

The Joseph S. Rumbaugh Historical Oration Contest

The National Society of the Sons of the American Revolution invites all high school students (9th through 12th grades) interested in the American Revolution to participate in the Joseph S. Rumbaugh Historical Oration Contest. The contest is open to all students attending public, parochial, private or home school students in that same grade range. The preliminary rounds of the contest begin at the local level, students may potentially advance to the state or national levels where scholarships and cash prizes are awarded.

The oration must be an original composition, of not less than five minutes, or more than six minutes. The oration must be given from memory and without the use of notes or any kind of props. The subject of the oration shall deal with an event, a personality, or a document, pertaining to the Revolutionary War, showing the relationship it bears to America today. Evidence of historical research and creative presentation are also important. The oration will be judged based upon its composition, delivery, significance, and historical accuracy and relevance.

For 45 years, the National SAR Oration Contest was named the Douglass G. High Oration Contest after the Ohio Society compatriot who developed the contest. In 1993, the name of the contest was changed, in perpetuity to honor a major benefactor, Joseph S. Rumbaugh.

The Contest

The contest is conducted in a room with seating arranged in a theater-style format. Access to the room is limited by doorkeepers. The master of ceremonies welcomes the audience and the contestants. He then explains the contest rules. Orations must be five to six minutes in length. The timekeeper will raise a paddle at five minutes. The timekeeper will stand at six minutes. If the timekeeper stands at six minutes the contestant may finish the current sentence without penalty. Orations that are short or over the five to six minute limit will receive a penalty from the judges. Only the assigned prompter may prompt the contestant. The contestant requests a prompt by saying "prompt." Prompts will also receive a penalty from the judges. All cell phones are to be

silenced. The audience is to remain silent throughout the competition. No applause may be offered until all orations are completed and the master of ceremonies indicates that applause is appropriate. The master of ceremonies will only refer to the contestants as contestant #1, #2, #3, #4 and so forth.

The master of ceremonies will offer three-minute historical vignettes between each of the orations to permit the judges time to mark their scoring cards. The judges will be incognito and placed randomly throughout the room. Once an oration session is complete, the head judge will receive the prompter's appended oration copies and the timekeeper's notes. The judges will then leave the room to deliberate. While the judges are deliberating, the master of ceremonies will offer an extended historical vignette or other relevant information. Once the judges have reached a decision, they will present their results to the contest chairman. The contest chairman will then introduce the contestants, announce the results, and present the awards.



Chapter Contests

The contests usually begin at the local SAR chapter level. Then the winner of each local chapter competes at their state society contest. The state society selects a state winner whose entry is then submitted to the national society

oration chairman. The chapters set the dates of the chapter contests, but the chapter contests must be completed by the state society entry deadline that is determined by the state society oration chairman. The chapter contests usually occur in January, February or March.

Chapter Responsibilities

Chapter Cash Awards are determined by the chapter. Expenses of the chapter include:

- The chapter winner's bronze medallion
- Certificates for the 1st place, the 2nd place and 3rd place winners
- Recognition certificates for all other contestants.

The chapter winner's bronze medallion, certificates and presentation folders can all be purchased from the NSSAR Store. See the on-line store for current prices.

State Society Contests

The states set their own dates for the state contests. These usually occur in March, April or May, but must be completed by the national society entry deadline of June 1st in each contest year.

State Society Responsibilities

State Society Cash Awards are determined by the state society. Expenses of the state society include:

- The state winner's silver medallion
- Certificates for the 1st place, the 2nd place and 3rd place winners
- Recognition certificates for all other contestants.
- The state society usually covers the state winner's travel and accommodations at the National SAR Contest conducted during the NSSAR Congress

The state winner's silver medallion, certificates and presentation folders can all be purchased from the NSSAR Store. See the on-line store for current prices.

State societies must complete their state contests in advance of the National Society entry submission date. The submission package must be received by National SAR Chairman by June 1st of each contest year. The submission package will include a copy of the oration, the entry forms, publicity release form and a photograph of the state winner.

National Society Contest

Contestants arrive the afternoon of the day before the National Society Contest. There is a welcoming

reception in the early evening. Following the reception, each contestant will have a brief opportunity to experience the view from the oration stage during a sound check. On the contest day, there is a mandatory breakfast where the contestants draw their order for the preliminary competition. The preliminaries follow directly, and conclude with the finalists being announced by their assigned numbers. Lots are then drawn for the presentation order for the final competition later that evening.

The NSSAR offers scholarships or cash awards for the top winners:

- The National First Place Winner receives \$6,000
- The 2nd Place Runner-up receives \$4,000
- The 3rd Place Runner-up receives \$2,000.
- Each also receives an Olympic-sized medal.
- All other finalists (4th through 6th Place runners-up) are awarded \$500 cash.
- All other national contestants receive \$200 cash.

The 1st Place national winner presents their winning oration the following day at the National SAR Youth Awards Luncheon.

A complete set of rules, along with the application for both the applicant and the sponsoring SAR members, can be found on the National SAR website at www.sar.org

We hope that you and the youth in your chapter and state will find the Joseph S. Rumbaugh Historical Oration Contest a rewarding, meaningful and educational experience.



For further information and contest planning assistance contact:
Mr. John H. "Jack" Bredenfoerder
National SAR Joseph S. Rumbaugh
Historical Oration Chairman
8751 Haverhill Lane
Cincinnati, Ohio 45236
jack.b@fuse.net