



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 non-profit Alliance for Young Artists & Writers partner to present the National Student Poets Program (NSPP), the nation's highest honor for youth poets (grades 10–11) presenting original work. The Library of Congress joins as a partner for the appointment ceremony. Annually, five students are selected for one year of service as youth 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 young people to achieve excellence in their creative endeavors and promotes the essential role of writing and the arts in academic and personal success.

The National Student Poets Program reflects the country's support of its creative youth and its commitment to arts and humanities education. The Program 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. The Library of Congress facilitates a relationship with the U.S. Poet Laureate and connects the poets with its digital and physical collections.

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 will also work with poet mentors and serve as a resource for the 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 Awards recipients, 35 semi-finalists are identified through blind adjudication as the most gifted young poets in their regions, based on their originality, technical skills, and personal voice. These students are asked to submit additional poetry and performance videos, and their work is then submitted to a distinguished jury for the final selection of five National Student Poets, based not only on the Scholastic Awards' criteria, but also on creativity, dedication to craft, and promise. The 2017 jurors included: Jennifer Benka (poet and Executive Director of the Academy of American Poets); Richard Blanco (United States Inaugural Poet); Ann Burg (award-winning poet and fiction writer); Kyle Dargan (poet and recipient of Cave Canem Poetry Prize); Juan Felipe Herrera (21st U.S. Poet Laureate); Edward Hirsch (poet and President of the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation); Rickey Laurentiis (poet and recipient of Cave Canem Poetry Prize); Robin Coste Lewis (winner of National Book Award for Poetry); Marilyn Nelson (award-winning poet and translator); Alice Quinn (Executive Director, Poetry Society of America).

Students in grades 10–11 who are interested in becoming a 2018 National Student Poet can submit their work to the Scholastic Art & Writing Awards at artandwriting.org. Submissions are open throughout the fall. Deadlines vary by region.

How are the National Student Poets recognized?

The Class of 2017 is appointed by the Librarian of Congress and the Director of the Institute of Museum and Library Services at a ceremony in Washington, D.C., held in conjunction with the National Book Festival where the National Student Poets also participate in a poetry reading and a workshop with 21st U.S. Poet Laureate Juan Felipe Herrera. Students also receive \$5,000 academic awards.

Turn this sheet over to meet the 2017 Class of National Student Poets. Find out more at artandwriting.org/NSPP.

Who are the 2017 National Student Poets?



Annie Castillo, Age 16, of Falls Church, VA, Junior at George Mason High School

Writing poetry originally began as a remedy for sleepless nights, but now Annie writes, edits, and reads it whenever possible. Her work dissects the complexity of adolescence, self-discovery, gender, and nature. Annie has discovered and built a rich community of colleagues, mentors, and friends in poetry workshops, seminars online, and at places like the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington, D.C., where she read and wrote poetry as part of "Shakespeare's Sisters." Annie also loves to hike, play volleyball, read, and instill a love for etymologies in anyone who will listen.

Region: Southeast



Kinsale Hueston, Age 17, of Corona del Mar, CA, Senior at St. Margaret's Episcopal School

Kinsale is an enrolled member of the Navajo Nation and focuses her work on modern issues facing her tribe including violence against women, the loss of native languages, exploitation of resources, and racial prejudice. She is actively involved as an intern for the Navajo Nation Department of Justice and is the founder and president of her high school's Native American Culture Club, and a tutor and member of the Spanish National Honor Society. In her free time, Kinsale enjoys playing lacrosse on her school's varsity team, acting in original native plays, and crafting ukulele mixtapes with friends.

Region: West



Ben Lee, Age 16, of Edina, MN, Junior at The Blake School

Ben's poetry is often inspired by his Korean and Canadian heritage, mixed-race ethnicity, Midwest roots, and his childhood memories on the northern shore of Lake Superior. He grew up listening to his grandfather recite stories and poems by his ancestor, Canadian writer Robert Service. Ben explains his love for poetry as his own necessity to rationalize his thoughts and emotions with his surroundings, thereby gaining a larger understanding of his current self and the encompassing atmosphere. Ben is also a member of two varsity sports teams, two vocal ensembles, and his school's student council.

Region: Midwest



Juliet Lubwama, Age 17, of Downingtown, PA, Senior at Downingtown STEM Academy

As the daughter of Ugandan immigrants, Juliet's poetry often revolves around family, heritage, and finding one's identity. She believes poems can build bridges between cultures, beliefs, and people, helping them empathize with each other. While Juliet hopes one day to be a neurologist, she has found ways to surround herself with words in every aspect of her life, whether she is writing, singing, or speaking. She is passionate about mental illness advocacy and is captain of her school's speech and debate team, where she performs oral interpretations of poetry and prose.

Region: Northeast



Camila Sanmiguel, Age 17, of Laredo, TX, Senior at John B. Alexander High School

Camila, a second-generation Mexican-American, sees poetry and her work as a way to appeal to human emotions and to understand diverse groups of people. She believes that a writer's most valuable resources are insight into one's own personal experiences and the ability to empathize with others. Camila, who first learned the alphabet at the age of two, considers language to be the most beautiful part of life. She tutors at her high school's writing center, is the founder of the school's Model United Nations, and interned this past summer for the U.S. District Court in Southern Texas.

Region: Southwest