemporary or historical. No student oratorical contest speeches allowed.
- B. **Published Fiction Work.** Excerpts from novels, short stories and informal essays, either serious or humorous in nature.
- C. **Written Commentary.** Includes editorials, syndicated columns, formal essays, and those with reasoned or logical appeals, and radio and TV commentary (such as Walter Cronkite).

1962 – 1964 Poetry Categories

- A. **British Poets.** Tennyson, Browning, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Arnold
- B. **American Poets.** Frost, Lindsay, Milay, MacLeish, Jeffers
- C. **Others.**

1962 – 1964 Prose Categories

- A. **Commentary.**
- B. **Fiction.**
- C. **Public Address.**

1961 – 1962 Categories

*Until this year, oral interpretation contest consisted only of Poetry. This was the first year for Prose. A prescribed list of five selections by 5 poets and 5 writers were selected by the League for these contests.

1955 – 1962 Poetry categories

- A. **A Prepared Selection.** The prepared selection shall be from the realm of good literature and shall be recognized as poetry. Poem may be complete, a cutting, or several short poems.
- B. **An Extemporaneous Selection.** The extemporaneous selection shall be drawn from several selections sent to the district director by the State Office. Students will choose one poem 30 minutes prior to competing.

Early 1950s Poetry categories

*The 1950s offered only poetry and “declamation.” The poetry event consisted of a prepared, four-minute selection, and an extemporaneous selection. The rationale for the event claimed “...*this contest is designed to provide training in the holding of a book and the effective reading from the manuscript in front of an audience, so that the best principles of oral reading are emphasized.*”

Earlier “Declamation” categories of the 1940s and 1950s:

General Field of Good Citizenship

The requirement may be fulfilled by a selection dealing with:

1. Noted events or characters in the shaping of American history
2. Fundamental qualities or virtues of good citizenship
3. Texas heroes, history and progress
4. Present-day public questions or issues

The C&CR noted: Each declamation shall consist of a prose selection from some standard author or well-known speaker. The subject matter of each selection shall be prevailing serious in tone, and delivered for the purpose of convincing or persuading the audience of certain ideas or truths; in other words, a declamation should not be chosen which is primarily adapted to the purposes of mere entertainment.

The subjects to be used are intended to lead the students to study the problems of our American system of government and to incite in speakers and hearers aspirations toward a better citizenship. Poetic quotations may be included in a prose selection, provided the selection as a whole contains more prose than poetry. Humor may be included, but purely “funny” pieces, dramatic readings and impersonations will not be allowed.

The purpose of these contests is to train pupils as public speakers and not as dramatic readers or mere entertainers.