

Poetry Ourselves for the 2016 Poetry Out Loud National Finals

As part of the National Endowment for the Arts' (NEA) 50th anniversary activities, Poetry Out Loud (POL) will be offering an additional competition for original student work for the 2016 National Finals. Each state champion will have the opportunity to submit an original work of poetry in one of two categories. Two runners-up will be selected for each category. Winners and runners-up will be announced at the 2016 Poetry Out Loud National Finals and winning work may be featured on the NEA website, arts.gov, and the Poetry Out Loud website, poetryoutloud.org. Poet and spoken-word artist [Patricia Smith](#) will judge the submissions.

Written Category

- State champions submit a single, original poem, typed and no longer than 50 lines. Poems are submitted via email to the National Endowment for the Arts at poetryoutloud@arts.gov.
- 1 student will win, and 1 student will be the runner-up.
- The winning student and runner-up may have his/her poem featured on arts.gov and poetryoutloud.org. The winning student and runner-up will be announced at the 2016 Poetry Out Loud National Finals.

Spoken Category

- State champions submit a video (mp4 file) of an original, spoken-word poem no longer than 3 minutes. Videos are submitted via email to the National Endowment for the Arts via DropBox. (Please note the URL and password will be shared with state champions after the state final.)
- 1 student will win, and 1 student will be the runner-up.
- The winning student and runner-up may have her/ his poem featured on arts.gov and poetryoutloud.org. The winning student and runner-up will be announced at the 2016 Poetry Out Loud National Finals.

Guidelines

- All state champions are eligible to enter, but entry is completely optional.
- Entries must be the original work of the student and will be judged solely on artistic excellence.*
- State champions may only submit one poem—written or spoken. Students should decide whether their original work is best suited to the stage or the page and select the appropriate category.
- The submission deadline for poems is Monday, April 4, 2016 at 5pm EST. This is a hard deadline. Poems submitted after 5pm EST on Monday, April 4, 2016 will not be reviewed. Submission date and time will be determined based on electronic time stamps.
- Poems may focus on any topic, but students should remember that winning entries will be presented to the public.
- Spoken poems may be no longer than 3min.
- Written poems may be no longer than 50 lines.
- Participants and their guardians will need to provide permission for the NEA to publish their work on the NEA and Poetry Out Loud websites as well as social media platforms.
- Participants and their guardians will need to certify that the work submitted is an original piece.

Questions? Contact Maryrose Flanigan at poetryoutloud@arts.gov.

*Works may not include any discriminatory, obscene, profane, threatening, or violent content or language. The NEA reserves the right to take appropriate actions in instances where submissions go beyond the boundaries of artistic merit and contain immediate threats of violence or criminal activity to individuals and/or communities.

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Patricia Smith, 2016 Poetry Ourselves Judge



Patricia Smith has been called “a testament to the power of words to change lives.” She is the author of six books of poetry, including *Shoulda Been Jimi Savannah* (2012), which won the Lenore Marshall Prize from the Academy of American Poets; *Blood Dazzler* (2008), a chronicle of the human and environmental cost of Hurricane Katrina which was nominated for a National Book Award; and *Teahouse of the Almighty*, a 2005 National Poetry Series selection published by Coffee House Press. Her work has appeared in *Poetry*, the *Paris Review*, the *New York Times*, *TriQuarterly*, *Tin House*, *The Washington Post*, and in both *Best American Poetry* and *Best American Essays*. Her contribution to the crime fiction anthology *Staten Island Noir*, which she edited, won the Robert L. Fish Award from the Mystery Writers of America for the best debut story of the year and was chosen for *Best American Mystery Stories 2013*. Smith also penned the critically acclaimed history *Africans in America* (1999) and the award-winning children’s book *Janna and the Kings* (2003). She is a 2014 Guggenheim fellow, a 2012 fellow at both MacDowell and Yaddo, a two-time Pushcart Prize winner, recipient of a Lannan fellowship and a four-time individual champion of the National Poetry Slam, the most successful poet in the competition’s history. She is currently working on a biography of Harriet Tubman, a poetry volume combining text and 19th century African-American photos, and a collaborative novel with her husband Bruce DeSilva, the Edgar-Award winning author of the Liam Mulligan crime novels.

Source: The Poetry Foundation poetryfoundation.org