



The English-Speaking Union  
National Shakespeare Competition  
2017 JUDGING ADVICE FOR STUDENTS

Since the goal of The English-Speaking Union National Shakespeare Competition is to encourage you (the student) to develop a deeper relationship with Shakespeare and his works, our best advice comes from the man himself: “Suit the action to the word, the word to the action” (*Hamlet* 3.2).

The Competition judges are professionals with expertise in Shakespeare studies, production or education. Typical members of a judging panel include educators, actors, directors and scholars. They look for performances that bring Shakespeare’s words to life with clear understanding, compelling truth and individual point-of-view. For examples, view the [2016 national finalists’ performances on YouTube](#).

Students are judged on two main categories of evaluation for each piece presented:

### **UNDERSTANDING**

- A thorough understanding of the text, including language, character and plot (monologue) and literary/poetic elements (sonnet).

Within this category are three subcategories: Meaning, Language & Character (monologue only).

### **COMMUNICATION & EXPRESSION**

- An effective delivery of the interpretation.
- An unaffected, artistic range that includes effective use of the body and voice and demonstrates an individual point-of-view.

Within this category are three subcategories: Vocal, Physical & Ownership.

**TIP:** Review the accompanying *Monologue Scoring Rubric* and *Sonnet Scoring Rubric* (school winner only)

### **REMEMBER:**

- You must select, memorize and present a monologue from one of Shakespeare’s plays.
- Your monologue must not be more than twenty lines according to the Folger Shakespeare Library editions of the plays (Simon & Schuster, 2003-2013). Longer selections result in your disqualification. Note: Editing of the text is allowed (just make sure your cuts make sense).
- In addition to your monologue, you must select, memorize and present one of Shakespeare’s sonnets (only applies to the ESU Branch competition and beyond). Note: No editing of sonnet is allowed (i.e. you must present the complete sonnet).
- You *cannot* wear costumes or use props of any kind (including chairs, hair and hair clips, articles of clothing and jewelry).
- You are expected to memorize your piece(s). If necessary, however, prompting is allowed. If you require prompting, you must say “Line.” NOTE: It is better to ask for a prompt than to drop lines in your presentation (especially the sonnet).
- Your order of performance should be determined by lot.
- You should introduce yourself *only* by name.
- You should identify your selection(s) before you begin your presentation. (You may perform your pieces in whatever order you prefer.)
- You should speak naturally in your own voice (rather than affect a British accent).

For complete Competition Rules & Eligibility Guidelines, visit the *Rules & Eligibility* section online.