



HIGH SCHOOL ORATION CONTEST

JUDGING SHEET

Oration Rules:

- The contestant must be a high school student in grades 9-12 or equivalent.
- The oration must be the original work of the participant.
- The oration must be between five and six minutes in length.
- The oration must be delivered from memory and without use of notes, props, or visual aids.
- The subject of the oration shall be an event or personality from 1775–1783, or a document from 1765–1783, pertaining to the Revolutionary War era.
- The oration must demonstrate how the chosen topic relates to America today.
- The oration should demonstrate research, analysis, and effective presentation.
- The oration will be judged based upon its composition, delivery, significance, historical accuracy, and relevance.
- The oration must make a clear reference to America's 250th anniversary.
- Participants may only enter the contest one time per competition year.

Judges Scoring Sheet:

<i>Points</i>		<i>Speaker (by Number)</i>									
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Composition	15 pts										
Delivery	40 pts										
Significance	15 pts										
History	30 pts										
General Excellence*											
Penalty Points**											
Total Points											

First Place No.: _____ **Points** _____

Second Place No.: _____ **Points** _____

Third Place No.: _____ **Points** _____

***General Excellence:** General Excellence is the basis for determining a winner only in the event of a tie. Up to 10 points may be awarded as a measure of how impressive and convincing the oration was.

****Penalty Points:** Judges may deduct points for infractions to the published rules (i.e., duration is over/under time, prompting was required, and/or improper use of a prop). Judges shall confer during judging and assign penalty points commensurate with the infraction(s).

Judging Criteria:

COMPOSITION: (15 points maximum)

Delivery relates to the manner in which the speaker communicates, and composition relates to the substance and structure of the oration. A skillful orator with weak arguments and poor organization is unlikely to persuade an audience regardless of how well it is delivered.

Organization. The speaker should clearly present the thesis early in the oration, providing a framework for the audience to follow. The body of the speech should develop the thesis through a logical progression of supporting evidence, such as historical examples, quotations, rhetorical questions, and reasoned analysis. Each point should build upon the previous one, leading the audience to a well-supported conclusion. The conclusion should reinforce the thesis by demonstrating how the evidence and arguments have established it. Material that does not contribute to the development of the thesis may distract the audience and weaken the overall effectiveness of the oration.

Vocabulary, Syntax and Grammar. Effective orators use carefully chosen words and clear sentence structure to communicate their message precisely and create the desired impact on the audience. Proper grammar and appropriate language enhance the clarity, credibility, and effectiveness of the presentation.

Logic. Once the speaker establishes the thesis, the entire speech should be designed to support and prove that thesis. Examples and arguments should logically support the thesis and build toward the conclusion. Arguments or evidence that do not logically support the thesis may weaken the overall argument. The ultimate determination of the oration's logic should be made after hearing the entire speech and considering whether, independent of the delivery, the arguments and evidence clearly supported and established the thesis.

DELIVERY: (40 points maximum)

Effective vocal delivery enhances the audience's understanding of the message through appropriate volume, pace, cadence, emphasis, and clear articulation.

Voice. Does the speaker pronounce words clearly and enunciate effectively? The speaker's voice should be well modulated, avoiding a consistently monotone delivery. Pace, cadence, and emphasis should be varied to maintain audience interest and reinforce the message. A speaker who consistently speaks too rapidly or too softly to be understood should not be rated as highly as one who communicates clearly. Effective speakers use volume, emphasis, and rhythm purposefully to enhance their presentation.

Body Movement and Gestures. Body movement and gestures should enhance the speaker's message rather than distract from it. Purposeful movement may be used to emphasize a point or transition between ideas, while excessive pacing or unnecessary movement may diminish the effectiveness of the presentation. Gestures should appear natural, intentional, and appropriate to the message. Mechanical, awkward, or repetitive gestures can distract the audience from the speaker's words. Effective gestures reinforce key points and should be used to support the oration, not simply for the sake of movement.

Appearance. A speaker's appearance contributes to the audience's and judges' first impression. Appropriate professional attire and grooming are recommended and should enhance, rather than distract from, the presentation.

Significance: (15 points maximum)

The purpose of the SAR Historical Oration Contest is to encourage students to demonstrate the continuing relevance of the American Revolution to our nation and its citizens. A successful oration should do more than recount historical facts; it should explain why the chosen event, individual, or document remains significant today. The speaker should establish a meaningful connection between the Revolutionary era and contemporary America by illustrating how the principles, challenges, or lessons of the founding continue to influence our nation. Judges should evaluate the effectiveness and thoughtfulness of that connection rather than the particular viewpoint expressed.

History: (30 maximum points)

The Sons of the American Revolution is dedicated to studying, preserving, and promoting the history of the American Revolution and the founding of the United States. The oration should focus on some aspect of the American Revolution or the founding of our nation. Historical facts, quotations, and interpretations should be accurate and presented in appropriate context. A passing reference to the Revolutionary era as a pretext for devoting most of the speech to another subject should be reflected in the score for this category.

Contest Clarifications and Judging Guidelines:

The following clarifications are provided to promote consistency in the administration, judging, and interpretation of the SAR High School Oration Contest rules.

- Contestants may include a title for their oration; however, the title is not included in the official time limit.
- Contestants are not penalized for concluding their oration with the phrase "thank you."
- Once the timer indicates that the six-minute time limit has elapsed, the contestant may complete the sentence currently being delivered without penalty. The sentence should be of reasonable length, and the determination of whether the extension is excessive shall be at the discretion of the judges.
- Quotations may be used to emphasize or support the contestant's thesis. Excessive reliance on quotations, particularly when they replace the contestant's own analysis or argument, may affect scoring in the Composition category at the discretion of the judges.
- For purposes of the SAR High School Oration Contest, the Revolutionary War era is defined as follows: events and personalities are considered within the period of 1775–1783, while relevant documents may include those from 1765–1783, beginning with the Stamp Act and including documents that contributed to the movement toward the American Revolution.