# Mississippi Poetry Society
# Contest Categories & Guidelines

## Deadline for Submissions – January 10, 2027

**Eligibility** - Poems must be original and unpublished and should not have won or placed in any poetry contest, other than honorable mention. A poet may not enter the same poem in more than one category and may not enter more than one poem in a single category. Also please do not submit the same poems to the MPS contest and other contests (such as NFSPS contests) at the same time. Note that Categories 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 31 are open to MPS members only. Take care that all entries meet the form requirements, line limit, and any other instructions specified for the category. Spaces between lines do not count as numbered lines.

**Entry Fees –** The entry fee is $1 per category for MPS members, with a maximum of $10 to enter all categories. For non-members, the fee is $3 per category, with a maximum of $30 to enter all categories. For online submissions, there is a small processing fee (please see below)

**Submission Process** – Poems and entrance fees may be submitted either through the mail or online. Details for each option are given below.

### Online Submission

To submit entries and pay submission fees online, compile your entries into a single electronic document (such as a MS Word doc – do not send as PDFs). Then visit the MPS website contest tab (link below), and complete the steps enumerated below.

https://www.misspoetry.net/contests.html

1. Enter your information into the form.
2. Click the ***Upload*** button to upload your document.
3. Hit the ***Submit*** button.
4. After submitting your poems, scroll to the bottom of the page, where you will find the Payment Button. Click that and a dialog box will open. Enter the correct fee amount for the number of categories you are submitting to and your membership status (Member or Non-Member). **Check the little box to add in the cost of processing.** Then click the yellow ***Donate with Paypal*** button or the **Donate with Debit or Credit Card** button.

Additional guidelines for online submissions:

*Please submit a single document containing all of your poems*. Do not submit separate documents.

*File format*: Poems may be submitted in any easily editable file format such as MS Word, Libre Writer, or a simple text document (such as that produced by Notepad**).** Please ***do not submit pdf or image files*** (e.g. png, jpg, etc.), as these are more difficult to edit for the journal.

*What to include in your document*: The document should include one copy of each poem, arranged in order of category number, and should indicate which category the poem is being submitted to. You need not include any personal information. All of that information is in the submission form.

**Submission by Mail**

Submit entries on regular 8.5" by 11" paper, produced with a computer printer or typewriter, and submitted in an 8 ½ x 11 or 10 x 13 mailing envelope. Submit two copies of each poem, with the following distinctions:

(1) The first copy must show the poet's name, complete US mailing address, phone number, email address (if available), and "MPS Member" or "Non-member" in the upper right corner. (MPS members include all entrants who have paid dues for the 2026-2027 year, including at-large members.) The category number and category title should appear in the upper left corner.

(2) The second copy must show only the category number and category title in the upper left corner, but no personal information. If a poem runs more than one page, please staple the pages together on each copy. Mail entries and entrance fees to the address below:

Pamela J Hatch
P.O. Box 70
Ellisville, MS 39437

If you submit via USPS, send email to ms.poetry.central@gmail.com and let us know to be on the lookout. If it doesn't show up, we can let you know and try to make other arrangements. Plan at least 10 days for submissions to be delivered.

**Awards** - Certificates and monetary prizes will be presented to winners at the MPS Spring Festival to be held the last weekend in April 2027 (details still being confirmed). Please cash prize checks within 45 days of their awarding. The winning entries and their author's names will be posted on the MPS website, www.misspoetry.net All poems that place first, second or third will be published in the 2027 Mississippi Poetry Journal (a copy of the journal is included with an annual membership.)

**Deadline** - Entries must be **received** by Monday, January 10, 2027. Please note that this date is a "must be received by" date, not a postmark date. No entries arriving after January 10th can be accepted. If you decide to submit via the postal service, please be aware of potential delays, and allow plenty of time for transit. Should you have any questions or issues, don't hesitate to contact us via email at ms.poetry.central@gmail.com

**We are thrilled you are entering Mississippi Poetry Society's 2027 Spring Contest! We hope you enjoy yourself! We all look forward to some great contest poetry!**

## *Submit only unpublished poems (very important!)*

As stated above, poems submitted to the contest should be unpublished. By this we mean that the poem should not be accessible anywhere online (including Facebook) or in print. This rule applies to everyone, and to be fair we must enforce it. If a previously published submission is discovered during judging, the person who submitted the entry will be notified that his/her poem has been disqualified. If a previously published poem is recognized after the journal is published, the poet who was honored for the published poem will be asked to return the certificate and/or prize check. The affected honors will then be given to those who should have received them, and amends will be made in the next journal. This would be no fun for anyone and a lot of work for the contest coordinators. So, please take care that you submit only unpublished poems.

## Thank you to all sponsors of the contest categories.

# Mississippi Poetry Society
# Categories for Spring 2027 Contest

**BEST OF THE FEST** – The first-place winner of each category will be entered into the Best of Fest competition. These poems will be sent to a panel of independent judges whose choices will be combined to select an overall winner. The decision will be final. A Best of Fest prize of $300 has been contributed by Mrs. Marilyn Denington in memory of her husband Michael R. (Mick) Denington.

**Category 1: Mississippi Poetry Society Award.** ***(Open to MPS Members only).*** Sponsored by Mississippi Poetry Society. Judged by Lara Taylor. Form: Open. Theme: Beautiful Mississippi. Line Limit: 100. Prizes: 1st $100, 2nd $50, 3rd $25. Honorable mentions: as merited.

**Category 2: MPS North Branch Award** ***(Open to MPS Members only).*** Sponsored by MPS North Branch. Judged by Janice Canerdy. Form: Sonnet (must state type). Theme: Open. Line Limit: 14. Prizes: 1st $50, 2nd $30, 3rd $20. Honorable mentions: as merited.

**Category 3: MPS Central Branch Award.** ***(Open to MPS Members only).*** Sponsored by MPS Central Branch. Judged by Pete Massey. Form: Quadrakuul - That's our name for a series of four haikus that together make a single poem. Place your title at the end, as a kind of surprise reveal of the subject matter. Theme: Open. Line Limit: 12. Prizes: 1st $50, 2nd $30, 3rd $20. Honorable mentions: as merited.

**Category 4: MPS South Branch Award. In Memory of Judy Davies.** ***(Open to MPS Members only).*** Sponsored by MPS South Branch. Judged by Rene Penrose. Form: Sonnet (please specify the type of sonnet – English, Italian, etc.) Theme: Open. Line Limit: as required by the form. Prizes: 1st $50, 2nd $30, 3rd $20. Honorable mentions, as merited.

**Category 5: Past President's Award** ***(Open to MPS Members only).*** – Sponsored by Emory Jones, Jeanne Kelly, Brenda Finnegan, Ann Carolyn Cates, Michael Shelton, Linda Owen, Patty Butkovich Janice Canerdy, and Mary Beth Magee. Judged by Ann Carolyn Cates Form: Open. Theme: Seasons (Literal or Metaphorical). Line limit: 40. Prizes: 1st $65, 2nd $45, 3rd $25.Honorable mentions: as merited.

**Category 6: David Schjott Award --** Sponsored by David Schjott. Judged by Vivian Danielle Wyatt. Poetry Form: Free Verse. Theme: Mississippi Waters. Line limit: 40 Prizes: 1st $50, 2nd $30, 3rd $20. Honorable mentions: as merited.

**Category 7: North Star Award – in memory of Leona Viola "Levi" Prisock --** Sponsored by Mary Jane Andol. Judged by Karen Lindstrum. Form: Free Verse. Theme: Storms. Line limit: 40. Prizes: 1st $100, 2nd $75, 3rd $50. Honorable mentions: as merited, up to three.

**Category 8: Mississippi Writers Award** -- Sponsored by Dr. Emory D. Jones. Judged by Robert Goddard. Form: Open. Theme: Writers from Mississippi: poets, dramatists, fiction writers. Line limit: 40. Prizes: 1st $30, 2nd $20, 3rd $10. Five honorable mentions.

**Category 9: Grands Award** -- Sponsored by Dr. Emory D. Jones. Judged by Terry Woosley. Form: Open. Theme: Grandparents or grandchildren. Line limit: 40. Prizes: 1st $30, 2nd $20, 3rd $10. Five honorable mentions.

**Category 10: Ruth F. Richmond Memorial Award –** Sponsored and judged by Dorothy Wiman in memory of Ruth F. Richmond. Form: Rhyming Quatrains. Theme: Fifty, Nifty States. Line limit: 40. Prizes: 1st $30, 2nd $25, 3rd $20.

**Category 11: Biblically Inspired Award –** Sponsored by Reverend and Mrs. Randy Owen. Judged by Linda Owen. Form: Rhythm and rhyme narrative. Theme: Write a poem intended to be read by or to children. Line limit: 40. Prizes: 1st $50, 2nd $25, 3rd $10. Honorable mentions: as merited.

**Category 12: Narrative Poem Award --** Sponsored and judged by Janice Canerdy. Form: Rhyming (must have the same rhyme scheme throughout; specific meter not required; syllables per line 8 to 12). Theme: Open. Line Limit: 40. Prizes: 1st $30, 2nd $20, 3rd $10. Honorable mentions: as merited. Sponsor's note: Please review the term "narrative".

**Category 13: Trips Around the Sun Award --** Sponsored and judged by Pete Massey. Form: Rhyming Quatrains. Theme: Life is a Journey. Line Limit: 40. Prizes: 1st $70, 2nd $35, 3rd $20. Honorable mentions: as merited.

**Category 14: Doctor's Dreams Award --** Sponsored and judged by Philip Levin and Doctor's Dreams Publishing. Poetry Form: Rhyming. Theme: A Birthing Experience. Line limit: None. Prizes: 1st $60, 2nd $40, 3rd $30. Honorable mentions: four for $5 each.

**Category 15: Purrfectly Pleasing Pets –** Sponsored and judged by Patty Butkovich. Form: Open. Theme: Domestic cats (nothing pertaining to animal cruelty) Line limit: 40. Prizes: 1st $30, 2nd $20, 3rd $10. Honorable mentions: as merited.

**Category 16: All Things New Award –** Sponsored and judged by Patsy Twiner. Form: Open. Theme: Transformation – a poem about personal transformation, either in your life or observed in someone else's life. Line limit: 40. Prizes: 1st $60, 2nd $40, 3rd $25. Honorable mentions: as merited.

**Category 17: Life Goes On Award –** Sponsored and judged by Jeanne Kelly. Form: Triolet. Theme: Being a widow or widower. Line limit: 8. Prizes: 1st $25, 2nd $15, 3rd $10. Honorable mentions: as merited.

**Category 18: Dan Olive Memorial Award –** Sponsored and judged by Trudy Olive. Form: Open. Theme: Grandkids. Line limit: 40 (or as appropriate for the chosen form). Prizes: 1st $100, 2nd $75, 3rd $50. Honorable mentions: as merited.

**Category 19: Finnanegans Award – Celebrating Antics in Honor of Finley** – Sponsored and judged by Mary Beth Magee. Forms: Any short form (please identify the form). Some examples of short forms are Fibonacci, American Cinquain, Diamante, Pirouette, and Triolet. Theme: Funny things children do and we treasure. Line Limit: As dictated by the form (see below). Prizes: 1st $75, 2nd $50, 3rd $25. Honorable mentions, as merited. Links for poetry types below:

Fibonnacci: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/articles/68971/1-1-2-3-5-8-fun

American Cinquain: https://ronovanwrites.com/2025/05/29/the-american-style-cinquain-made-easy/ ; https://writers.com/cinquain-poetry#american-cinquain

Diamante: http://www.shadowpoetry.com/resources/wip/diamante.html

Pirouette: https://poetscollectivepoetryforms.wordpress.com/2014/10/25/pirouette/

Triolet: https://poets.org/glossary/triolet

**Category 20: A Journey Made in Secret Award** – Sponsored and judged by Mike Wahl. Form: Free verse. Theme: A Journey Made in Secret. Line Limit: 36. Prizes: 1st $50, 2nd $30, 3rd $20.Honorable mentions: as merited.

**Category 21: J.G.W.J. Memorial Award** – Sponsored and judged by Daniel Pickett (in memory of my Grandparents). Form: Open. Theme: A Family Heirloom. Line Limit: 40. Prizes: 1st $50, 2nd $30, 3rd $20. Honorable mentions: up to 3, as merited.

**Category 22: Primrose Award – In Loving Memory of Barron and Dessie Caulfield** Sponsored and judged by Dorothy Wiman. Form: Prose Poem. Theme: A Founding Father. Line limit: 40 lines. Prizes: 1st $75, 2nd $50, 3rd $35. Honorable mentions: as merited. Check out these websites. Note terms such as: “repetition,” “compression,” and “imagery.” Think paragraphs more than fragmentation.

https://behindthedraft.com/how-to-write-prose-poetry/

https://janisseray.substack.com/p/what-the-poet-laureate-taught-me (see prose poem example)

**Category 23: Ekphrastic Award** – Sponsored by Pacesetter Art Gallery. Judged by Pamela J Hatch. Form: Open. Theme: Write a poem inspired by a work of art (painting, sculpture, music, dance, etc.) Place a note at the end of the poem stating the name of the work of art and the artist that inspired the poem. Line limit: 40. Prizes: 1st $25, 2nd $15, 3rd $10. Honorable mentions as merited. Poets are encouraged to focus on art works/performances by Mississippi artists. In particular, we invite you to visit the website of the Pacesetter Art Gallery in Flowood: https://pacesettergallery.com/ and find something that inspires you! Or, better yet, visit the gallery in person.

**Category 24: When I Grow Up Award –** Sponsored and judged by Vivian Danielle Wyatt. Form: Open. Theme: What did you want to be as a child? You may include how it compares to who and what you are today. Line limit: 40. Prizes: 1st $80, 2nd $50, 3rd $30. Honorable mentions: as merited.

**Category 25: WRITER’S CAMP Award**. – Sponsored and judged by Pamela J. Hatch and WRITER’S CAMP. Form: Double Reverse Nonet (Total of 18 lines - 9 lines of poetry starting with 9 syllables and each line reduced by one syllable until 1 syllable remains and then double with reverse with 9 lines from 1 syllable to 9 syllables incorporating one thought). Theme: The Power of Words. Line Limit: 18 lines per form. Prizes: 1st $15, 2nd $10, 3rd $5. Honorable mentions: as merited.

**Category 26: Gertrude McCarty Smith Memorial Award** – Sponsored by the Gertrude McCarty Smith Foundation for the Arts. Judged by the Foundation Board. Form: Illustrated Lyrical Ballad. Theme: Visual Verse. Line Limit: 40. Prizes: 1st $50, 2nd $30, 3rd $20. Honorable mentions as merited. Sponsor’s note: The late Gertrude McCarty Smith was an artist, poet and longtime MPS member. Her namesake foundation honors her creativity and her lifelong encouragement of fellow artists and writers. Visit http://www.gertrudemccartysmith.com/ and find something that inspires you. Technical note: Blend a lyrical ballad with visuals from original or found drawings, paintings,

photography, graphics, etc. – akin to contemporary haiga. Inspired by two of the foundation board members' favorite bookstore, Lyrical Ballad, in Saratoga Springs, New York, which was named for Wordsworth and Coleridge's ground-breaking 1798 poetry collection.

**Category 27: Vietnam Memories Award –** Sponsored and judged by Mary Lee Terry in memory of Chester Terry, Jr. Form: Shakespearian Sonnet. Theme: Vietnam Memories. Line limit: 14 per form. Prizes: 1st $50, 2nd $30, 3rd $20. Honorable mentions: as merited. Be sure to follow the rules of the Shakespearian Sonnet.

**Category 28: Lynda Carol Memorial Award –** Sponsored and judged by Peggy and George Shumaker. Form: Two Rhyming Couplets per 4-line Stanza. Theme: A Life Worth Living. Line limit: 32. Prizes: 1st $75, 2nd $50, 3rd $35. Honorable mentions: as merited.

**Category 29: The Category That Shall Remain Nameless (for now) Award --**
A recent Executive Order attempts to rename “Artificial Intelligence” as “Super Intelligence”. If you ask me, the word “artificial” is pretty accurate, and it is the word “intelligence” that should be questioned. How about you? What would you name it? I’ll pick one of your ideas to name the category. Sponsored and judged by Jason Ervin. Form: Give your poem the form of a dialog between two or more persons. Theme: Artificial Intelligence. Line Limit: 40. Prizes: 1st $50, 2nd $30, 3rd $20. Honorable mentions as merited.

**Category 30: Video Award –** Sponsored by Jason Ervin. Judged by Sharlee Shumpert. Form: Open. Theme: Open. Line limit: 40. Prizes: 1st $50, 2nd $30, 3rd $20. Honorable mentions as merited. This year, we again combine the Video Award with the MPS Interview Series project.  Your video should include two things.

#1: Give your answers to the interview questions below.

#2: After answering the questions, read/perform a poem that you are particularly proud of.

Judging will be based on the reading/performance of the poem.  The videos will be posted to MPS’s YouTube channel.  The texts of the winning poems will be published in the MPS Journal, as usual.  All the usual rules about originality and previously published works apply to the video entries.  Here are a few additional instructions:

1.Submit a typed version of your video poem along with your other submissions as usual.

2. Please avoid external props.  This is about your poetry and your performance.

3. Once we receive the text of your poem, we will reach out to you with instructions on getting your video to us.

Interview Questions:

1. How long have you been a member of MPS (if you are a member)?

2. Favorite thing about being an MPS member (if you are a member)?

3. What kind of poetry do you typically write?

4. What poets/poetry inspires you?

5. What makes "good" poetry, in your opinion?

6. Talk about any of your books/awards/writing projects you'd like to mention here.

**Category 31: First Time Submitters Award** ***(Open to MPS Members that have never submitted to the annual spring contest. If you have never submitted, this category is just for you).*** **–** Sponsored by Jason Ervin. Judged by Doris Jones. Form: Free Verse. Theme: Tradition – something to be defended/something to be challenged. Line limit: 40. Prizes: 1st $25, 2nd $15, 3rd $10. Honorable mentions: as merited.