

Ligonier Valley Writers presents the 36th annual Student Poetry Contest

CONTEST RULES

Deadline: March 11, 2026

LVW is only accepting submissions through the provided contest form.

Please do not snail mail copies of poems.

- 1. Eligibility.** Open to all students in grades 4-12 in southwestern PA.
- 2. Limit.** One entry per student in each category. A maximum of 20 lines per poem.
Exception: In the haiku category (three lines long), you may submit up to three poems as one complete submission.
- 3. Qualifications.** Entries must be the contestant's original work and must not have won a prize in any other contest or been published before. No AI, please.
- 4. Winning Poets.** Winners will be notified in April. Prizes will be presented at an awards ceremony at the Hempfield Barnes & Noble at 4:00 p.m. on a Saturday in late April. Winning poets will have a chance to read their poems to the audience. The list of winners and group photos of them will be sent to local media and posted on www.LVWonline.org afterward.
- 5. Publication rights.** Ligonier Valley Writers retains the right to *first* publication of prize-winning poets. Authors retain all other copyrights.
- 6. NOTE TO TEACHERS:** Please communicate all rules to your students. Students must choose their own topics, and all poems must be in good final form. Large batches of unedited poems will not be read. You may want to conduct your own class poetry contest and have your students select the top entries to submit to this contest.

Parents and guardians: You may sponsor your child's entry by providing your contact information on the Contest Form (link below).

7. Poetry Judging Criteria

- a. Aptness of title.
- b. Impact (powerful effect).
- c. Effectiveness and meaning.
- d. Universality.
- e. Imagery.
- f. Suitability (appropriateness to contest category and age level).
- g. Continuity of theme.
- h. Craftsmanship (aptness of phrase, freshness of rhyme, economy of words, rhythmic quality, appropriate mechanics, grammar).

8. Format. Go to <https://www.lvwonline.org/spcform2026> to fill out the entry form and paste or type in your poem.

The form will ask you to specify the poet's grade and the poem category. See the next page for a list of the nine submission categories.

Student Poetry Contest Categories

Categories A-C are open to students in Grades 4-6.

A. Jane Robb Gallagher Memorial Award

Grades 4-6: Rhymed Verse, any subject.

Sponsored by Judith Gallagher

B. Glenda Busch Memorial Award

Grades 4-6, Unrhymed Verse, any subject

Sponsored by Jim Busch

C. Henry Clay and Gladys Maas Pruitt Memorial Award

Grades 4-6: Haiku, any subject

Sponsored by Candace Green

Categories D-F are open to students in Grades 7-9.

D. Highview Farm Award

Grades 7-9, Traditional Verse, any subject

Sponsored by Sally Shirey in memory of Barb and Lou Steiner

E. Shirey Poetry Award

Grades 7-9, Free Verse, any subject

Sponsored by Sally Shirey in memory of Barb and Lou Steiner

F. Ogden Nash Award

Grades 7-9, Light Humorous Verse, any subject

Sponsored by Anita Staub

Categories G-I are open to students in Grades 10-12.

G. Dr. Len Roberts Memorial Award

Grades 10-12, Traditional Verse, any subject

Sponsored by Ruth McDonald

H. Hayden Savinda Memorial Award

Grades 10-12, Free Verse, any subject

Sponsored by Ronald J. Shafer

I. Marie Martin Memorial Award

Grades 10-12, Romantic Love Poetry, any subject

Sponsored by Phil and Mary Lou Fleming

The John L. Naccarato Memorial Award

Three winners, one for each poem chosen as the best of the best in its grade group (G4-6, G7-9, and G10-12).

Sponsored by Michele Jones

In Categories A-I, first prize is \$25, second prize \$20, and third prize \$15. For each Naccarato Award, the prize is \$30.