

Miriam Lutchter
Stark *in* **Contest**[®]
Reading and Declamation
ESTABLISHED 1904

STUDENT RULES AND GUIDELINES

**For the 114th Miriam Lutchter
Stark Contest in Reading and Declamation
(School Year 2017-2018)**

1. Purpose of Contest

- (a) The Miriam Lutchter Stark Contest in Reading and Declamation (known as “The Stark Reading Contest”) is a qualified scholarship program sponsored by the Nelda C. and H.J. Lutchter Stark Foundation. The general purpose of the Stark Reading Contest is to understand, experience, and share selections of literary merit through oral interpretation, which focuses on the presentation of literature through expressive oral reading or declamation. The objective is to encourage student participation in and exploration of a variety of literary selections, to enhance literary and forensic quality and skills, and to stimulate the appreciation of literature on the part of both a Contestant and the audience through a Contestant’s interpretation of the selected work.
- (b) The Stark Reading Contest (referred to as “SRC” or “Contest”) is comprised of two distinct categories: (1) **Interpretive Reading** (Prose and Poetry) and (2) **Declamation**. Contestants may compete in either category but may not compete simultaneously in both categories. Contestants must select the category of the Contest in which they will participate at the time of entry in the Contest and must note their selected category on the Entry Form for Student Participation.

Contestants may change from one category of the Contest to the other (and make any corresponding changes in their material selection) by withdrawing their initial Entry Form for Student Participation and completing a new Entry Form for Student Participation, as long as the Contestant’s final Entry Form (reflecting any change in the category of the Contest and/or selection of material) is completed and received by the local director for that Contestant’s school on or before the Entry Deadline Date provided in Section 2(b) below.

- (c) The SRC is held at two levels: (1) local (school) level; and (2) county level.

Placement in first or second place in either category of the Contest at the local level is necessary for a Contestant’s advancement to (and, thus, a participating school’s inclusion in)

the county level in the same category, as discussed in Section 5 below. The county level may include up to all five Orange County public high schools, subject to local level participation and advancement in a local level contest.

- (d) Contestants who finish in first and second places of either category of the Contest and at either level of the Contest will be awarded scholarships to be utilized for study in an academic degree program at a properly-accredited college or university, as further described in Section 5 below.

2. Eligibility

(a) *Student/Contestant*

To be eligible for participation in any or all levels of the Contest, a student must:

- (1) be enrolled in one of grades 9-12 of a school that is eligible to participate in the contest under the schedule eligibility requirements set forth in the separate Directors' Rules and Guidelines at the time of that student's completion of an Entry Form for Student Participation in the Contest, as well as at the time of the local and/or county levels of the Contest;
- (2) maintain a minimum grade of C- (75 or above) for all classes in which the student is enrolled at his/her participating school during all grading periods and rank academically in the upper fiftieth percentile (50%) of his/her class at all times during the Stark Reading Contest year;
- (3) choose a selection for presentation at all levels of the Contest that is either (i) from the Approved Selection List provided by the Contest administrators, as described in Section 3(a) below; or (ii) that is subsequently approved (during the entry process) as part of the alternative approval procedure described in Section 3(b) below;
- (4) not be related within the second degree of affinity (marriage) or the third degree of consanguinity (blood) to a current member of the Board of Directors of the Stark Foundation or a judge at the local and/or county level contest in which the student may participate;
- (5) not have previously received either one first place award or two second place awards (or the benefits of such placement, as provided below) in the same category of the Contest in which he or she seeks current participation; and
- (6) behave in an exemplary manner, conduct himself with integrity, and be in good standing with respect to conduct both on and off school premises, which means (among other things) that a student must not be subject to any significant disciplinary action by the participating school (including but not limited to detention, suspension, probation or expulsion) as a result of conduct on or off school premises, nor may a student be charged with or convicted of violating any local, state or federal criminal law, whether on or off school premises.

(b) *General*

The Entry Form for Student Participation in the SRC must be submitted to the director of the local level contest held by the school at which the Contestant is enrolled no later than the Entry Deadline Date that is designated for that contest year. The Entry Deadline Date will be determined by the Stark Foundation's Stark Reading Contest Coordinator and posted on the Stark Reading Contest website (<http://www.starkfoundation.org/reading-contest/>) on or before November 1 of a contest year and will, further, be announced by the individual School Directors. All paperwork must be completed and submitted on or before the Entry Deadline Date, including any changes that the Contestant may determine to make to his/her Entry Form, as provided in Section 1(b) above.

The Entry Form for Student Participation will not be finalized and participation by a student will not be confirmed until all information on the Entry Form has been completed and all signatures provided, all of which must occur by the Entry Deadline Date. This includes any completion of Part C of the Entry Form regarding "Form Requesting Approval of Alternative Selection", if a student is seeking approval of an alternative reading selection. Information provided will only be used for purposes related to the Contest, including but not limited to any scholarship award distribution and processing that may apply.

If a student seeks an exception to the Approved Selection List as part of his entry as provided in Section 3(b) below, the student may enter the Contest so long as he/she completes all paperwork on or before the Entry Deadline Date even if his alternative selection has not yet been reviewed or approved, as long as such selection is approved within 15 calendar days following the deadline date (the "alternative selection approval deadline"). If the alternative selection is not approved by the alternative selection approval deadline or if it is rejected, then the Contestant will be deemed ineligible for the Contest regardless of the timeliness of any other paperwork.

Note: Each director at the local/school level of the Contest must review the selections of all students seeking participation in the Contest as listed on their Entry Forms to be sure that two or more student within the same participating school do not make the same reading selection. In the event this occurs, then the student who first submitted a fully completed, signed Entry Form that included the selection should be approved, and the other student(s) with later, competing submissions should make another selection.

3. Selection of Reading or Declamation Material

- (a) A Contestant's selection of reading or declamation material for the Contest must be one of literary merit. In selecting material to either be read or declaimed in the Contest, a Contestant is encouraged to explore literature of high quality and to prepare a selection of literary merit that has not been presented in the recent history of the Contest.

Except as may be otherwise provided in subsection (b) below, a Contestant's selection must be chosen from the Approved Selections List issued by the Stark Foundation's SRC Coordinator for the school year in which the Contestant participates in the Contest. Once a Contestant's selection is made, it may not be changed unless Contestant submits a replacement Entry Form with a new selection (and different category, if applicable), which must be completed on or before the Entry Deadline Date.

- (b) *Exception to Approved Selection List:* If a Contestant chooses a selection that does not appear on the Approved Selection List at the time of Contestant's entry in the Contest, the Contestant must provide a copy of the selection that he/she would like to present as part of the Contest to the local level director of the Contest at his/her participating school, together with a completed Form Requesting Approval of Alternative Selection (Part C of the Entry Form), and request that the selection be approved.

All parts of the Form Requesting Approval of Alternative Selection must be completed, including name, author and source of selection, as well as confirmation of level of reading difficulty (Lexile measure, if available) and of printing/publication of the material. Additionally, the Contestant must provide a written explanation in support of the literary merit of the selection and attach a copy of the selection itself. At least one of the selections should be on the Approved Selection list.

An alternative selection must be approved by both the local level director at the Contestant's school as well as the Stark Foundation's SRC Coordinator before it may be used in the Contest. If the local level director for the Contestant's school approves the alternative selection, then that director must forward the alternative selection approval request to the Stark Foundation's SRC Coordinator for review and final approval.

This approval process may take up to ten (10) business days, so the Contestant should plan accordingly. While the alternative selection request is not required to be approved by the Entry Deadline Date, all entry forms must be completed and submitted by the Entry Deadline Date. If an alternative selection request is not approved, additional time for entry will not be permitted once the Entry Deadline Date has passed. Once a Contestant's alternative selection is approved by the Stark Foundation's SRC Coordinator, it may not be changed unless Contestant submits a replacement Entry Form with a new selection (and different category, if applicable), which must be completed on or before the Entry Deadline Date.

An alternative selection that is approved by the Stark Foundation's SRC Coordinator may be added to the Approved Reading Selection List for the following year, unless the selection is rendered ineligible as a result of use in the county level of the Contest, as provided in (e) below.

- (c) A Contestant's selection must be part of published, printed material. Any internet material should be published concurrently in hard copy, if possible, or, if not, the Contestant should provide an explanation as to why it is not. Contestants are responsible for providing proof that their selection is published in hard copy. Examples of acceptable proof include the original published source or a photocopy of the Library of Congress cataloging information. If the selection is from a literary collection, the Contestant must supply the original source or a photocopy of the table of contents that designates the title of the book and proof the specific selection is included in that book.
- (d) Any material selected by a Contestant for either the Interpretive Reading or Declamation category of the Contest must meet a certain level of difficulty in terms of word count and sentence length. If available, a Contestant's selection must have a **minimum Lexile measure of 855L**; if a Lexile (or comparable) measure is not available for a particular selection, then such selection must be recognized by a nationally-recognized source as having a minimum grade reading level of 9th grade.

While the difficulty of a piece will not be a separate consideration for scoring on the official evaluation form, judges at both the local and county levels of the Contest may consider the level of difficulty of a Contestant's selection as part of their overall consideration of a Contestant.

The requirement of a minimum Lexile measure (or comparable standard for assessing reading difficulty) is in addition to and separate from the requirement that the selection be from the Approved Selection List described in subsection (a) above or be otherwise approved in the alternative approval procedure described in subsection (b) above. Thus, even if a selection is on the Approved Selection List as constituting a selection of literary merit, the selection must ALSO reflect the minimum Lexile measure (or comparable grade reading level or other measure) set forth above in order for it to be permitted.

While most (if not all) of the selections on the Approved Selection List should meet the minimum Lexile measure, the two requirements (Approved Selection List and minimum reading level measure) are mutually exclusive, and the existence of one does not automatically assure the existence of the other. It is the Contestant's responsibility to demonstrate compliance with both requirements.

- (e) **Selections presented by a prior contestant as part of the county level of the contest during the two-year period prior to the current year are deemed ineligible and may not be used by any Contestant at either level of the Contest.** Ineligible selections are highlighted in yellow on the Approved Selection List. It is the responsibility of a Contestant to review such list prior to submitting their Entry Form and/or choosing a selection. A Contestant who selects and/or presents an ineligible selection without substitution prior to the deadline date will be deemed disqualified.

Additionally, Contestants who previously competed at any level in the Stark Reading Contest, regardless of placement, may not repeat or otherwise re-use the same selection as present in prior Contests and must, instead, make a different selection for presentation. Also, Contestants who participate in UIL are strongly encouraged to choose a different selection as the rules and judging criteria are different for the two competitions.

- (f) As part of his/her entry to the Contest, a Contestant must submit a copy of his/her selection for reading or declamation to the local level director for approval on or before the Entry Deadline Date at that Contestant's participating school. Documentation showing proof of the source of the selection must be included with the copy, if the selection is not on the approved list. All entries must be delivered by the local level director to the SRC Coordinator for review and final approval no later than the Entry Deadline Date of the Contest year.

NOTE: Each director at the local/school level of the Contest should carefully check the selections of all participating students as listed on their Entry Forms to be sure that two or more students have not chosen the same reading selection. In the event that such a duplication occurs, then the student who first submitted his/her selection should be approved, and the other student(s) with later, competing submissions should make another selection.

- (g) The following material, or excerpts from the following material, may not be selected and, if selected, will not be permitted:
 - (i) Plays, dramas, musicals, screenplays, stage productions or scripts;

- (ii) Religious books or similar documentation;
- (iii) Song lyrics published only as music;
- (iv) Original material/material prepared by the Contestant; and
- (v) Anonymous material/material without attribution and/or source must be approved by the Stark Foundation's SRC Coordinator.

In addition, any speech that may be selected, whether from the selection list or otherwise as part of the alternative selection process, must have initially been given by its original speaker no less than 5 years prior to the year of the Contest in which it will be presented, determined based on the year in which the school and county level contest in which the speech selection would be delivered will occur (i.e., spring semester of a given school year). For example, for the current school year, the earliest speech that may be chosen must be dated for year 2012 or prior years (2011 and prior), as the selection would be made for presentation in 2016-2017 school year.

- (h) Selections must be presented in the English translation; however, incidental use of foreign language words and phrases in any selection may be used as in the original selection.
- (i) In selecting material to be presented, Contestants should consider the audience to whom their presentation will be directed. Contestants will be judged on the propriety and suitability of a selection for the audience, among other factors. It is strongly suggested, but not required, that a Contestant consider the gender of the author and/or primary person, central character/protagonist and/or narrator of a potential selection in determining the suitability of a selection for presentation by the Contestant.
- (j) Notwithstanding anything to the contrary in these rules and guidelines or in any attachments or corresponding documents, selections must not offend the moral standards of the community or be in poor taste, which includes but is not limited to selections depicting a graphic, explicit, violent, or sexual situation, selections involving crude language, or selections of a harassing or offensive nature towards any religious or ethnic group. Local level directors should reject all selections that in any way fail to meet this qualification, that have the potential to fail to meet this qualification, or for which there is a reasonable possibility that the selection may not comply, with the standards outlined in this subsection (j).
- (k) **Once a selection has been approved by the Stark Foundation's SRC Coordinator, a Contestant may NOT change his/her reading selection without the prior written approval of the Stark Foundation's SRC Coordinator. Approved Selections may not be changed after the Entry Deadline Date.**

4. Presentation/Delivery of Selection During Contest

- (a) Contestants must use a dark, stiff-backed folder to hold any manuscript or excerpt for a selection. The manuscript or excerpt must be identical to the content of the selection named in the Contestant's Entry Form and submitted to the local level contest director for that Contestant's participating school, although the cutting/layout of the manuscript/excerpt for placement in the folder may be different. Contestants should not present without a manuscript or copy of their selection. Notwithstanding the foregoing, Contestants may not read directly from books, magazines or similar materials.

- (b) Contestants in either category of the Contest (whether Reading or Declamation) must present a memorized introduction of their selection, including the author and title. The introduction should be prepared by the Contestant ahead of the time of the Contest and should prepare the audience to listen to the Contestant's presentation of the selection.
- (c) Contestant's delivery of his/her selection must utilize a speaking time of no less than **five (5)** minutes and no more than **eight (8)** minutes. The total speaking time will include the introduction and any transitions.
- (d) **Contestant may not engage in acting as part of the delivery of his/her selection.** Responsive use of the body is permissible as part of a Contestant's delivery of the selection, such as spontaneous changes in posture, nominal gestures and place-to-place movement. These movements should appear natural and not rehearsed. Additionally, such active use of the body should (i) be appropriate to the demands of the selection; (ii) be a natural outgrowth from the literature presented; and (iii) be limited in scope.

Acting is prohibited. Acting includes but is not limited to representing a character or assuming the role of another person or thing and portraying that character by generating or emulating physical and emotional conditions and expressions, such as overt gestures, body movements, dramatic postures, and an emotive form of delivery.

A Contestant may not use costumes, props, or visual materials in connection with any part of his or her presentation at the Contest, including but not limited to his or her delivery of the selection.

The focus of the Contest as set forth in Section 1 above is oral skills as exhibited by reading or declamation – not acting, dramatization or role playing. If the judges construe any part of a presentation as acting, the Contestant will be penalized. A judge's opinion regarding style and delivery is final.

- (e) Contestants who are absent from any round of the Contest will receive an automatic forfeit. Contestants who are late to a round may compete at the discretion of the judges, provided the speaker who follows the tardy contestant has not begun. Once the next contestant in the order has begun, a tardy contestant will forfeit even if the judges may otherwise allow that contestant to speak.

5. Contest Protocol and Awards; Local and County Levels

(a) *Local Level*

- (1) There will be one first-place winner and one second-place winner in each category of each final round of a local level presentation of the Contest. Each first-place winner in a participating school's local level final will earn a **\$2,000** scholarship. Second-place winners in a local level final will each earn a **\$1,500** scholarship.
- (2) First-place winners in each category at a local level school contest will be eligible to participate in the same category at the subsequent county level contest. If a first-place winner of a local level of the Contest is unable to compete in the county level of the Contest, that person's participating school may substitute the second-place winner or alternate, respectively, in that category of the Contest, provided such substitution occurs no later than 14 days before the date of the county level of the Contest. The Stark

Foundation SRC Coordinator must be notified for approval before permission is given for any such substitution.

In the event of any such situation, while the first-place winner will lose the right to participate at the county level of the Contest, he or she will retain the scholarship awarded to him or her at the local level, subject to compliance with all other obligations of these rules. Any second-place winner who replaces a first-place winner for the county contest will retain the scholarship awarded to him at the local level and will not earn the first-place local level scholarship as a result of any substitution or replacement of a first-place local level winner at the county level.

If any winner at the local school level receives first-place benefits (i.e., advancement to county level) in a particular category of the Contest, whether by placement (first place) or alternate process (second place substituting for first place), then he or she shall be deemed as being in first place for purposes of future eligibility with regard to that particular category. All rules regarding eligibility (per Section 2(a) above) will apply to that individual as though he or she had originally placed first in that category.

- (3) All preliminary and final rounds of the Contest at the local level of each participating school must begin **no earlier than January 2** of each school year and be completed **no later than March 20** for the 2017-2018 school year, unless approved by the Stark Foundation's SRC Coordinator.

- (4) The Local Level Director for each school will conduct a random drawing for presentation order among the contestants at the local level round(s) at that school, whether preliminary or final.

(b) *County Level*

- (1) There will be a maximum of five finalists in each category of the Contest (i.e., being the declaiming and the interpretive categories), comprised of the first-place winners from the participating schools in the respective categories or, alternatively, the second-place winners or other alternate designated from the final round of the local level; provided, however, that any alternate contestant has been properly substituted as provided in place of the first-place winner as provided in Section 5(a)(2) above.

Upon completion of the county level of the Contest, there will be one first place and one second place winner in the declaiming category, and one first place and one second place winner in the interpretive reading category. The first place winners in each category of the county level of the Contest will receive a **\$5,000** scholarship. The second place winners in each category of the county level of the Contest will receive a **\$2,500** scholarship.

- (2) Contestants who participate in the county level of the Contest pursuant to subsection (b)(1) above must present the same selection at the county level as they did at the local level of their respective participating school. Selections may not be changed after the Entry Deadline Date.
- (3) A reading order for contestants at the County Level has been established for a five-year period, with the order based on the contestants' participating school. The order of schools rotates annually and is intentionally different for each category (Interpretive

Reading v. Declamation). The reading order is entitled “SRC Annual Reading Order” and is available online at www.starkfoundation.org.

- (4) The Stark Foundation SRC Coordinator will select the program emcee(s) for the county level of the Contest. Preference is given to previous winners of the Stark Reading Contest.
- (5) The date and time for the county level of the Contest will be determined by November 1 of each year and communicated to each local level director as well as posted on the Stark Foundation website.

(c) *Both Levels*

- (1) Procedure: No coaching will be permitted during any level of the Contest. The director for each level of the Contest must prevent any interruption of a contestant during the Contest.

A timekeeper should be provided for each contest at the local levels and at the county level to notify the Contestants of the amount of time remaining from a Contestant’s total allotted time. The timekeeper should sit where he/she may be seen by contestants and should demonstrate before each contestant begins his/her presentation the type of time signals to be used. Even with the use of a timekeeper, responsibility for keeping within the minimum and maximum time limits set forth in Section 4(c) above lies solely with the Contestant. Contestants will be penalized for going under or over the minimum/maximum time limits.

- (2) Dress/Attire: Students who compete at the county level and at the finals of a local level of the Contest shall adhere to a formal, semi-formal or professional dress code. Namely, at either and both of these levels, young men should wear formal or professional attire as they may elect (i.e., dress trousers, shirts, ties and coats), and young ladies should wear formal, semi-formal or professional attire as they may elect, including but limited to dresses, suits or pantsuits. Young ladies are strongly encouraged to wear long dresses or pantsuits during their presentations onstage. All contestants should wear proper dress shoes.

During any preliminary round of a local level contest, the code of dress is determined within the discretion of the local level school director for that participating school; however, in any and all final rounds, the more formal/professional code of dress applies, as outlined above. **Jeans, leggings, shorts, tank tops, tennis shoes, flip flops, boots and related items of casual dress are not acceptable at any level of competition or at any time during the Contest.** A Contestant’s appearance will be judged as part of his/her overall presentation, and deductions may be applied for any blatant noncompliance with the basic dress code set forth in this subsection (2).

- (3) Ancillary Participation: In the final round of either the local school or county level of the Contest, Contestants may not participate in any activity other than the delivery of their selection as part of the Contest, including but not limited to participation in musical performances during Contest intermissions, whether instrumental or vocal.
- (4) Judging: The designated local director of each participating school is responsible for securing a judging panel for the final round as well as any preliminary rounds at the local

level of the Contest at that director's participating school. The Stark Foundation SRC Coordinator will secure the judging panel for the county level of the Contest.

Judges may not be related within the second degree of affinity (marriage) or the third degree of consanguinity (blood) to any Contestant (and vice versa) at the contest level for which the judge is providing critique and ranking as a judge. Additionally, judges serving on a panel for a single contest may not be related by blood or marriage.

If such circumstance exists, the affected judge and/or affected Contestant must notify the Stark Foundation SRC Coordinator as soon as any potential conflict or prohibited relationship is either known or discovered. In the absence of such notification prior to the contest/judging, the Contestant to whom the judge is related may forfeit his/her appearance or otherwise be disqualified, as determined by the Stark Foundation's SRC Coordinator.

The Judges will score students on the presentation and oral quality of the reading or declamation selection. There are three categories of evaluation: (1) Introduction of Selection, (2) Delivery/Presentation of Selection, and (3) Appearance and Poise in accordance with the stated Rules and Guidelines for this Contest.

A copy of judging instructions (including category descriptions and reading level measure information) as well as judging criteria will be given to each judge. Decisions of the judges at both the local and county levels are final. **There will be no ties.**

(d) *Awards*

- (1) Scholarship awards for Contestants who finish first and second place (a "placing Contestant") in either the local level or county level of the Contest are directly payable only to accredited colleges and universities. No cash payment of the scholarship will be made directly to any placing Contestant.

In order to receive any scholarship award, a placing Contestant must (i) enroll as a full-time student in an accredited college or university no more than 18 months following his graduation from high school, (ii) remain as full-time students in an academic degree program and (iii) maintain a passing average of 2.5 on a 4.0 scale in the current (and any preceding) academic period for which the scholarship funds are used. If a placing Contestant fails to fulfill any of the foregoing requirements, or if placing Contestant fails to provide or cooperate with the provision of any of the requisite documentation as provided in this subsection (d), he or she will forfeit the scholarship.

When notified by the registrar of any accredited college or university that the placing Contestant has enrolled as a full-time student, the Foundation will send to the registrar payment for all or part of the scholarship funds as requested. Instructions will be given as part of such transmission that the funds may be used only to defray tuition and fees required for the enrollment or attendance of the placing Contestant at the accredited college or university, as well as for fees, books, supplies and equipment required for courses of instruction at such educational organization.

- (2) A placing Contestant may use his/her scholarship at more than one accredited institution provided that Contestant continues as a full-time student and maintains a passing grade point average of at least 2.5 (collectively "good standing").

- (3) If a placing Contestant exits the accredited institution and is not in good standing at the time of such exit, any unused portion of the funds will be transferred to the general scholarship fund of the accredited institution.
- (4) Separate scholarship applications must be completed for each placing Contestant in order to trigger processing of a scholarship award. The scholarship application must be submitted by the placing Contestant by U.S. mail or by email to the Stark Foundation office as soon as the local level final for a participating school has been completed. Additionally, the educational institution would be requested by the Stark Foundation to provide an official report of the courses taken by the placing Contestant and the corresponding grades received by the placing Contestant in such courses in each academic period in which any part of the scholarship is expended.
- (5) Scholarships are not transferable and will be forfeited if not applied as provided in this subsection (d) no later than eighteen (18) calendar months after the placing Contestant's graduation from high school, unless special arrangements have been made with the Foundation in writing for an extension of time for application of the scholarship funds, which time must not exceed twenty-four (24) calendar months.

If any part of the scholarship has not been paid to a qualifying college or university for the account and/or benefit of a placing Contestant within sixty-six (66) calendar months following the Contestant's graduation from high school, the entire amount will be forfeited, in the absence of special written arrangements between the Stark Foundation and the placing Contestant for an extension of time not to exceed twenty-four (24) months.

Revised 8/1/2017