

Miriam Litcher
Stark *in* **Contest**®
Reading and Declamation
ESTABLISHED 1904

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS (FAQs)

Students/Participants

- 1. Do I have to fill out an application in order to be a contestant in the Stark Reading Contest?**
Yes. In order to compete in the Stark Reading Contest at any level, students must complete and submit an Entry Form for Student Participation to the local level director at the school at which the Contestant is enrolled.

The Entry Form, along with any Alternative Selection Approval Forms, must be submitted no later than December 1 of the 2023 - 2024 Contest year. Participation in the Contest will not be confirmed until all information on the Entry Form has been completed and all signatures provided on or before the entry deadline date of December 1. [Rule 2(c)]

Please note that each school's Local Level Director may require an earlier deadline in order to complete necessary paperwork and submit it to the SRC Coordinator in a timely manner. Always check with your Local Level Director to confirm submission deadline.

- 2. Where do I turn in my Entry Form for Student Participation?**
The Entry Form for Student Participation should be given to the director for the student's local/school level of the Contest for approval by or before December 1 of the contest year.

The separate Form Requesting Approval of Alternative Selection (for a selection not on the Approved Selection List) should also be submitted to the Contest director for the student's local/school level for prior review/approval. If approved at that level, it should then be sent by the local level director to the Stark Foundation SRC Coordinator for ultimate approval before the piece may be used in any level of the Contest. [Rule 2(c)]

- 3. Are there any grade or class standing requirements for participation in the Stark Reading Contest?**
Yes. In order to be eligible for participation in the Stark Reading Contest, a student must maintain a passing grade of 70 and above for all classes in which the student is enrolled at his/her participating school. [Rule 2(b)(2)]

4. **Are there any non-academic requirements for participation in the Stark Reading Contest?**

Yes. In order to be eligible for participation in the Stark Reading Contest, a student must be committed to participating at all levels of the contest, including the county level, which is held *on Sunday afternoon*. (5) All participants should be made aware of this schedule and take into consideration religious and cultural practices before competing. [Rule 2(b) (6)]

Additionally, a student must behave in an exemplary manner, conduct himself or herself with integrity, and be in good standing with respect to conduct both on and off school premises. This means 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, nor may a student be charged with or convicted of violating any local, state or federal criminal law, whether on or off school premises. [Rule 2(b)(7)]

5. **Do I have to choose my reading or declamation material from the Approved Selection List?**

No. While students are encouraged to select material from the Approved Selection List, they are not required to do so.

Regardless, students entering the Stark Reading Contest must select reading or declamation material that is of literary merit, and they must provide information about their selection on the Entry Form for Student Participation to be completed by them. If their selection is not from the Approved Selection List, then they must complete Part C of the Entry Form for Student Participation to request approval of an alternative selection (FAQ 6). [Rule 3(a)]

6. **What if I want to use a piece that is not on the Approved Selection List?**

If a student entering the Stark Reading Contest indicates on his/her Entry Form that his/her selection is not on the Approved Selection List, then that student must ALSO complete and submit Part C of the Entry Form for Student Participation, which is “Form Requesting Approval of Alternate Selection”. This form is on page 3 of the Entry Form (Part C) and must be completed by all student participants who do not select reading or declamation material from the Approved Selection List. This form must be submitted no later than December 1 of the Contest year.

The alternate selection will first be reviewed by the director for the student’s local/school level of the Contest; if approved at that level, it must receive final approval from the Stark Foundation’s Stark Reading Contest Coordinator before it may be used. This approval process may take up to ten (10) days, so the student should plan accordingly. A selection that is not on the Approved Selection List will only be allowed if prior approval is granted through this process. [Rule 3(b)]

7. **Are there any minimum criterion for a reading selection for the Stark Reading Contest?**

All reading selections (whether from the Approved Selection List or requested for approval as an alternative selection) must have a Lexile measurement of 855 or higher (or comparable readability gauge as approved by the Stark Foundation’s Contest Coordinator) to be eligible. It is the responsibility of the student participant to ensure that his/her selection meets this minimum criteria. [Rule 3(d)]. A selection must also have “literary merit” [Rule 3(a)] and be part of published, printed material [Rule 3(c)]. See FAQ 8 below for other information.

8. **What are ineligible selections?**

Ineligible selections consist of any part of the following materials:

- Plays, dramas, musicals, screenplays, stage productions or scripts;
- Religious books or similar documentation;

- Song lyrics published only as music;
- Original material/material prepared by the Contestant; and
- Anonymous material/material without attribution and/or source.

Speeches that were originally given by the original speaker for the first time less than 5 years prior to the year of the Contest are also ineligible. [Rule 3(g)]

Materials that lack literary merit are also ineligible. [Rule 3(a)]

Additionally, the Stark Foundation Stark Reading Contest Coordinator maintains a list of **ineligible selections** for each contest year. This list excludes any selections that were presented at the county level of the Stark Reading Contest during the two-year period prior to the contest for which the current selection is being chosen. [Rule 3(e)]

9. **May two or more contestants read the same selection in a local/school level contest?**

No. 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 this occurs, then the student who first submitted his/her Entry Form to his/her local level director should be allowed to use the selection, and the other student(s) with later, competing submissions should choose other material.

[Rule 3(f)]

Note: The foregoing only applies to the local/school level contest. At the county level of the Contest, there may be more than one contestant reading the same selection, since the county level involves the participation of multiple schools.

10. **Is there a time limit on my presentation?**

A contestant's presentation of a selection must be no less than **five (5)** and no more than **eight (8)** minutes. The time begins with the first word of a contestant's introduction and ends when the contestant has finished speaking; total speaking time includes any transitions. [Rule 4(c)]

11. **How should I dress for the Contest?**

At the county level and at the finals of the local level of the Contest, contestants should follow a formal, semi-formal or professional dress code. This means that young men should wear formal or professional attire as they may choose (i.e., dress trousers, shirts, ties and coats), and young ladies should wear formal, semi-formal or professional attire as they may choose, whether dresses, suits or pantsuits. All contestants should wear proper dress shoes.

During any preliminary round of a local level contest, the code of dress is at the discretion of the local/school level director for that school. 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 noncompliance with the basic dress code described in the Contest rules.

[Rule 5(c)(2)]

12. **How do I collect any scholarship money to which I may be entitled?**

Any scholarship money to which a contestant student may be entitled as a result of participation in the Stark Reading Contest will be distributed after that contestant student graduates from high school and enrolls in an accredited college or university, provided the student's enrollment occurs

no more than 18 months after his/her graduation (unless an extension has been granted in writing by the Foundation).

The Stark Foundation must be notified by the registrar of the college or university that the student has enrolled, as which point the scholarship money is sent directly to the registrar of the specified university for application to that student's account in accordance with IRS regulations, which state that funds may be used only to defray tuition and fees required for enrollment at the accredited college or university, as well as for fees, books, supplies and equipment required for courses of instruction at the educational organization [Rule 5(d)(1)].

Local Level Directors

13. What role should a Local Level Director play in the completion of student contestant's entry forms and materials?

A Local Level Director should ensure that all students at his/her school who wish to participate in the Stark Reading Contest complete and submit an Entry Form on or before December 1. Local Level Directors should review all Entry Forms upon receipt and confirm that all information has been provided and signatures obtained.

While a student is free to choose his/her own material from the Approved Selection List, a Local Level Director should review all reading materials selected and provide guidance to a participant student as to the type of selection (or category) that may be best suited to a particular student (whether based on gender, experience, personality, etc.).

If a student contestant completes Part C of the Entry Form requesting approval of alternative selection, the Local Level Director for that student should review the alternative selection requested and confirm that it meets the basic requirements outlined in Section 3 of the Rules and Guidelines, including and especially the requirement that the selection be one of literary merit.

Each Local Level Director should also 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 choose other material. [Rule 2(c)]. All of the foregoing should be completed by the Local Level Director before submission of materials and forms to the Stark Reading Contest Coordinator.

14. When must the preliminary, semi-final, and/or final rounds for the local/school level of the Stark Reading Contest occur?

Local/school level rounds may be scheduled anytime on or after January 5 and must be completed on or before March 15 of a contest year. [Rule 2(a)(2); Rule 5(a)(3)]

The number of rounds at the local/school level (i.e., whether there are multiple preliminary rounds or not) will depend on the number of participants. The number of participants in a given round may not exceed 10. Regardless of whether preliminary rounds are held or not, each participating school must have one local level "final" round that includes at least five (5) eligible contestants in each category (Declamation and Interpretive Reading). [Rule 2(a)(3)]

It is recommended that there be an alternate in each category, in the event a contestant is unable to compete the day of the local finals contest. [Rule 2(a)(4)]

15. How many judges are required for the finals at the local/school level?

The final round of the Contest at each local/school level must have an odd number of judges, not less than three (3) and not more than five (5). The Local Level Director is responsible for securing a qualified judging panel for all rounds (any preliminary + final) at a local/school level contest. [Rule 5(c)(4)].

It is up to each school's Local Level Director to assign participants to governed preliminary rounds to determine seeding if any preliminary rounds are necessary (which will depend on the number of participants in the contest) and, subject to that, schedule one final round to determine the 1st and 2nd place contestants in each category of the Contest. Note: preliminary rounds are not to exceed 10 participants per round. [Rule 2(a)(3)].

16. What qualifications are required for a Stark Reading Contest judge?

At a minimum, an individual selected to serve as a judge for the final round of the local/school level of the Stark Reading Contest must be a college graduate. It is preferred that a judge have a background in reading/language arts, communications, English/literature, speech, or journalism/broadcast media or similar field of study, work or discipline that emphasizes oration, public speaking, rhetoric, language or comparable skills or similar field of study, work or discipline. [Rule 5(c)4]. See also FAQ 17 for more information on prohibited relationships.

17. May a Stark Reading Contest judge be related to a contestant in the Contest in which the judge is being asked to judge?

No. A judge must not be related, either by blood or by marriage, to any participating student(s) in the contest level for which the judge has been asked to judge. In fact, a judge will be asked to confirm in his/her information sheet that he/she is not related in any way to a contestant in the particular level for which he/she is asked to judge. [Rule 5(c)(4)]

18. Who is responsible for paying individuals who serve as judges for the preliminaries, semi-finals and/or final rounds in a local/school level of the Contest?

Judges who affirmatively elect to receive a stipend for serving as judge, regardless of the level of the round, will be paid directly by the Stark Foundation. (Note: Judges may instead choose to donate their time on the Information Sheet to be completed by them, if they prefer to do so.) [Rule 5(c)(4)]. In order to facilitate any payments to judges, each local/school level director must submit the names and addresses of all judges for preliminary, semi-final and/or final rounds of the local/school level Contest to the Stark Reading Contest Coordinator, who will then send an "Judge's Information Sheet" for completion to each judge.

19. How often will my school have to host the county level final?

This will depend on the number of Orange County public high schools that participate and continue to participate in the Contest in a given year; however, presuming all five Orange County public high schools continue participation, each participating school should host the county level final once every five years. The school host for the county level final for a given year will be rotated annually between the five area schools. [Rule 2(a)(7)].

20. When will the county level final be held?

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. [Rule 5(b)(5)].

21. Where can I find more information about the Stark Reading Contest?

More information about the Stark Reading Contest (including Approved Selection List, forms, reading order for the county level contest, judges' guidelines/handbook, etc.) may be found at the Stark Foundation website -- www.starkfoundation.org -- under "Reading Contest" on the home-page tab.

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