

The Joseph S. Rumbaugh Historical Oration Contest

The National Society of the Sons of the American Revolution invites all high school students interested in the American Revolution to participate in the Joseph S. Rumbaugh Historical Oration Contest.

The contest is open to all students attending 9th through 12th grades in public, parochial or private schools or home-school students in that same grade range. The preliminary rounds of the contest begin at the local level; students have the opportunity to advance to the state or national levels where scholarships and cash prizes are awarded.

Participants must write an original oration of not less than five minutes, or more than six minutes. The oration must be delivered 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, 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 arranged in theater-style. 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 and if necessary 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.

Due to health or travel restrictions, state and local contests may opt for competitions to be conducted virtually.



Chapter Contests

The contests usually begin at the local SAR chapter level. The winner of each contest advances to compete at their state society contest. The state society selects a winner. That oration is then submitted to the National Society Oration Chairman.

The chapter contests usually occur in January, February or March. The chapters choose the date of their competition, but all must be completed in advance of the state society entry deadline. The state society oration chairman sets that deadline.

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.

Chapter bronze medallions, certificates and presentation folders may 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 and April. The winner's entry packet and contestant video must be submitted to the National Society Oration Chairman by **May 15th** of 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.
- If the state's winner is selected as a National Finalist, the state society will cover the cost of travel and hotel for the winner and a chaperone.

State silver medallions, certificates and presentation folders may 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 and video must be received by National SAR Oration Chairman by **May 15th** of each contest year. The submission package will include a video, printed copy of the oration, the entry forms, signed publicity release form and a photograph of the state winner. By June 1st, six National Finalists will be determined by the National Judges based on the video submissions. The National SAR Chairman will announce the results via email soon thereafter.

National Society Contest

The six National Finalists arrive the day prior to the National Society Contest. A welcoming reception is held early that evening. Contest day begins with a mandatory breakfast where the contestants draw their competition order. Following the breakfast, each finalist will have a brief opportunity to experience the view from the oration stage during a sound check. The contestants will then have time on their own to explore the Congress city prior to the competition early 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 state winners receive \$200 cash.

The National First Place 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:
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