

POETRY IN MY HEART



Poetry recitation
contest 2026.
Guidelines for
teachers

By Diana Bolgare

Riga, Latvia
2026

Contest at a glance

01 WHAT

Poetry In My Heart contest is an all-Latvian English poetry recitation contest for 10-18 year old students held annually from October to November, with finals at the end of November.

02 WHY

- Poems are short
- A dynamic way to introduce students to poetry
- Easy to implement
- Inspires learning

03 WHEN

ONLINE PHASE

September–30 October 2025

OFFLINE FINALS

29 November 2026

Theatre Museum

Ed. Smilģa iela 37, Riga, Latvia

How to take part

Teachers may offer participation as optional extra-credit work.

01 CHOOSE

Explore poems from:

[Poetry Out Loud](#)

[Poetry By Heart](#)

[Poets.org](#)

Or another suitable source

02 PREPARE

**1 Discuss the chosen poem
(25 lines or fewer)**

**2 Help the student
memorize it**

**3 Record the performance
(up to 2 minutes)**

03 SUBMIT & ADVANCE

[Send the recording via Google Form](#)
by 30 October 2025

- A parent or guardian submits the form.
- Online winners advance to the offline finals.
- The final winner receives a valuable prize; details will be confirmed.

Prepare the poem in three layers

Move from understanding the text to finding the voice, then shaping the performance.

01 UNDERSTAND

- Summarize the poem
- Identify literary devices
- Describe the mood
- Explain why and uncover the hidden message
- Note the title, author, word count, illustration and full poem

02 VOICE

- Relaxation and breathing
- Resonance and voice projection
- Vocal warm-ups

03 PERFORM

- Intonation, stress, rhythm and pauses
- Body language and gestures
- Facial expressions

Reference: Lesson Plan 29, “Literature in a Foreign Language Class” — Erasmus+ cooperation project.

Worked example: “First Love”

LEVEL 1 IN PRACTICE

A one-page analysis brings together:

- Summary
- Literary devices
- Mood
- Why the poem matters

Use this structure as a model for students.



"First Love"

by John Clare

You & Me

I ne'er was struck before that hour
With love so sudden and so sweet,
Her face it bloomed like a sweet flower
And stole my heart away complete.
My face turned pale as deadly pale,
My legs refused to walk away,
And when she looked, what could I ail?
My life and all seemed turned to clay.

And then my blood rushed to my face
And took my eyesight quite away,
The trees and bushes round the place
Seemed midnight at noonday,
I could not see a single thing,
Words from my eyes did start –
They spoke as chords do from the string,
And blood burnt round my heart.

Are flowers the winter's choice?
Is love's bed always snow?
She seemed to hear my silent voice,
Not love's appeals to know,
I never saw so sweet a face
As that I stood before.
My heart has left its dwelling-place
And can return no more.

Stanzas: 3
Words: 154
Lines: 24



Summary:

- True feelings
- Falling in love
- How much we care about people we love the most
- Pleasure in heart

Literary devices:

- Metaphor
- Simile
- Personification

Mood

- Romantic
- Joy and happiness
- Explaining strong feelings
- Dreaming
- Blushing and shy

Why?

I chose this poem because it explains how a person who truly fell in love feels.





198 poems over two years reveal clear favourites

MOST POPULAR AUTHORS

Robert Frost	11	Edgar Albert Guest	4
William Wordsworth	10	Christina Rossetti	3
Kenn Nesbitt	8	Elsa Gidlow	3
Maya Angelou	7	Emily Dickinson	3
A. A. Milne	6	Gordon Snell	3
Edgar Allan Poe	6	Judith Viorst	3
Shel Silverstein	6	Richard Siken	3
William Shakespeare	6	Sara Teasdale	3
Emily Brontë	4	Walt Whitman	3
Paul Laurence Dunbar	4	Wilfred Owen	3
Rudyard Kipling	4	William Ernest Henley	3

198 poems selected
over two years

MOST REPEATED POEMS

I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud	9
William Wordsworth	
Still I Rise	6
Maya Angelou	
The Road Not Taken	5
Robert Frost	
Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening	5
Robert Frost	
If—	4
Rudyard Kipling	
A Dream Within a Dream	4
Edgar Allan Poe	
Sick	3
Shel Silverstein	
Meanwhile	3
Richard Siken	
Invictus	3
William Ernest Henley	
I Need to Do My Homework	3
Kenn Nesbitt	

Counts reflect the supplied two-year selection data.

What happens at the offline finals

29 November 2026 · 12:00–14:00 · Riga

A focused two-hour programme moves from performance to creativity and recognition.

01 RECITE

A new poem

Students begin with a fresh recitation.

02 CREATE

Creative writing

Students aged 15–18 complete a writing task.

03 PRESENT

Share the work

Students present their creative writing.

04 SELECT

Choose the winner

Judges review the work and name the winner.

The sequence gives every finalist a clear path from recitation to a final decision.

Judging combines performance and accuracy

Two judges score the performance; an accuracy judge adds a separate score for precise recitation.

01 PERFORMANCE

Score five dimensions
Maximum: 33 points

02 ACCURACY

Deduct for inaccuracies
Maximum: 8 points

03 FINAL SCORE

Maximum: 41 points

Recite from memory.
No props or costumes.

PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

	Weak	Below Average	Average	Good	Excellent	Outstanding
Physical Presence	1	2	3	4	5	6
Voice and Articulation	1	2	3	4	5	6
Interpretation	1	2	3	4	5	6
Evidence of Understanding	1	2	3	4	5	6
Overall Performance	1	2	3	5	7	9

TOTAL: _____ (maximum of 33 points)

ACCURACY JUDGE'S SCORE: _____ (maximum of 8 points)

FINAL SCORE: _____ (MAXIMUM OF 41 POINTS)

ACCURACY SCORE

ACCURACY SCORE SHEET

NAME OF STUDENT: _____

TITLE OF POEM: _____

Maximum Score 8 points

Inaccuracy Deduction (subtract) - _____ points

Prompt Deduction (subtract) - _____ points

FINAL ACCURACY SCORE _____ points*

*Lowest possible score is 1 point

Minor inaccuracies, resulting in a 1 point deduction per occurrence, include:

- Confusing a pronoun ("he" instead of "she")
- Confusing an article ("a" instead of "the")
- Pluralizing a word or vice versa ("horses" instead of "horse")
- Replacing a word with a similar word ("jump" instead of "leap")
- Omitting the poem title
- Omitting the author
- Omitting the translator
- Confusing the order of words ("hops and skips" instead of "skips and hops")
- Skipping a word
- Repeating a word
- Adding a word

Major inaccuracies, resulting in larger deductions per occurrence, include:

- One line out of order: -2 points
- Repeating a line: -2 points
- Omitting an epigraph: -2 points
- Including a footnote: -2 points
- Skipping one line/skipping three or more words in the same line: -3 points
- Reversing two stanzas: -5 points
- Skipping one stanza: -6 points

Use of prompter: Each time a student uses the prompter, 3 points will be deducted from the final accuracy score.

The inclusion or omission of stanza numbers or dedications should not affect scoring.

Likewise, the addition of a student introducing themselves by stating their name, state, and/or school at the beginning of a recitation, or the inclusion of a "thank you" at the end of the recitation, while discouraged, should not affect the accuracy score.

ACCURACY JUDGE: Follow along with the text of the poem as the competitor recites. Mark the text each time there is an error in accuracy (mispronunciations are not accuracy errors). You should mark all minor inaccuracies the same (since each is worth a 1 point deduction), and flag the bigger mistakes differently. Be consistent. After the recitation, use the guidance below to assign a point deduction to each mistake. To get the final accuracy score, count up the point deductions, and subtract them from the maximum score of 8 points. Remember that the accuracy score is added to the contest evaluation sheet of each judge.

Example: If the competitor repeats a word (-1 point), confuses an article (-1 point), and skips one line (-3 points), that would be 5 points subtracted from the maximum score of 8. The final accuracy score would be 3 points.

What the judges recommend

NADEZHDA PIKULEVA

Think through gestures and glances from the start.

Choose a poem that suits the student's nature, so the student and poem feel comfortable, natural and clear together.

Treat the competition as a game and an experience.
Ask: "What can I do differently? How can I make this easy?"

ILONA BUCKMASTER

Learn the poem well in advance.

Perform it for your class or another listener. Practice reduces public-speaking stress and creates more space for sincerity and expression.

Do not feel like a person being evaluated. Feel like a person who came to share a reading.

The shared message: prepare early, stay natural and focus on communicating the poem.

Record a clear, confident performance

Keep the setup simple so attention stays on the student and the poem.

01 SET UP THE SHOT

- Use a vertical Instagram format.
- Film on a phone.
- Choose an aesthetic or plain background.

02 DELIVER THE POEM

Memorization: Students must recite their poems from memory.

Props: Students may not use props or wear costumes during their recitations.

Framing: Frame the student from the waist up or shoulders up.

Before submitting, check that the voice is clear and the student remains fully in frame.

Finalists (age 15-18) complete blackout poetry plus one surprise format

Four poetry formats · blackout poetry is obligatory; one other format is revealed on the spot.

01	02	03	04
“I AM” POEM	DIAMOND POEM	BLACKOUT POETRY	ACRONYM
Build a voice through repetition.	Shape one idea in seven lines.	Find a new text inside an old page.	Build a portrait or idea through initials.

Prepare all four—the surprise format is selected from the other three.

Two quick prompts help students begin

Both activities offer a simple structure without deciding the final meaning for the writer.

01 POETRY FRAME

Pattern

Noun + verb + adverb

Preposition + pronoun

Pronoun ... ?!

Example: Wizards are here. Among us. You?

02 NAME ACRONYM

Use each letter of a name to begin a describing word.

D Distinguished

A Aspiring

V Venturesome

I Interesting

D Debonair

Use these as warm-ups before moving to longer forms.

The “I am” poem builds a voice through repetition

Students repeat the opening phrase while changing the image, action and comparison.

PROMPT SEQUENCE

I am a(n) ...

I am a(n) _____ .
name of plant, animal or object

I ... (verb + object)

I _____ .
verb *object(s)*

... as a ... (comparison)

_____ as a(n) _____ .
texture, size, color or other quality *similar plant, animal or object*

I can ... like no other

I can _____ like no other.
special talent, trait or power

I am a(n) ...

I am a(n) _____ .
name of plant, animal or object

A diamond poem compresses one idea into seven lines

The widening and narrowing structure helps students move from a subject to a related ending.

THE PATTERN

NOUN

ADJECTIVE · ADJECTIVE

GERUND · GERUND · GERUND

A SHORT PHRASE LINKS THE IDEAS

GERUND · GERUND · GERUND

ADJECTIVE · ADJECTIVE

SYNONYM

The structure creates discipline without limiting the topic.

Three diamond poems show how structure changes tone

Each example follows the same form but arrives at a different emotional result.

Quiet, difficult

Making-to-believe

Starting and ending

But which never ends

A culture, not a history

A chance

[Watch example](#)

Creative, passionate

Thinking, fighting, surviving

The creation of God

Mortal

[Watch example](#)

Slow, hurtful

Crushing, shattering, scaring

Never again

Hurt

[Watch example](#)

Blackout poetry creates meaning by subtraction

Students discover a new poem by selecting a few words and obscuring the rest.

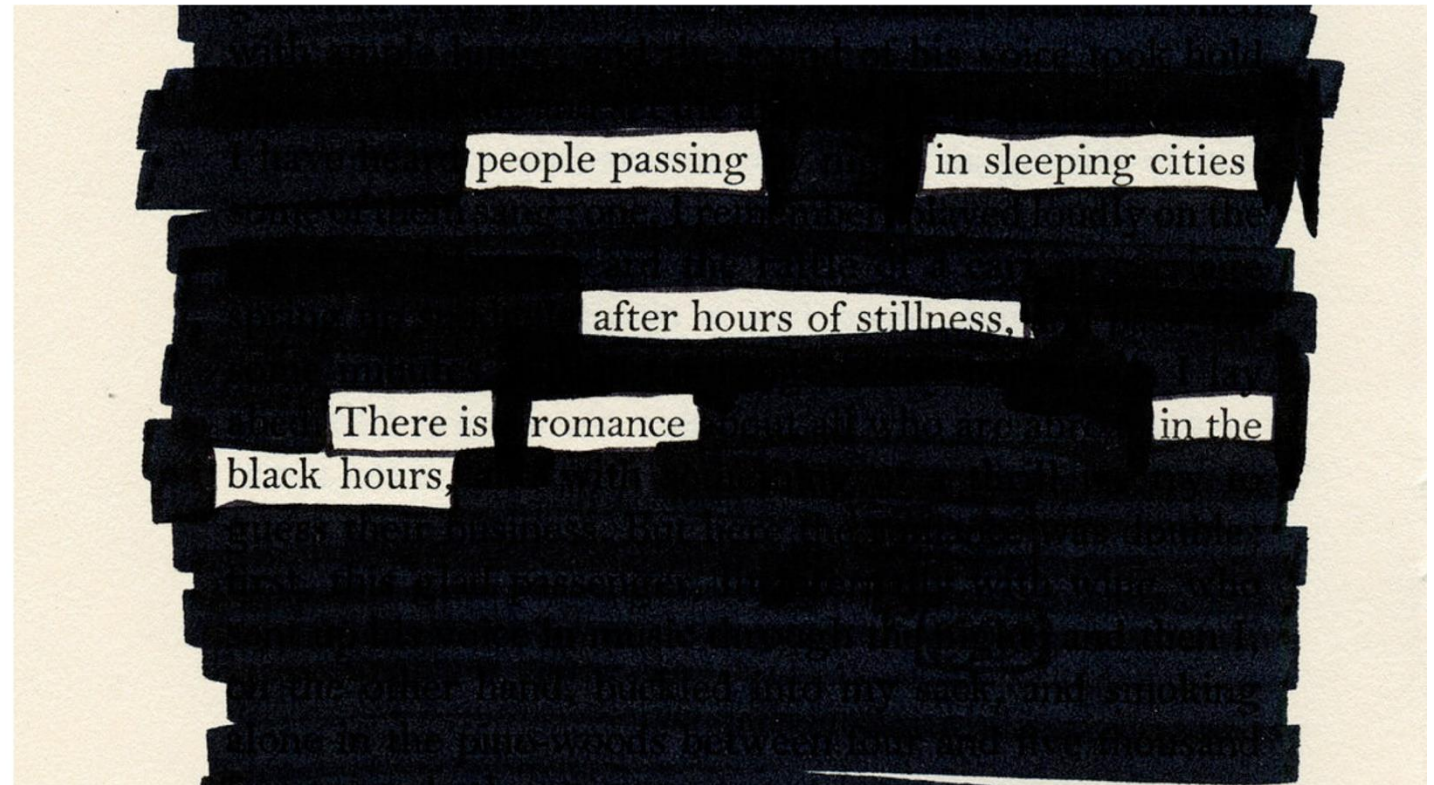
THREE MOVES

- 1 Scan the page for words that connect
- 2 Keep only the words the poem needs
- 3 Black out everything else

Read the remaining words in their new order.

WHAT IS BLACKOUT POETRY? EXAMPLES AND INSPIRATION

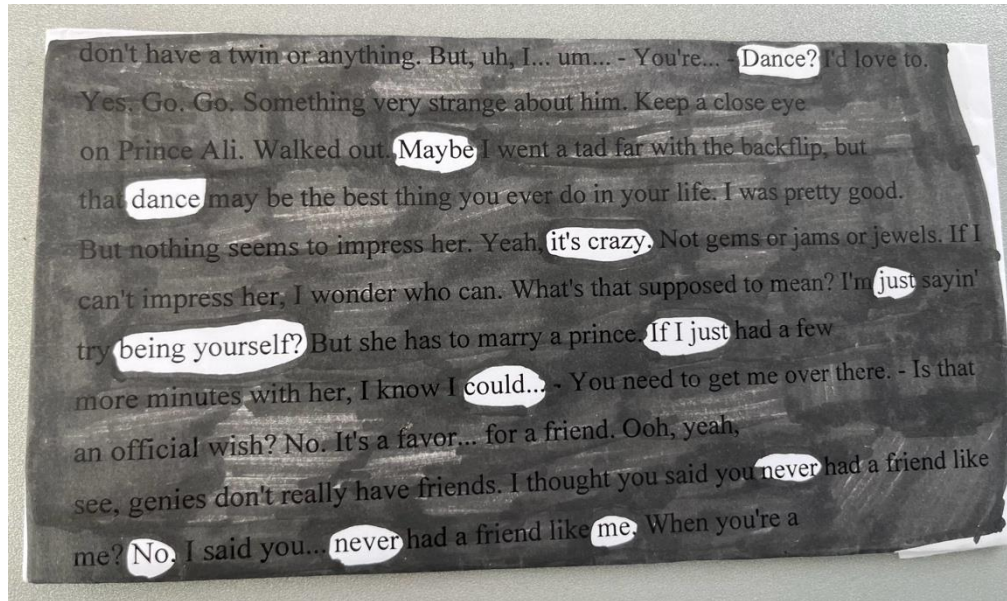
Sean Glatch | October 2, 2023 | [18 Comments](#)



Two student examples show how few words can carry a story

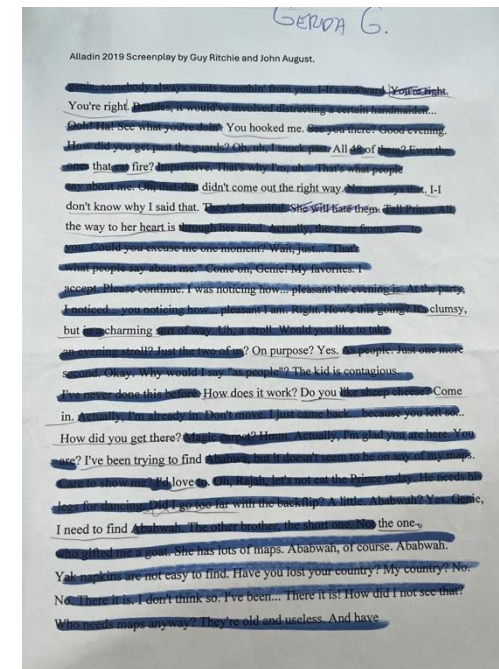
Examples from Poetry in My Heart 2024 · compare word choice, rhythm and visual treatment.

01 EXAMPLE



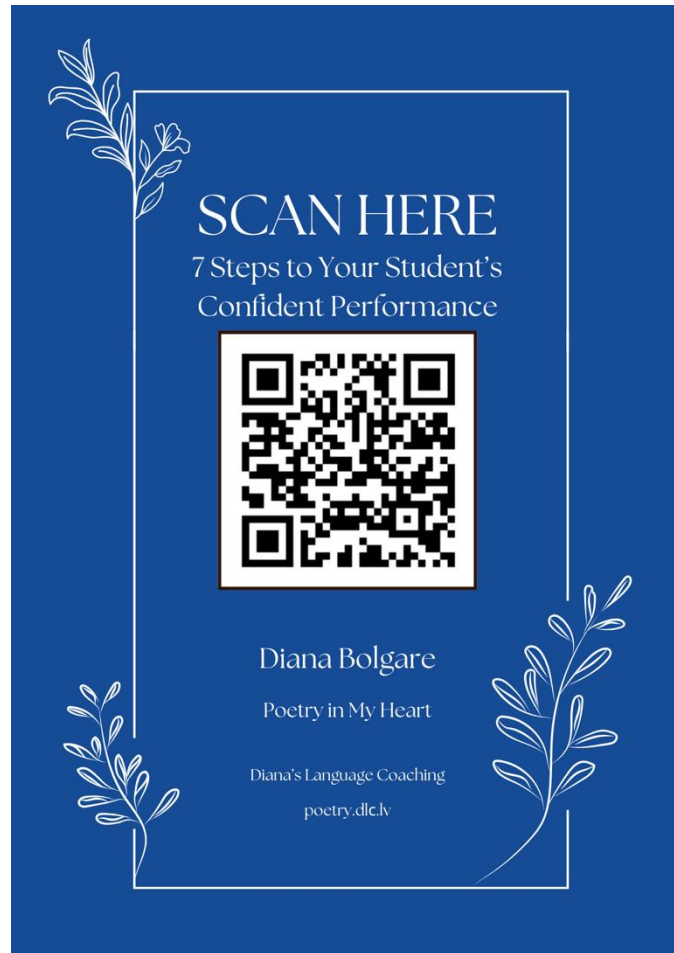
[Watch example](#)

02 EXAMPLE



[Watch example](#)

Stay connected with Poetry in My Heart



CONTACT

Diana Bolgare

diana@dlc.lv

+371 223 00743 · SMS

CONTEST 2026

Poetry in My Heart

poetry.dlc.lv

Scan the guide for seven steps to a confident performance.