

BERKS COUNTY POET LAUREATE COMPETITION: TIPS FOR SUBMITTING YOUR POETRY

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SELECTING AND ARRANGING YOUR POEMS:

- Choose your five strongest poems to represent your work. (See tips below from past judges)
- First and last impressions: start with a strong poem that introduces your style and voice, and makes a reader want to continue. End with a poem that leaves a strong final impression.
- Choose poems that show a range of subject and style, and don't sound too similar.
- Consider what the poems look like on the page. Let the line breaks and arrangement on the page represent your ideas and images in the clearest and most effective way.
- Read through the five poems out loud. Are they arranged in the most effective order? Is there a good flow from one poem to the next? Are there any weak poems or needed revisions?

PREPARING YOUR SUBMISSION:

- Follow the instructions on the application site carefully: <https://racc.edu/poetry>.
- Submit one Word document, beginning each poem at the top of a new page.
- Avoid any fancy fonts, pictures, etc. Let your words speak for themselves.
- Avoid centering a poem on the page, unless you have a specific reason to do so.
- Proofread and edit carefully.

WHAT DO JUDGES LOOK FOR IN A STRONG POETRY SUBMISSION:

(Thanks to Marilyn Klimcho of BerksBards, and laureates Sandra Fees and Heather Thomas)

- Strong, evocative imagery
- Beautiful, fresh language
- Strong voice; Originality
- Unique details
- Something that surprises while conveying a basic human experience
- Maturity of viewpoint and insight
- The poet shows an understanding of craft and what they want to accomplish in the poem.
- Clean language and strong imagery that conveys ideas clearly.
- A title and/or opening line that draws me in, capturing my interest by a turn of phrase, image, or idea.
- Can I trust this writer to take me somewhere in this poem, maybe somewhere I didn't know I wanted to go?

"I want a poem to surprise me with its language, energy, or form. I want the poem to show me through imagery and an appeal to the senses something I forgot or overlooked or never knew about ordinary life, the extraordinary in the ordinary. I love when a poem about nothing I've ever known creates that recognition of myself through the other. I want clear and precise language that evolves with an ear for sound and rhythm. I want the poem to evidence care and skill in its crafting. It's the detail, not the tale, that matters."

