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Alabama Winner: Garrett Whalen of Baker High School,
Mobile, Alabama. Photo by Kristina Allen

Alabama Names Garrett Whalen State Champion for Poetry Out Loud

Montgomery, ALA -- On Monday, February 18, 2019, students from high schools all over the state converged on Montgomery to compete in the Alabama finals of the Poetry Out Loud National Recitation Competition. Students, their teachers and parents arrived at the Alabama Shakespeare Festival to hear competing students recite poetry. These students, already winners in their own regions, gave moving renditions of poetry from well-known poets such as Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, William Shakespeare, Langston Hughes and Maya Angelou. The students also performed their own original poems about truth and friendship, personal identity and tragic life experiences. It was a day filled with laughter, thoughtfulness and tears, proving to all that Alabama students have the power to speak with voices very much worth hearing.

First place in the Alabama Poetry Out Loud National Recitation Competition went to Garrett Whalen, a senior at Baker High School in Mobile. This was the first year Garrett and his school participated in the completion. Garrett's teacher is Laura Sadler.

Garrett Whalen will be traveling to Washington, D.C. in May, with all expenses paid, to represent Alabama in the National Finals. Garrett's family and friends will be there to celebrate his achievements. Keyshawn Sellers, a student from Greenville High School (Teacher, Naomi Pryor), came in second place in the Alabama finals. Honorable mentions were awarded to Maggie Jane Brown of Bob Jones High School in Huntsville (Teacher, Shelia Hadden), Aditya Singhal of James Clemens High School in Madison (Teacher, Stefanie Beckett), and Martha Emily Marchio of Lakeview Christian School in Auburn (Teacher, Deborah Stabler).

Alabama is one of the few states that include an original poetry competition within its state poetry finals. Maggie Jane Brown, a student at Bob Jones High School in Huntsville was selected as the original poetry winner with her two poems, *Kintsugi Noun: The Art of the Golden Joinery* and *The Trappings of Eve*. Second place in original poetry was Ariana Marie Brown, a student at Lee High School in Huntsville for her poems *Oreo* and *Soulful Sound*. An honorable mention in original poetry was awarded to Haley Clancy of Hale County High School in Moundville for her poems *What the American Dream Didn't Tell You About Me* and *The Inked Blueprint*.

Poetry Out Loud is a national arts education program presented by the [National Endowment for the Arts](#) and the [Poetry Foundation](#) in partnership with state arts councils nationwide. In Alabama, the [Alabama State Council on the Arts](#) partners with the [Alabama Arts Alliance](http://www.alaae.org). The program encourages mastery of great poetry by offering educational materials and a dynamic competition of high schools across the country. Poetry Out Loud uses a pyramid structure. Beginning at the classroom level, winners advance to a school-wide competition, regional competitions, the state competition, and ultimately to the National Finals in Washington, D.C.

The winner of the Alabama's Poetry Out Loud Competition is awarded \$200, and the student's school receives a \$500 stipend for the purchase of poetry books. The second place winner receives \$100, and the student's school receives \$200 for the school library. The Poetry Out Loud National Finals will award a total of \$50,000 in scholarships and school stipends, with a \$20,000 college scholarship for the Poetry Out Loud National Champion.

Alabama's original poetry winner Maggie Jane Brown was awarded \$200 from the Alabama Writers' Forum. Second place original poetry winner was Ariana Marie Brown and she was awarded a prize of \$100 from the Alabama Writers' Forum.

Winners in the Alabama Poetry Out Loud National Recitation competition as well as winners in the Alabama Original Poetry Finals were gifted with the book, *Writing Alone and With Others* by Pat Schneider.

For additional information about this event, please contact Diana Green, Arts in Education Program Manager for the Alabama State Council on the Arts: 334-242-5148 or diana.green@arts.alabama.gov or Donna Russell, Executive Director, Alabama Arts Alliance, 334-269-1435 or drussell@alartsalliance.org.

