

ORIGINAL PROSE/POETRY (O.P.P.)

In this event, a contestant presents original prose, poetry or a combination of prose and poetry. This event provides an opportunity for “creative” writers to present their work to an audience. The material may be humorous, dramatic, or a combination. The competition in this event is challenging because the material varies so widely.

Tournament Requirements

1. All presentations must be the original work of the contestant. In the same or previous years, the contestant may not use the same subject in competition in the same event, or in expository, advocacy, or oratory.
2. The manuscript must be prepared in advance. The manuscript must follow the MLA style guidelines for internal citations and must include a “works-cited” page, or shall include a disclaimer from the student indicating that the composition was accomplished without access to or use of any published source. Presentations which include impersonations, depictions or distinctive work or phrases based wholly or in part on the creative work or another, or upon the public personal of any professional performer living or dead must include appropriate acknowledgement in the submitted script [either within a “Works Cited” page or a separate “Personalities Cited” page]. In addition, such words or phrases must be included in the total count of words quoted.
3. The maximum time is ten (10) minutes. There is no minimum time, although something over five (5) minutes is preferable.
4. The number of quoted words may not exceed 150.
5. No costumes or props are allowed.
6. The speaker may use notes or a manuscript or it can be delivered from memory.

Writing the Speech

1. Decide on a topic.
 - Good taste is the only limit.
 - Choose an appropriate tone for the work: humor, satire, suspense, anger, fear; the list goes on.
2. The presentation may be one long work, short story, play, essay, narrative poem, or several short works.
3. Poetry may be rhymed, free, or blank verse.
4. Develop the manuscript. Keep in mind the audience will hear but not see the sentences. Read aloud what is written to see if it flows well and that it meets the time requirements.
5. Polish the speech and have other people read it to suggest improvements. Revise and rewrite as necessary.

Practice the Delivery

1. Read the manuscript silently several times. Then, read it aloud, repeatedly, always saying the lines with expression. Some contestants hold the manuscript, but most have the material memorized. If the speech will be delivered from memory, set the manuscript aside and deliver the speech from memory, using the manuscript only to review when necessary.
2. When the speech is memorized, practice in front of a full-length mirror. Use gestures and facial expression, but don’t over-rehearse. A good delivery should be polished, direct, clearly enunciated, easily heard, and visually interesting to watch.
3. When the presentation takes around eight minutes to read aloud, edit, revise and read again. Keep practicing. If there is dialogue in the script, the characters must be well-developed.

Ballots are in a separate location. Click link below

**[California High School Speech Association Ballot:
Original Prose/Poetry](#)**

HOW TO BEGIN AND DEVELOP AN ORIGINAL PROSE/POETRY

by Ray Schaefer, Sherman Oaks Center for Enriched Studies

Original Prose/Poetry remains the only competitive event designed to encourage creative writing. There are important advantages to you who enter this event. I have noticed that when a student writes for performance, the writing tends to be better quality and the performance tends to be more effective because the ideas originate from the performer. The purpose of Original Prose/Poetry is to stimulate original thoughts and performance.

The question is “Where does one begin the process?” I have a few suggestions. Writing is thinking. Thinking is a response to what occurs around you. Search within, look around, and notice stuff. Be open and creative. Journal observations allow ideas and feelings to come. Develop a love for words. When it is time to write, make several decisions. Who is the audience? What will be the writing approach? What is the style? If the genre is a short story, what point of view will be used, first, second or third person? Will the selection be a monologue? Will the selection be poetry? Will the tone be humorous, serious, or a combination of the two? Will the use of language create graphic pictures or characters? Is the underlying purpose to entertain, enrich, or frighten? Will the tone be sensitive, sympathetic, satirical or threatening? Whatever you decide, be creative, be playful and, above all, keep your mind open.

Allow me to offer a few suggestions to help the thinking process get moving. Imagine the following:

1. You are invisible and you have the gift of flight. Take your reader on a journey. Where will you go? What will you see? Will you tease someone? What tricks would you play?
2. You enter your bedroom. Slam! The door closes. The pictures shift. Suddenly your bedroom wall begins to talk to you. Remember, your bedroom wall and the pictures on the wall you know best.
3. You discover one day that the plants in your yard and your furniture are angry enough to kill.
4. You wake up one morning to discover you are only two inches tall.
5. You are babysitting; you are alone as the baby sleeps. Suddenly you hear a noise outside.
6. You are an animal, a tree, or a trashcan with human thoughts. (I once had a student who wrote a piece about a dog in the pound. In this story, the dog remembers the happy days; then feels the loss of a friend and the isolation of living in a cell. The dog then experiences the loss of life as it is put to sleep. The details and feelings made this story memorable.)
7. You are a person on death row remembering events that got you there. You then experience the execution to become a spirit looking over your crumpled body.
8. You are a pawn that comes to life in a chess game. You fall in love with the Queen and try to protect her.
9. Envision a peaceful setting. Sense a concern, experience fear, panic, and then, conclude, either saved or dead.

Finally, I offer this approach in search for content: consider writing a scene where the character engages in a series of actions and reactions. Look around right now and begin the writing process:

“I entered the room. I noticed a woman standing in a darkened corner. Only the moonlight ignited her flaxen hair. She turned and looked directly at me. A compulsion urged me to step toward her. I did so. I fell over the glass coffee table. As I was crawling over the broken glass, my left hand slipped under the overstuffed chair. Snap! A mouse trap went off. An unbelievable pain ran up my fingers and arm...” Now by thinking in terms of the action/reaction process, the fumbling character could have this entire room in shambles. With this situation, there might be the beginnings of a misfit detective story.

Stories like this can occur anywhere. Perhaps you could use your own house for the setting. You can begin anywhere and move forward. For more content, think of a large number of embarrassing moments you have encountered and give these events to a character. [Caution: try not to write too fast.

Allow events to occur and settings to reveal themselves to you and then to your reader.] By all means have fun writing. Be playful with your imagination.

Once you have written your story, it is time to work on your presentation. Before you begin, I suggest you read Hamlet's "Speech to the Players." It is one of the greatest acting lessons ever presented. Try to follow the principles stated. "Speak the speech..." Practice orally. "Do not mouth my words..." Read for meaning. "...trippingly on the tongue..." Read for diction. Please remember that all sentences are divided into thought units. In performance, read no faster than it takes for you to see, feel, and react. Most people read too fast, leaving no time to feel. It is important to keep in mind that "acting is believing..." and that "acting is reacting." This is your work; believe it!

During the practice session, read for diction. Make certain you exaggerate pronunciation. In slow motion, enunciate and articulate consonant and vowel sounds. Also play with vocal tones. Say a word, then convert the sound to a note and play that note on the piano. To develop your voice as an instrument, read a paragraph and see how many notes you can include. Use high, middle and low tones. When imitating different languages, you need to realize that languages have different pitches. If you want specific information to help you develop different accents or dialects, I recommend two books which are extremely effective sources, *Foreign Dialects* and *American Dialects* by Lewis and Marguerite Herman. Use them and the piano to help establish the vocal tones. In the meantime, listen to people who speak with accents or dialects. Notice how they form sounds. Notice the shape of the jaw as well as the emphasis within the mouth that produces sounds. Again, note the pitch. It will vary from language to language. Even dialects vary. Oxford English emanates from a different place and has a different pitch than Cockney English. The Scottish dialect is very different in sound emanation and pitch from Irish. French is very different from German.

After you practice with exaggeration of sounds, then read your selection fast. This becomes a good diction exercise for the selection to be performed. Finally, it is time to read for feeling. What should happen is that your mouth will be more responsive to thoughts and sounds.

The last consideration in oral practice involves gestures. "Suit the action to the word, the word to the action..." Allow yourself to respond honestly. The key is believing the thought units. I do offer a few suggestions.

1. Cup your hands and keep your fingers together.
2. Do not suddenly drop a gesture; instead, move from one level to the next.
3. Allow the life force to go through your arms and out your fingertips.
4. Allow the life force to move down your legs and out the bottom of your feet.
5. Avoid overdoing.
6. Avoid underdoing.

If you concentrate and believe in what you are doing, if you truly feel the emotions, your body will respond naturally. If you are creating many characters, view each character as a unique person and develop a set of gestures and body attitude for each character. You may exaggerate at first, then make it as "t'were a mirror held up to nature."

In conclusion, I again suggest that you enjoy the writing process. Do not rush. Allow the ideas, images and character perceptions to come to you. If "Thirty days hath September, April, May, and No Wonder; all the rest eat peanut butter, except for Grandma: she drives the Buick" makes sense to you, writing may be a difficult process for you. Focus. Become a keen observer of what goes on around you. When walking or driving home, look at signs and make up stories. Be playful with your imagination. Have fun writing. Practice orally, exaggerate vocally, exaggerate gestures, read the selection fast, then read for feeling.

Original Prose/Poetry is designed to encourage you to write and then enrich the lives of your audience members. Go for it, please, and ignite our lives.

SAMPLE ORIGINAL PROSE/POETRY SCRIPT

These speeches were prepared before the current MLA citation requirement was instated by CHSSA. See appendix for an example of a speech that includes MLA citation.

A Letter Home by Hong Tea, San Gabriel High School

Grandfather: Let's see if I have any mail today. What is this? It is a letter from my grandson, Pei, in America.

Pei: Hello, Grandfather. How are things back in China. I am doing great here in America. I know how much you worry about me being here by myself, but you really mustn't worry so. I can take care of myself now. I remember when I first asked you if I could leave China to come to America: So you see, Grandfather, now that I am eighteen and adult, I feel that I am old enough to go out on my own, and I feel that in America I will have the best opportunities to make something of myself.

Grandfather: So, Pei, you want to go to America. You want to leave the homeland. Well, if you can snatch these pebbles from my hand, it will be time for you to leave.

Pei: I have some very exciting news, Grandfather. I have enclosed a newspaper clipping -- the one with the heading "Kung Fu Vigilante Foils Robbery At Local Convenience Store". Yes, Grandfather, that is me in the picture. You see, a few weeks ago, me and my American friend Bob, we stopped by a Seven-Eleven to get some slurpee: Excuse me. Excuse me, sir. How much is this size slurpee?

Clerk: Oh, no. I am terribly sorry. You cannot buy the slurpee in the Big Gulp Cup. You must buy the slurpee in the slurpee cup. The small is 79¢; the medium is 99¢; and the large is \$1.19. Now, you put the cup back because if you make a mess, I will not be the one who will clean it up!

Pei: Oh. Okay. Hey, Bob, you got 99¢ I can borrow?

Bob: I think so. Well, you better let the guy behind us go first.

Pei: What? The one with the gun? GUN!?!

Robber: That's right, folks. I'm robbing this place. Everyone do as I say and no one gets hurt. You! Empty out the register!

Clerk: Okay! I will empty out the register, but please no shooting gun. No be killing anyone.

Robber: You two, over there! Empty out your pockets. Give me all your valuables.

Bob: Okay, man! Just stay cool, okay? Here, man. Twenty-two dollars, man. That's all I got. That's all, man. Wait..uh..forty three cents. That's all I got, man. Please don't kill me.

Pei: Gee, Bob, get a grip. I could tell Bob was really scared. He was shaking and sweating and his pants..they were all wet. I knew something had to be done and I would have to do it myself.

Robber: Well, how about you, Chinaman? Ain't you got any valuables?

Pei: The only thing valuable I can give you is some advice. You don't want to mess with me because I am "The Master of Kung Fu." Ha! Yes, Grandfather, it is true. I have learned Kung Fu right here in America. You see, one night while flipping through the TV channels, I saw this commercial...

Announcer: That's right, folks. You get this genuine, hand-hammered wok, the five piece cookware set, this easy to follow wok cookbook, plus, if you act now we'll throw in, absolutely free, this book, *How to Learn Kung Fu the Easy Way*. Yes, folks, all this can be yours for just \$29.95 plus shipping and handling. So act now!

Pei: Well, Grandfather, you know I cannot pass up an offer like that so I sent in for the set, even though I already have three wok sets at home. Well, in two to four weeks the set arrived, and I took the Kung Fu book and I studied and studied for two whole hours. And in that time, I mastered the ancient art of Kung Fu. Anyway, this robber guy, he says to me...

Robber: Look, why don't you just hand over your valuables and no one will get hurt?

Pei: I'm warning you. I am the Master of Kung Fu! Ha! Hoy! Hiya! Hi..Hi..um, one moment, please. Oh, got it. Ha! Hoy! Hiya! Hiyo! Hiyee! Ha!

Robber: Aw, you've gotta be kidding me.

Pei: I am the master of many forms of Kung Fu! I know Tiger technique! Dragon Technique! Cobra technique! Lion technique! Forehand technique! Backhand technique! Topspin serve! Oh, wait. That's from my Tennis lesson!

Bob: Hey, I don't even know the guy. I just came in to get a slurpee.

Pei: I am warning you! My body is a deadly weapon. I know seventeen ways to kill you with my hand! I know fourteen ways to kill you with my feet!

Robber: Is that right? Well, I know one way to kill you with a gun and it goes something like this! Ow! Man! How'd you do that?

Pei: I don't know!

Robber: Well, I'm getting pretty sick of you, Chinaman!

Bob: Look out, Pei! He's got a knife, too!

Pei: Oh, don't worry, Bob. I saw this in movie once.

Bob: Aw, man! That isn't Kung Fu! It's Karate! Aw, he's going to kill us! He's going to cut us up!

Clerk: You know, if you cut him open and spill his blood all over the floor, you will have to mop it up because I will not be the one to clean up your mess!

Pei: Hiya! Ow! Oh, my hamstring! I should have stretched out first.

Robber: Wait a minute. This ain't one of those hidden video shows is it?

Pei: Hey, mister robber, look behind you. It's Michael Jackson!

Robber: I have Michael Jackson!

Pei: Wait! Who's that with him? It's Randy Travis!

Robber: Randy!?!

Pei: Ha! That's what you get! I warned you not to mess with me because I am the Master of Kung Fu! So you see, Grandfather, you really shouldn't worry about me. I am doing just fine. I can take care of myself now. Give my love to the rest of the family and I will be writing to you again very soon.

Love,
Your Grandson, Pei

Grandfather: Yes, Pei, you can take care of yourself now. Silly me. You see, I left the pebbles in my pocket.

SAMPLE ORIGINAL PROSE/POETRY SCRIPT

These speeches were prepared before the current MLA citation requirement was instated by CHSSA. See appendix for an example of a speech that includes MLA citation.

The Wishing Well by Anne Walter, Bakersfield High School

There is a place where people of all different types can come together as equals. This place is filled with fantasies and dreams of hope and enrichment. Only at this place do people dare to be selfish by thinking mainly of themselves. Why is it only here where people are so daring? It is rather simple: here no one knows what others are saying. thus, no one knows of the act of selfishness.

As people leave this place, they walk away with a feeling that life will be enjoyable. It is not a guarantee that you will walk away with such pleasurable feelings, for not all visitors do. Actually, this place has no guarantees!

It is amazing to think that there is a place in this world where all people are one and where dreams come alive. I am sure that by now you are wondering exactly where this magical place is. This place is none other than...The Wishing Well!

Join me now as we meet three visitors to the well. I can not tell you their names because it would be bad luck. We all know the old superstition that if you tell your wish, it won't come true. So the three visitors have asked to remain anonymous so that they still have a good shot at obtaining their dreams.

Grab yourself a few special pennies and your deepest wish because you too soon may find yourself a visitor to The Wishing Well!

"HI! My name is...OOPS! I almost forgot that I'm not supposed to tell. It's not that I don't trust you; it's just that it is bad luck. Anyway, I have a really special wish that I want to make. I hope that the wish fairy, wherever she is, is listening! You see, I have this little doggy named Buttons. Buttons isn't feeling too well right now. We took her to the doggy doctor last week, and he said that she is real sick. The doggy doctor says that Buttons has these bumps growing inside her and that he doesn't know of any way to get rid of them. He told me to be sure and give Buttons lots of love and attention so that she knows how much she means to us. I used to not be able to let Buttons sleep with me, but now that she isn't feeling very good Mom lets her sleep with me anytime I want. I want Buttons to get better so that she can sleep with me for the rest of my life. She always makes me feel safe! Whenever there is a loud noise outside, she makes sure that she is really close to me so that I feel warm and safe. I think that I do the same for her.

"Another reason why I want Buttons to get better is because she is my friend. We do everything together! When she needs to go out, I go out with her. After she is done going "doggie stuff," we run around and play catch and other fun games. Whenever I feel sad, she always cuddles with me. Sometimes, I even see a tear in her eye. I know that I may sound silly, but I don't think there are any other dogs out there who are nearly as good at being a friend as Buttons. I mean how many other dogs do you know that are willing to listen to a little girl go on and on about school and other silly things?

"This is why I want to wish for Buttons to get better. I hate to think of her not feeling good and me not being able to help her. If she ever did anything wrong, I am sure that it wasn't on purpose and that she is really sorry. So, if the Wish Fairy could make Buttons better, I would be very thankful. And if by some chance my wish can't come true, would you at least make sure that she is happy and taken care of in Doggie Heaven? Thank you."

"Do you know what it is like being different from almost everybody? You probably think you do, but you don't! and you probably think that you know how I feel when I tell you that sometimes I feel like an outsider in this world, but you don't. No one does!

"I just don't see what's so wrong with having different views and opinions from everybody else. It isn't my fault that I see things differently than most people or that sometimes I hear sounds that no one hears. So I am a little bit different, a little unique. Isn't everyone? I mean, that is what my family always taught me to believe. My mom always says that every person has something that sets them apart from

everybody else. That is why no one looks the same and some people are smarter than others. Think how boring life would be if we were all the same. I try and convince other people to listen to what I'm saying, but they won't; so they keep acting stupid.

"The people at school call me names. They say I am weird, stupid, freaky, crazy, and nutty. I don't think I am! I would love to have one day where I was the sane one and everybody else was different. Maybe then people wouldn't make fun of me anymore. However, I know that you can't change what people are. But you should be able to change the way they treat other people. That is what I want to wish for. I wish that I could be treated just like the next person. If everyone treated me normal, then maybe I would have a shot at fitting in. I don't want to spend the rest of my life looking in on all the action from the outside. I want to have a chance to look at the outside from amidst the action."

"My wish is not very original nor is it very simple. I am wishing for something that hundreds of thousands of others have wished for. I want to wish for peace. I believe that now more than ever this world needs peace. Everyday, people become more and more violent. Everyday, countries become weaker and weaker. And everyday, complete happiness becomes harder and harder. However, I still want to believe that we have a chance.

"I look around and I see so much potential in everyone and everything. I see a homeless person and think that if given just a little help, she could become independent again. I see a broken swing and I think that if someone just took the time to mend it, then another generation of kids would be able to enjoy it. Maybe I am an extreme optimist, but I try to believe that there is good in everything. And so I throw my penny and I wish for peace.

"And then I think about it, and I can't help but wonder if maybe I'm wrong. I mean, look around and almost everything you see is bad. You pick up a newspaper or watch the news and the majority of paper and time is spent telling you about all the terrible things going on. More and more children are dropping out of school and joining gangs. Children are having children. And the thing that scares me most of all is that freedom is being taken away from more people everyday. Still, I throw my penny and I wish for peace. And the doubts about whether or now we can achieve it become stronger and stronger.

"I have thrown two pennies along with the thousands of others that have been thrown. However, I still hold one penny in my hand. I look at the penny in my hand and I look at the well that is full of coins, and I wonder if I should even bother to throw the last penny. Then, I look at the sky and see that first star and I think of saying, "Star light, star bright, first star I see tonight. I wish I may; I wish I might have this wish come true tonight!" So, I throw my penny and I wish for peace. You can't live in a world without wishes because wishes give us dreams. And a world without dreams is a world that I would hate to live in."

SAMPLE ORIGINAL PROSE/POETRY SCRIPT

These speeches were prepared before the current MLA citation requirement was instated by CHSSA. See appendix for an example of a speech that includes MLA citation.

The Black experience. One of the most painful experiences known to man. We've struggled. We've cried. Yet we still stand strong. Thoughts from my soul.

As I traveled through time,
through history written,
and some destroyed.

I made many discoveries.

I found the originators.
What was the beginning
and what shall be the end.

As I went further
I found the royalty
that was taken from me centuries ago.

I saw my blood running through the Nile.

I found my other, Afrika
waiting with open arms
to welcome her lost children.

A mother's womb.

Just as soft and inviting
As a warm bed in the middle of winter
As hypnotic as the smell of gardenias
in the spring.

Mother's Womb
opens it all to welcome/comfort
its long lost inhabitant.

As fertile as the land of the great one
As warm as the sun blazing on its
oceans.

Come home to the womb for comfort,
children.

Come home to Mother Africa.

Every Black woman is beautiful. Though she may be physically distraught, her inner glow exposes her genuine beauty. This glow comes from her natural descendancy [sic] as a Mother of Civilization.

Every Black man is strong. He can credit himself with squirting the juice of life which spawns civilization in his African wife. He too has a glow.

This internal radiance pulsates throughout our bodies but never passes through to our minds until Inspiration summons our Power. The Power spreads through our minds and shatters the stereotypes we've been enslaved in for 400 years. We realize our strength. Born is our Pride.

The moon seems to pulsate
while below, people scatter in chaos
but there is no distance
that can out run him.

Hiding behind walls, in trees
and bushes, but there is no place
of seclusion from him.

When he comes in the night to
take the women and children
no tree or bush
is high enough
no bed is low enough
no space is dark enough and
no lights are so swift as I avoid him

So you may as well wait at death's
door for him to walk through
because he's coming
he's coming
he's coming...

Every morning I awaken to the crack of a whip. My fear gets me out of bed and starts me to work. The blazing sun burns my sweaty Black skin as I pick his cotton. I hate this life of suffering white folks give us. I don't want to die here. So tonight, I'm going to run. I'm getting on the train and Moses is going to take me to Freedom. When I cross that Mason Dixon Line, I'm going to go down to the banks of the river Eternity, and I'm going to let its ever so swiftly running waters wash my shackles away. And when I get to Freedom's house, the first thing I'm going to do is bathe in the water of Equality. I'm going to sit down at the table of Brotherhood, and eat the food of Emancipation. And then I'm going to go into the garden of Victory and pick the flowers of Pride.

I realize the mistakes I've made
I cherish them, and hold on to
them for use in the future.

I mourn losses
And welcome those I love into
my arms for safe keeping so
as I will never have to mourn again.

I endure pain inflicted by others in

All areas of my life.
Then open my forgiving heart, and
bear no malice for my scars.
In the beginning I thought I was
only me. But now I realize
I am Black
and I am woman.
I owe this strength to the grandmothers
and great-grandmothers who have gone before
me; those who have had this experience.

It is their perseverance that has
given me what I need to survive.

“The Soon-to-Be Revolutionary”

He speaks
And the words glide off of his tongue
to capture you,
like a lion in the wild.

Come all to hear the soon-to-be revolutionary,
Taking righteous music,
and making magic in the minds
of the young.

Dipping others in his passion
for the People
Drowning all that is biased
in his wrath.

Come to hear
the revolutionary

I remember when we were together.
all the wonderful times we shared.
you loved to run your fingers through my cornrows.
...said you “could never love a woman that was ashamed of her root.”
and that was why i loved you.
...and those times we sat in my room in the dark,
when you made me close my eyes and dream of us sitting on a throne in
Ethiopia or Senegal or Zaire.
i remember, because that was why i loved you.
those nights we lay in your bed,
those nights i wrapped my branches of brown sugar around your
waist,
those nights your flesh bulged like the hills
at Kilimanjaro,
i can still remember feeling your luscious
round lips glide across my chocolate chips.

yes, I remember, I remember because that was why i loved you.

but now things have changed.

 your preference for a creamy Black hue
has turned to milky white.
the hair your fingers pass through now
 shows no trace of the roots you've always loved.
you don't even know how to deal with me now.

I am of virgin blood, yet still unpure [sic]
 For my spirit carries the weight
of a thousand days of sorrow,
 And my soul a million years of pain.
 And I feel the need today to banish my impurities.
And, letting the pain drip into a cup of relief,
 Drain my soul of sorrow.
But my open flesh will perish
in the sun,
 so I submerge myself in
darkness to meet the healer.
 He comes draped in silk, running from
the nape of his neck, down to his thighs,
Carrying the secrets to the ages,
 Unlocking my chest of treasures
for me because I no longer have the strength to do it alone.
 Dressing me in shining white swathling [sic]
cloth,
 Dawnming cowrie [sic] shells and
Ndebele beads. Swaying them over and around me.
 Drums pounding, flesh crawling, heart pulsing,
head throbbing, blood running from my eyes
healing me,
 healing me.