Sons of the American Revolution

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 is to be five to six minutes in length and should be based on a compelling Revolutionary War subject that is directly related to current national issues and patriotism. 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.

The Contest

The National 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 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. 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 Philadelphia Continental Chapter will hold its contest in April, and ask that applications be submitted by March 31, 2023.

State Society Contests

The Pennsylvania Society contest will take place on Saturday, May 6 at its Annual Meeting Banquet Dinner which begins at 7:00 that evening.

National Society Contest

The national contest occurs at the SAR National Congress which takes place in Orlando, FL from July 13-20, 2023. Contestants arrive the afternoon of Saturday, July 15, 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, Sunday, July 16, 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 $8,000
* The 2nd Place Runner-up receives $5,000
* The 3rd Place Runner-up receives $3,000.
* 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 <https://www.sar.org/joseph-s-rumbaugh-historical-oration-contest>.

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For further information and assistance for applicants in the Philadelphia area, please contact:

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