

Rules and Guidelines for Youth Poetry Contest

The WCPA Curt Curtin Youth Poetry Award – Spring 2026

The Curt Curtin Youth Poetry Award seeks to incentivize, recognize, and celebrate the diverse voices of young poets within the City of Worcester. For its inaugural run, the award is open to 7th and 8th graders who attend Worcester Public or charter schools, or are homeschooled in the City of Worcester.

Awards will be presented for:

- 1st Place: \$75 and publication in *Three Decker*
- 2nd Place: \$50
- 3rd Place: \$25
- Honorable Mentions (2): Certificate of Recognition

All winners will be announced on Worcester County Poetry Association social media and website.

Who is Eligible:

To enter the Curt Curtin Youth Poetry award, you must be a 7th or 8th grader who attends Worcester Public or charter schools, or is homeschooled in the City of Worcester.

Timeline and Judging:

Submissions will be accepted starting March 1, 2026 through April 15, 2026. Winners will be announced by May 5, 2026. A reading and awards ceremony will be held in late May/early June of 2026.

The Curt Curtin committee will offer three constructive workshops to receive feedback and revise poems. Final dates and times to be announced.

Contest Guidelines:

There is NO ENTRY FEE to participate.

- Each entrant may submit up to THREE (3) poems.
- Poems must be the entrant's original work in English. Poems must not be previously published. We will not be considering any work assisted or generated by AI.
- **Do not put your name on the individual poems.**
- Electronic submissions will be accepted via our Google Form.
- Paper submissions must not be stapled/attached and formatted for 8 1/2" x 11" paper. Include a cover sheet with your name, grade, school and email address and the title of each poem. Paper submissions can be mailed to: Curt Curtin Youth Poetry Award, PO Box 804, Worcester, MA 01613
- Submissions will not be returned.

About Curt Curtin:

Curt G. Curtin was a respected poet and lifelong educator who published four full-length poetry collections for adults, one for children, and one for young adults. He received several local awards for his poetry, along with grants from the Worcester Arts Council and the Mass Cultural Council. Curtin taught English at Westfield State College (now WSU) for 20 years, following several years teaching younger students.

The Curt Curtin Youth Poetry Award is made possible by an endowment made in his memory to the WCPA from Dee O'Connor, Curt's loving wife.

About WCPA:

A half-century ago, [the Worcester County Poetry Association](#) (WCPA) was founded in 1971 by Dr. Samuel Bachrach and Professor Michael True and incorporated as a nonprofit organization in 1972. With over fifty years of service to poetry, it remains one of the longest-running non-profit poetry organizations in the United States.

The mission of the Worcester County Poetry Association is to:

- Celebrate the rich literary history and creative energy of Central Massachusetts through public readings, workshops, festivals, scholarly conferences, and other programs.
- Publish the literary journals [The Worcester Review](#) & [Three Decker](#)
- Collaborate with libraries, bookstores, colleges and universities, museums, churches, schools, community centers, businesses, and cultural organizations to promote poetry events.

- Fiscally sponsors Worcester Writers' Collective in its mission to provide Worcester residents with the creative space, freedom, and opportunity to explore the written arts through strong community and robust, accessible programming.