

WASHINGTON STATE ARTS COMMISSION

PRESENTS

POETRY OUT LOUD 

2025

**WASHINGTON STATE
FINAL**



TACOMA LITTLE THEATRE

MARCH 8, 2025



ARTS WA

Welcome to Poetry Out Loud 2025

When the *Poetry Out Loud* program first started in 2005, 8 schools in a single Washington county participated. This year, 37 schools from across Washington State participated in Poetry Out Loud.

After classroom-level competitions and school-wide competitions, these schools sent their top students to participate in one of four regional finals held in Central, Eastern, Northwest, and Southwest.

In addition, eleven students from around the state registered for Poetry Out Loud Virtual, under the coordination of Tacoma Little Theatre. This program is available to individual students from non-participating schools, and home-schooled students. Six students from this cohort participated in their own final competition.

Top scoring students from each of these finals are competing today for the title of 2025 Washington State Poetry Out Loud Champion.

The winner of the State Final will receive \$200, and the winner's school will receive a \$500 stipend for the purchase of poetry books. The second-place finalist will receive \$100, with \$200 for their school library. The state champion will represent Washington State in the National Finals in Washington D.C. May 5 - 7, 2025.

The Poetry Out Loud National Finals will award a total of \$50,000 in scholarships and school stipends, with a \$20,000 college scholarship for the National Champion.

Tacoma Little Theatre recognizes that they teach and perform on Indigenous land: ṽukʷədiitəb ṽuhigʷətəb čət txʷəl tiit ʔa čət ʔal tə swatxʷixʷtxʷəd ʔə tiit puyaləpabš dxʷəsəʔlils gʷəl ʔutxʷəlšucidəbs həlgʷəʔ. "We gratefully acknowledge that we rest on the traditional lands of the Puyallup People where they make their home and speak the Lushootseed language."

About Poetry Out Loud



Poetry Out Loud invites the dynamic aspects of slam poetry, spoken word, and theater into the classroom.

The National Endowment for the Arts and the Poetry Foundation partner with State Arts Agencies across the United States to support Poetry Out Loud, a program that encourages the nation's youth to learn about great poetry through memorization and performance. This program helps students to master public speaking skills, build self-confidence, and learn about their literary heritage.

Over 8,000 students from across Washington participated in the program this school year, reciting poems selected from an anthology of more than 1,100 classic and contemporary poems.

Thank you to everyone who has come to enjoy great poetry and to support our state finalists. Enjoy!

About ArtsWA



The Washington State Arts Commission (ArtsWA) is a state agency, established in 1961, whose purpose is to conserve and develop the State's artistic resources, as essential to the social, educational, and economic growth of the State of Washington. One of our strategic goals is to strengthen K-12 arts education as part of, and fundamental to, basic education. For more information: www.arts.wa.gov.

The Washington State Arts Commission is committed to values of inclusion, diversity, equity, and creative expression.

We believe in diverse forms of artistic expression, and we believe in access to arts and arts education for all individuals in our state. The arts can and should play a role in addressing inequities, modeling inclusion, and teaching empathy.

Washington State Regional Champions

Luella Brevik

North Central High School, Spokane County

Shae Dooley

Peninsula High School, Pierce County

Sydney Frost

Mt. Spokane High School, Spokane County

Isabella Jennings

East Valley High School, Yakima County

Thomas Laurino

Eastlake High School, King County

Sidra Marshall

Anacortes High School, Skagit County

Nascha Martinez

(POL Virtual) Kingston, Kitsap County

Luis Mata

River Ridge High School, Thurston County

Elizabeth McAleer

Battle Ground High School, Clark County

Orlo Parkinson

Liberty Bell High School, Okanogan County

Brianna Smith

Ellensburg High School, Kittitas County

Washington State Final Program

Welcome and Introductions

Emcee: Asha Berkes

Introductions and Program Information

Presentation of the Washington State Regional Champions

Recitations - Round One

All Students recite their first poem

SHORT INTERMISSION

Recitations - Round Two

Guest: Janae Lu, Seattle Youth Poet Laureate

All Students recite their second poem

A Word from the Classroom: Carolyn Gilman

ArtsWA Executive Director: Karen Hanan

Announcement of Three Finalists

SHORT INTERMISSION

Recitations - Round Three

Finalists recite their third poem

2025 Poetry Forward Winners

Third Round Stretch

Announcements and Acknowledgments

Announcement of the 2025 Washington State

Poetry Out Loud Champion

Regional Champion Questions & Answers

Student Poem Selections

Student recitations are conducted in alphabetical order, by last name. For the first round of recitations, we go A-Z. In the second round, we start at the center of the alphabet and go to Z, followed by A-L. The finalists who advance to the third round are presented in a randomly chosen order. All poems were selected from the Poetry Out Loud anthology, available at poetryoutloud.org.

Luella Brevik

(First Recitation in Round One)

[*Miss you. Would like to grab that chilled tofu we love.*](#) by [Gabrielle Calvoceressi](#)

[*The Poem You've Been Waiting For*](#) by [Tarfia Faizullah](#)

[*April Midnight*](#) by [Arthur Symons](#)

Shae Dooley

[*We Wear the Mask*](#) by [Paul Laurence Dunbar](#)

[*Caged Bird*](#) by [Maya Angelou](#) **

[*Songs for the People*](#) by [Frances Ellen Watkins Harper](#)

Sydney Frost

[*Siren Song*](#) by [Margaret Atwood](#)

[*There are no kings in America*](#) by [Aileen Cassinetta](#) **

[*No, I wasn't Meant to Love and Be Loved*](#) by [Mirza Asadullah Khan Ghalib](#), translated by Vijay Seshadri

Isabella Jennings

[*Thoughtless Cruelty*](#) by [Charles Lamb](#)

[*Another One of the World's Liars*](#) by [Mohja Kahf](#)

[*How Dark the Beginning*](#) by [Maggie Smith](#)

Thomas Laurino

[*Art vs Trade*](#) by [James Weldon Johnson](#) **

[*The Season of Phantasmal Peace*](#) by [Derek Walcott](#)

[*A Hymn to the Evening*](#) by [Phillis Wheatley](#)

Sidra Marshall

(First Recitation in Round Two)

[Mimesis](#) by [Fady Joudah](#)

[Invisible Children](#) by [Mariana Llanos](#)

[A Song: Lying is an Occupation](#) by [Laetitia Pilkington](#)

Nascha Martinez

[Green Light Go](#) by [Emmy Perez](#)

[The World Is Too Much With Us](#) by [William Wordsworth](#)

[From the Sky](#) by [Sara Abou Rashed](#)

Luis Mata

[We Lived Happily During the War](#) by [Ilya Kaminsky](#)

[Ways of Talking](#) by [Ha Jin](#) **

[The Rights of Women](#) by [Anna Letitia Barbauld](#)

Elizabeth McAleer

[A Wing and a Prayer](#) by [Beth Ann Fennelly](#)

[Listening in Deep Space](#) by [Diane Thiel](#)

[Ships that Pass in the Night](#) by [Paul Laurence Dunbar](#)

Orlo Parkinson

[Weighing In](#) by [Rhina P. Espailat](#)

[Istanbul 1983](#) by [Sheila Black](#)

[The Glories of Our Blood and State](#) by [James Shirley](#)

Brianna Smith

[Y2K](#) by [Therese Lloyd](#)

[Pastoral Dialogue](#) by [Anne Killigrew](#)

[Valentine](#) by [Lorna Dee Cervantes](#)

**** These poems are not permitted for live streaming.**



“Poetry Out Loud has greatly enhanced my love for poetry, and has served as an incredible learning experience for me. I have absolutely loved how positive this experience has been, as the competitive nature takes a back seat to the experience of sharing poetry with a group of like-minded youth.”

Blaze Rowan, 2024 Washington State Champion

Poetry Out Loud Biographies

Asha Berkes, Emcee

Asha is a poet and educator in Tacoma. They have taught workshops all over Tacoma, in middle and high schools, with the Tacoma Public Library, at SOWA annual Bridge Conference, and more. Berkes serves as the Director of Educational Partnerships at Write 253 and teaches poetry at Tacoma School of the Arts. Berkes studied English, Gender and Queer Studies, and African American Studies at the University of Puget Sound. Their senior thesis, a collection of poems entitled “Lesbo Island” was a finalist in the Stories Award for Poetry at Not a Cult Media.

Michelle Avitia, Judge

Originally from Los Angeles, Michelle moved to Washington to live and work in Olympia in 2018. She holds a B.A. from San Jose State University in English and Professional Technical Writing. Michelle spent many years writing and editing for independent literary magazines, held an editorial internship with Bitch Media, and a column with Catalyst Wedding Co magazine. In her free time, she enjoys hosting dinner parties, crushing her partner in sudoku, and volunteering at Community Print Olympia. Michelle currently works at ArtsWA as the Art in Public Places Program Coordinator and is a board member at Community Print Olympia.

Elizabeth Hallberg, Judge

Elizabeth Hallberg was born and raised in Tacoma, leaving the area only to attend the not-too-distant Western Washington University to earn her undergrad degree in English, with additional interests in American Cultural and Women Studies. She then went on to receive her teaching certificate in English and Theatre Arts, finding a home base as an educator at Rogers High School in Puyallup, where she has taught for the last 20 years. She is passionate about infusing poetry into the classroom, allowing students space to explore their own voices in writing, and greatly appreciates Poetry Out Loud for being a program that supports those endeavors.

Jeanette Sanchez-Izenman, Judge

Jeanette is a director, teaching artist, and theatre theorist/historian. She did her actor training at the University of New Mexico where she earned her BFA with honors and an MA in Directing and Educational Theatre.

(Continued) She moved to the Pacific Northwest for her PhD candidacy in Theatre History and Criticism at the University of Washington School of Drama. She is co-founder of eSe Teatro in Seattle and has worked as a dramaturg with Teatro Vision in San Jose (Perla) and with Teatro Nuevo México (Electricidad). She is a founder of Screaming Butterflies Productions with Kathryn Philbrook in Tacoma. Their indie company seeks to use performance to re-vision myth, community and justice.

Jasmine Mahmoud, Judge

Jasmine Mahmoud is Assistant Professor in Theatre History and Performance Studies at the University of Washington. A performance historian, her work engages the Pacific Northwest arts sector, racial equity, and cultural policy. Jasmine has worked as a musician, theater artist, arts critic, and as a TeenTix Mentor and Teaching Artist. She serves as Board Vice President of On the Boards. She earned her PhD in Performance Studies from Northwestern University, MA in Arts Politics from NYU, and BA in Government from Harvard College. Jasmine currently serves as a Commissioner for the Washington State Arts Commission (ArtsWA).

Aileen Keown Vaux, Judge

Aileen Keown Vaux is a poet and essayist whose chapbook Consolation Prize was published by Scablands Books. Their poems can be found in Faultline Journal, Roanoke Review, Northwest Review, and Portland Review and they publish interviews with poets and writers at The Rumpus. They live and work in Portland, OR.

Katie Taylor, Judge

Katie Taylor (she/her) currently serves as the Director of Secondary Education at the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction. Her 25+ years in education has focused on secondary schools in Tacoma Public Schools and the Clover Park School District, and through her work at the Center for Strengthening the Teaching Profession. Her love of poetry began as an English major at the University of Puget Sound and fueled her work as a high school English teacher. Among her favorite movies is the documentary, “Louder Than a Bomb” and she thrilled to engage with the power of the spoken word.

Special thanks to the Washington's 2024-25 *Poetry Out Loud* Leadership and Regional Partners

Central Washington

Yakima Valley College: Jeff Gerhardstein, Coordinator

Eastern Washington

Spokane Arts: Jeremy Whittington, Coordinator

Northwest Washington

The Skagit River Poetry Foundation: Molly McNulty, Coordinator

POL Virtual

Tacoma Little Theatre: Cassie Fastabend, Coordinator

Southwest Washington

South Puget Sound Community College: Melissa Meade, and
Kathleen Byrd, Coordinators working cooperatively with ArtsWA.

Poetry Out Loud Teacher Liaison

Carolyn Gilman, Olympia High School, Olympia

Many thanks to the teachers who coordinated Poetry Out Loud at their school this year:

Central

AC Davis High School, Rebecca Hoover; Bickleton High School, Silvia Navarre; East Valley High School, Kristin Morrison; Ellensburg High School, Jesse Stueckle; Kamiakin High School, Joyce Donais; Naches Valley High School; Teresa Eims; Richland High School, Jason Allen; Selah High School, Jon McClintick.

Eastern

DeSales High School, Christine Richard; Lakeside High School, Alecia Sing; Liberty Bell High School, Kelly Grayum; Mead High School, Drew Lohead; Methow Valley Independent Learning Center, Sara Mounsey; Mt Spokane High School, Elizabeth Scourey; North Central High School, Ashley Byrne; Okanogan High School, Dennis O'Connor; The Community School, Nathan Seaburg.

Northwest

Anacortes High School, Brian Backman; Eastlake High School, Natalie Guinasso; Innovation Lab High School, Christina deVidal; Mercer Island High School, Jane Stafford; Mount Si High School, Daniel Mancoff; Quilcene High School, Camille Hildebrandt; Shorewood High School, Tim Murray; Squalicum High School, Joe McAuliffe; Washington Preparatory School, Kristi Bubna,

Southwest

Annie Wright Schools, Rebecca Disrud; Battle Ground High School, Heather Smithline; Camas High School, Rachael Tullar; Concordia Christian Academy, Nikki Shannon; Shute; Governor John R. Rogers High School, Elizabeth Hallberg, Ocosta Junior-Senior High School, Mae Thomas; Olympia High School, Carolyn Gilman; Peninsula High School, Hannah Morrison; River Ridge High School, Emily Ehrlich; Stadium High School, Liz Jacobsen.

Production Credits

Emcee

Asha Berkes

Judges – Poetry Out Loud

Michelle Avitia, Jeanette Sanchez-Izenman, Aileen Keown-Vaux, Jasmine Mahmoud, Katie Taylor, (Accuracy) Elizabeth Hallberg

Judge – Poetry Ourselves

Dr. Tod Marshall, Gonzaga University, 2016-18 Washington Poet Laureate; Kate Myre, Faculty at Cornish College of the Arts; Mery Smith, current Spokane Poet Laureate.

Music

The Kareem Kandi World Orchestra - kkworldorchestra.org
Kareem Kandi and Greg Feingold

Tacoma Little Theatre

Chris Serface, Managing Artistic Director
Lily Oellerich, Production Manager

Photography

Pavel Verbovski

Washington State Arts Commission Staff

Karen Hanan, Executive Director
Tamar Krames, Arts in Education Program Manager
Alexis Sarah, Arts in Education Project Manager
Judy Cullen, Poetry Out Loud State Coordinator
Kalei Matsui, Arts in Education Program Coordinator

Special Thanks

Write253 and Line Break Press for the creation of custom letter-press prints to recognize this year's State Finalists.

Poetry Forward

Poetry Forward is an optional, original poetry contest open to Washington Poetry Out Loud School Champions and students participating in POL Virtual. This feature debuted during the 2023 competition season and was originally called “Poetry Ourselves.”

Poetry Forward recognizes outstanding poetry by students in the POL program. After an initial review by ArtsWA Staff, this year’s entries were judged by a panel of recognized Pacific Northwest poets and educators. The winning poems will be announced and recognized during the 2025 Washington State Poetry Out Loud Final Competition.

A selection of top poems, including those recognized (as above), will be included in the 2025 chapter of the online Poetry Forward Anthology, which will be available to read only on the ArtsWA website.

2024 Winners:

- » First Place: Luca Artz of Mount Si High School (Snoqualmie) with *The Recipe*
- » Honorable mentions: Leki Albright of Liberty Bell High School (Winthrop) with *In Betweens* and Nascha Martinez (Kingston) with *A Generation’s Soliloquy*

Listen to the students read their poems at

arts.wa.gov/2024/03/20/listen-2024-poetry-ourselves-finalists/

2023 Winners:

- » First Place: Leki Albright from Liberty Bell High School (Winthrop) with *Some Things I’ve Learned this Summer*
- » Second Place: Jovi Weller from Sequim High School (Sequim) with *True Beauty*

Listen to the students read their poems at

arts.wa.gov/2023/04/26/listen-poetry-ourselves-finalists/

The *Poetry Out Loud* Washington State Final is presented by the [Washington State Arts Commission](#), with support from the following partners:

National Endowment for the Arts



The [National Endowment for the Arts](#) was established by Congress in 1965 as an independent agency of the federal government. To date, the NEA has awarded more than \$5 billion to support artistic excellence, creativity, and innovation for the benefit of individuals and communities. The NEA extends its work through partnerships with state arts agencies, local leaders, other federal agencies, and the philanthropic sector.

Poetry Foundation



[The Poetry Foundation](#), publisher of Poetry Magazine, is an independent literary organization committed to a vigorous presence for poetry in our culture. It has embarked on an ambitious plan to bring the best poetry before the largest possible audiences.

For More Information

The National Poetry Out Loud Program: poetryoutloud.org

Washington State Arts Commission (ArtsWA): arts.wa.gov

About Tacoma Little Theatre

In October of 1918, a group of civic-minded community members founded the Tacoma Chapter of the Drama League of America with Tacoma Little Theatre (TLT) serving as the production wing. Over a century later, TLT is the sole remaining entity of the founding chapter. The staff and Board of Directors are committed to creating quality productions and fostering meaningful interactions among all people in their community. Visit tacomalittletheatre.com to learn more.



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