

Judging Criteria
Talk the Poem National Recitation Competition
(Taken from the Poetry by Heart Competition (UK))

Student performances in all rounds of the competition must be judged and scored using these criteria.

Voice 1-7 points

This category is to evaluate the auditory nature of the recitation. Consider the student's volume, pace, rhythm, intonation and pronunciation. In a strong performance, all words are pronounced appropriately in the student's natural accent and the volume, rhythm and intonation greatly enhance the recitation. Pacing is appropriate to the poem.

Understanding 1-7 points

This category is to evaluate whether the student exhibits an understanding of the poem in his or her recitation. A strong performance relies on a powerful internalisation of the poem rather than distracting dramatic gestures. In a strong performance, the sense of the poem is powerfully and clearly conveyed to the audience. The student displays an interpretation that deepens and enlivens the poem. Meanings, messages, allusions, irony, tones of voice and other nuances are captured by the performance. A low score is awarded if the interpretation obscures the meaning of the poem or makes use of affected character voices and accents, inappropriate tone and inflection, singing, distracting and excessive gestures, or unnecessary emoting.

Performance 1-7 points

This category is to evaluate the overall success of the performance, the degree to which the recitation has become more than the sum of its parts. ***The word 'performance' is not to be interpreted to mean dramatic action but instead refers to the single recitation event itself.*** Has the student captivated the audience with the language of the poem? Did the student bring the audience to a better understanding of the poem? Did the contestant's physical presence enhance the recitation, engaging the audience through appropriate body language, confidence and eye contact? Does the student understand and show mastery of the art of recitation? The judges will use this score to measure how impressed they were by the recitation, and whether the recitation has honoured the poem. A low score will be awarded for recitations that are poorly presented, ineffective in conveying the meaning of the poem, or conveyed in a manner inappropriate to the poem.

Accuracy 1-4 marks

A separate judge will mark missed or incorrect words during the recitation. Students will score a full 4 marks for a word-perfect recitation; 3 for a small number of errors which do not significantly affect meaning and/or flow; 2 for a recitation where the errors do affect meaning and/or flow; 1 for a recitation where occasional use is made of the prompter; 0 for a recitation which requires considerable prompting.

Additional considerations in the event of a close tie: variety, difficulty, diversity

In the event of a very close tie between two or more students, judges should consider the level of challenge the student has chosen. This might be indicated in the variety of poems selected for recitation, with different styles, moods, language varieties, voices or settings. It might also be indicated by poem difficulty. A poem with difficult content conveys complex, sophisticated ideas, that the student will be challenged to grasp and express. A poem with difficult language will have complexity of diction and syntax, metre and rhyme scheme, and shifts in tone or mood. Poem length is also considered in difficulty but bear in mind that longer poems are not necessarily more difficult than shorter ones. Judges may also consider the diversity of a student's recitations with this score; a student is less likely to score well in this category when judges note that a student's style of interpretation remains the same regardless of poem choice or challenge.