



What is the National Student Poets Program?

The President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities, the Institute of Museum and Library Services, and the nonprofit Alliance for Young Artists & Writers partner to present the National Student Poets Program (NSPP), the nation's highest honor for young poets (grades 10-11) presenting original work. Annually, five students are selected for one year of service as literary ambassadors, each representing a geographic region of the country. By elevating and showcasing their work for a national audience, the program strives to inspire other young people to achieve excellence in their own creative endeavors and promote the essential role of writing and the arts in academic and personal success.

The National Student Poets Program reflects the national imprimatur of the President's Committee and its Honorary Chairman, First Lady Michelle Obama, as well as the Administration's commitment to arts and humanities education. It connects the National Student Poets with audiences and resources in their communities through the Institute of Museum and Library Services' community-based network of libraries and museums, and builds upon the Alliance's long-standing work with educators and creative teens through the prestigious Scholastic Art & Writing Awards.

What are the duties of the National Student Poets?

National Student Poets promote the reading, writing, and appreciation of poetry among youth and the general public during their year of service. By their example and words, National Student Poets encourage creative self-discovery, impart new skills, and inspire their peers to dream big and work hard to achieve those dreams through community service projects they design and regional events and workshops. They also work with poet mentors and serve as a resource for the White House, Library of Congress and the U.S. Department of Education throughout the year.

How are the National Student Poets selected?

National Student Poets are selected from a pool of National Medalists in Poetry through the Scholastic Art & Writing Awards, the exclusive pathway to be considered for the program. Each year, from this pool of Gold and Silver Medal winners, 35 semi-finalists are selected based on creativity, dedication to craft and promise. Their work is then submitted to a distinguished jury for the final selection of five National Student Poets. The 2016 jurors included Kwame Alexander (Award-winning Writer); Jennifer Benka (Executive Director, Academy of American Poets); Glenis Redmond (Poet and Performance Artist); Michael Earl Craig (Montana State Poet Laureate); Naomi Shihab Nye (Award-winning Poet); Jacqueline Woodson (Award-winning Writer); Edward Hirsch (President, John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation); Alice Quinn (Executive Director, Poetry Society of America); Toi Derricotte (Poet and Cave-Canem Co-founder); and Alfre Woodard (Actor and Activist).

Students in grades 10-11 who are interested in becoming a 2017 National Student Poet can submit their work to the Scholastic Art & Writing Awards at www.artandwriting.org. Submissions are open throughout the fall. Deadlines vary by region.

How are the National Student Poets recognized?

The Class of 2016 was appointed by First Lady Michelle Obama at the White House where the National Student Poets also participated in a poetry reading. Their first public appearance was at a reading at TBC. Students also receive \$5,000 academic awards thanks to the Bernstein Family Foundation.

Turn this sheet over to meet the 2016 Class of National Student Poets. Find out more at www.artandwriting.org/NSPP

THE 2016 CLASS OF NATIONAL STUDENT POETS



Stella Binion, Age 17, of Chicago, IL, Senior at Walter Payton College Prep

Stella is captain of her performance poetry team, Rebirth Poetry Ensemble, a community-focused organization that brings together youth poets from across the city. This past March, Rebirth won Chicago's Louder Than a Bomb slam poetry competition, and Stella and her team represented Chicago at the 19th annual Brave New Voices International Youth Poetry Slam Festival. Stella is also a poet educator—teaching, mentoring, and leading workshops for fifth-graders at Rowe Elementary. She is a Payton Advisory Leader (PAL) and a leader with Payton's Organization of Women (POW).

Region: Midwest



Maya Eashwaran, Age 17, of Alpharetta, GA, Senior at Milton Public High School

Maya Eashwaran has always loved reading and writing. As a first generation Indian American, Maya writes a lot about foreigners and the foreigner mentality, often incorporating personal experiences dealing with assimilation in the modern age. An avid writer and musician, Maya also combines her love for poetry and music, frequently experimenting with rhythm and syncopation in her poems. When she's not writing, you can find her doodling in the margins of a new poem, experimenting with watercolors or calligraphy, or reading Harry Potter or works by Walt Whitman.

Region: Southeast



Gopal Raman, Age 17, of Dallas, TX, Senior at St. Mark's School of Texas

For Gopal Raman, a senior at St. Mark's School of Texas, poetry distills images and emotions into a form that brings people together. Although most of his inspiration comes from nature, poets like Billy Collins, Wallace Stevens, and Walt Whitman push him to experiment with different styles and subjects. During the summer after his freshman year, Gopal studied under Nickole Brown and learned how to craft his own unique style and how to develop a concrete voice. In addition to writing poetry, he edits for his high school newspaper and chairs the St. Mark's Literary Festival.

Region: Southwest



Joey Reisberg, Age 17, of Towson, MD, Junior at the George Washington Carver Center for Arts and Technology

Joey Reisberg is a junior at the George Washington Carver Center for Arts and Technology in Towson, Maryland, where he studies literary arts and is on the staff of the literary magazine "Synergy." His poetic influences include Emily Dickinson, Mark Doty, and Sylvia Plath. When he's not doing homework or writing poems, Joey enjoys poking around used bookstores, wasting precious reading time on the internet, or taking care of his plants.

Region: Northeast



Maya Salameh, Age 16, of San Diego, CA, Junior at the San Diego High School of International Studies

A junior at the San Diego High School of International Studies, Maya Salameh is passionate about writing, psychology, and history. She is the founder and president of her school's Psychology Club and is fluent in English, French, and Arabic. The oldest daughter of Lebanese-Americans, Maya hopes to become a psychologist and possibly a diplomat. She believes psychology is an immutable facet of international relations and seeks to bring about effective change for the lost generation of children who have served as weapons of war throughout the world.

Region: West