



Alameda County 2025-2026 POETRY OUT LOUD

All Alameda County High Schools are Invited to Participate!

Poetry Out Loud (POL) is a national arts education program that encourages the study of great poetry by offering free educational materials and a dynamic recitation competition for high school students across the country. This program encourages students to read, recite and share their voice. Students practice public speaking skills, build self-confidence, and learn about literary creative expression. Poetry Out Loud provides free, online curriculum resources including a teacher's guide, lesson plans, poetry archive, and student performance videos. All Alameda County high schools and community organizations with youth in grades 9-12 are invited to participate. Visit www.poetryoutloud.org to watch an engaging and informative [POL Promo Video](#).

Competition Format: Structured like a spelling bee, school/community organization winners advance to the County competition in February, then the State competition in March, and ultimately National Finals in May.

2025/2026 Competition Overview: The program focuses on students choosing, memorizing, and reciting at least one memorized poem for a school/organization contest. Highly flexible, the program can be conducted in the classroom during the school day, as extra credit, or during an after-school program. The program length can be as short as 2 weeks. To select their representative to advance to the County Competition, schools and organizations must conduct their recitation contest in-person or online by Jan. 22, 2026. For the County Competition, each school student representative is required to recite two memorized poems at an in-person event on Wed, Feb. 5, 2026. All poems for all competitions must be memorized and on www.poetryoutloud.org.

County Competition Prizes: 1st Place Prize \$200; 2nd Place Prize \$100; all other participants \$25. \$100 will be awarded to 1st Place County Winner's school/organization that facilitated the student winner's participation.

Timeline and Important School Deadlines:

- **Wed, Oct. 1, 2025 - School/Organization Deadline to Confirm Participation:** School/Organization must email the Alameda County Poetry Out Loud Coordinator Violet Harlo at violet.harlo@acgov.org with contact information for school/organization site, teacher/coordinator, and date of site Poetry Out Loud contest.
- **October 2025 - January 2026 – Schools/Organizations conduct their Poetry Out Loud program:** Using the online [Poetry Out Loud](#) resources and poems, sites conduct the program and a poetry recitation contest to select their representative for the County competition. All competition poems must be memorized and on www.poetryoutloud.org.
- **Wed, January 21, 2026 - School/Organization Deadline to Register Student Representative for County Competition:** Site coordinator/teacher must email the Alameda County Poetry Out Loud Coordinator Violet Harlo at violet.harlo@acgov.org with: 1) Contact information for the student representative and student's parent/guardian and 2) Student's two poems (title and poet) in the order they will be performed at the County Competition. All competition poems must be memorized and on www.poetryoutloud.org
- **Wed, February 4, 2026, 4:00-6:00 pm: In-Person County Competition:** County Level Competition hosted by Alameda County Arts Commission. All poems must be memorized and on www.poetryoutloud.org.
- **March 15 - 16, 2026 – California State Competition:** Alameda County student representative participates in the California State Finals competition in Sacramento. The student will recite three memorized poems on www.poetryoutloud.org. One poem must be 25 lines or fewer, and one must be written before the 20th century. The same poem may meet both criteria, and may be the student's third poem.
- **May, 2026 – National Finals Competition:** The California State student representative participates in National Finals competition in Washington, DC.

Alameda County Poetry Out Loud Coordinator: Contact Violet Harlo at violet.harlo@acgov.org or 510-891-5716.

WHAT IS POETRY OUT LOUD?

Poetry Out Loud is an opportunity for high school students to learn about great poetry through memorization and recitation performance. Since 2005, Poetry Out Loud has reached more than 4.1 million students and 68,000 teachers from 17,000 schools and organizations throughout the nation. California's Poetry Out Loud is the largest in the country involving over 50 counties, 200 schools, and 10,000 students annually.

WHO CAN ENTER THE POETRY OUT LOUD COMPETITION?

Poetry Out Loud competition is open to schools and organizations that serve high school students in 9-12 grades. School sites may include public, private, charter, parochial, independent, alternative, continuation, court, and home schools. A Poetry Out Loud site coordinator may be a teacher, librarian, or staff member.

HOW DOES POETRY OUT LOUD WORK?

Poetry Out Loud is a tiered competition structure like a spelling bee. Site coordinators use the Poetry Out Loud resource materials to teach poetry recitation and run a contest to select the site's student representative to enter the County competition. The County winner competes in the state competition, and the state winner competes in the national finals.

HOW DOES POETRY OUT LOUD SUPPORT THE SCHOOL CURRICULUM?

Poetry Out Loud activities support [many Common Core Standards and NCTE Standards](#). Common Core examples include Anchor Standards for Reading (RL.9-10, RL.11-12) and Anchor Standards for Language (L.9-10, L.11-12).

POETRY RESOURCES

All resources are online at the [National Poetry Out Loud website](#) at www.poetryoutloud.org including:

- **Find Poems section** for students to browse and discover poems that are meaningful to them using interactive tools to browse by [thematic collection](#), [poet](#), [poetic form](#) or term, and [title or key word](#).
- **Competing section** with student resources including:
 - [What It's Like to Compete](#) videos about the [Poetry Out Loud](#) program and how to [choose](#), [memorize](#), and [perform](#) poems.
 - [Recitation Videos](#) with notes about the strengths of each performance.
 - [Listen to Poems](#) section with poetry recitation audio files which are referenced in [teacher lesson plans](#).
 - [Tips on Reciting](#) with detailed information and videos examples for each of the [Evaluation Criteria](#).
- **Teachers & Organizers section** with detailed, helpful information for teachers including:
 - [Teacher's Guide](#) with sample schedule and information about judging evaluation, scoring, rules and tips.
 - [Lesson plans](#) with [Lesson Plan Videos](#). The plans also use [Poem Recitation](#) audio files.
 - [Organizing a Contest](#) and [Judging a Contest](#) sections with information and resources.
 - [Poetry Out Loud Fact Sheet](#), [Logos and Graphics](#) and [Standards Information](#).

DO WE NEED TO SIGN UP?

Yes, Alameda County High Schools must submit Poetry Out Loud participation information by Oct. 1, 2025 to Alameda County Poetry Out Loud Coordinator Violet Harlo at violet.harlo@acgov.org.

HOW IS POETRY OUT LOUD FUNDED?

Poetry Out Loud is funded by The National Endowment for the Arts, the Poetry Foundation, the California Arts Council, and the Alameda County Arts Commission.

Questions? Contact Poetry Out Loud Coordinator Violet Harlo at violet.harlo@acgov.org or 510-891-5716.



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