



NATIONAL  
SHAKESPEARE  
COMPETITION

2024 BRANCH  
HANDBOOK



NATIONAL  
SHAKESPEARE  
COMPETITION

**Branch Handbook**

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Fall 2023

Dear ESU Shakespeare Coordinators,

Having overcome the challenges of the past two years, the English-Speaking Union now proudly looks to the future as we celebrate the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our beloved National Shakespeare Competition. The adversities we have endured as an organization have cemented relationships, inspired our constituents, and emboldened us to look at our next century with hope and confidence. The competition remains a living embodiment of our founder's vision. Resiliency in the face of a pandemic is part of the DNA of the ESU. Sir Evelyn Wrench would surely recognize the commitment, grit and tenacity of our members who for forty years have made this competition a reality.

We are excited to announce that once again the competition will culminate with a **100% live competition held in New York City**. All branch champions will travel to New York City for an exciting weekend of events, camaraderie, fun and competition! As always, we thank you for your commitment to the competition, and to the communities it serves.

#### **2024 Branch Fee Structure**

The fee for branches to participate in 2024 is \$600.00. ALL Branch Champions will travel to New York City for a weekend of events. Although the cost of a live events has risen significantly, we return the fee to its pre-COVID amount with no increase. This fee structure has been made possible by the generous donations made by our branches, members and friends to the ESU National Shakespeare Competition Endowment Fund.

#### **Accepted Competition Formats for Branches and Schools Post-COVID**

Branch and School Competitions: Each branch community will have different needs in response to waves and variants of COVID, and for this reason we suggest that branches consider which of these options is best for their schools and for their branch competition. Branches may choose not to request recordings of student performances however, all Branch Champions must submit a recording of their performance on their Winner Packets for participation in the People's Choice Award.

1. Live Competition: Beyond the minimum requirements defined in this handbook, branches are free to hold their live events in the manner that best serves their capabilities and needs and adheres to local laws and restrictions.
2. Recorded Competition: School winners upload a video to YouTube and provide a link on the school winner form. Branch coordinators email the list of links to judges who adjudicate independently and then gather via conference call or Zoom meeting to arrive at a winner. This option is less reliant on technological expertise.
3. Live via Internet: Branches set up a Zoom meeting (or another platform) for a live via internet competition. Students and judges are provided a Zoom link, date/ time, and performance order. Judges then retire to a breakout room on Zoom to adjudicate and return with the results.

Branches should choose what is most comfortable and works best for them and their schools. We recommend engaging teachers, students, and members with the necessary skills to assist with tech needs, but national will do its best to support our branches in this regard. Please note: **All branch winners will be required to submit a video of their performance on the Winner Packet Form in order to participate in the People's Choice Award.**

TECHNICAL RESOURCES ARE AVAILABLE TO BRANCHES AND TEACHERS ON OUR WEBSITE.

## Programs, Outreach, and Initiatives

NEW! Shakespeare Writing Contests to further encourage the love of English in our students were inspired by our branches! We worked with education experts to create a series of fun and engaging writing contests as satellite events to support and expand the competition. These contests will engage students who prefer to express their love of Shakespeare and the English language through the written word. Competitions will address both creative and analytical writing.

Shakespeare Coordinator Facebook Group: This invitation-only private group is for ESU National Shakespeare Competition Branch Coordinators and other ESU officers and members directly involved in the competition. Please use this group to share ideas, discuss challenges, celebrate successes, introduce new resources, and develop connections within our community. To join, visit <https://www.facebook.com/groups/185060537035030/> and request to join.

Remote Learning Resources for Teachers: The free and comprehensive “Teacher’s Tool Kit” includes strategies for remote and in-person teaching and using performance to teach Shakespeare. This resource is posted on our website.

People’s Choice Award is back in 2024! This vote-in program has reached over 25,000 people across the United States and as far away as China, Brazil and Saudi Arabia raising awareness and support of the ESU, its branches and programs.

**Please note: All branch winners will be required to submit a video of their performance to national in order to be included in the People’s Choice competition. This video should be submitted with the Winner Packet.**

Teacher Recognition Award. For 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Place: The ESU continues to support educators across America and recognizes the teachers who make our students shine.

Monologue and Sonnet Packets: Expanded monologue packets are available on our web site to give your students and teachers more time and options. The improved design makes them easier to read and navigate.

## More Competition Information

Please note: As we embark on planning a live competition in the post-COVID world, we are facing some unexpected challenges such as increased competition for resources, event spaces, hotel rooms and amenities because of all the other events that were cancelled due to COVID. For this reason, we respectfully ask your understanding and ask that you support our efforts but providing required information (such as Branch Registration and Branch Winner Forms) by their deadlines. **Please contact us if you cannot make a deadline or are having difficulties.** As always, we remain committed to serving the best interests of our students and branches.

### Branch Registration:

- The 2024 [Branch registration form](#) is available now on our website under Branch Resources, Shakespeare Competition. Registration deadline is September 15<sup>th</sup>. Payment deadline for the branch fee is September 30<sup>th</sup>.

### User-Friendly Forms:

- All forms will continue be hosted on our website.

- We are in the process of updating the [NSC School Participation Form](#) for each branch on the website.

Please share the following link in your outreach to teachers and schools:

[www.esuus.org/esu/programs/shakespeare\\_competition/school\\_participation\\_form/](http://www.esuus.org/esu/programs/shakespeare_competition/school_participation_form/)

- School registrations and school winner forms will instantly and automatically be sent to the email addresses provided by the coordinators.

- All other forms and materials are being uploaded to the website.

- In the case of branches who cannot pay the branch fee, a \$75 school fee will be collected on the school winner form. - National will provide need-based scholarships for schools in MMOA branches. No school will ever be excluded because of financial hardship.

Competition Dates and Prizes: We are committed to a live competition in New York City once again in 2024. Because of necessary planning, including hotel and restaurant reservations, we respectfully ask our branches to please keep to the dates on this timeline in order to ensure that the competition goes smoothly.

Deadline to hold branch competitions and submit 2024 ESU National Shakespeare Competition Branch Winner Forms the **March 10, 2024**.

Branch Champions must return their Winner Packets by **March 17, 2024**.

The live competition finals are tentatively scheduled for **Monday, April 29th, 2024**.

(Date and location be confirmed in early 2024.)

Prizes are as follows (due to the lingering threat of COVID, the ESU reserves the right to delay/substitute prizes)

**1st place:** British American Drama Academy Mid-Summer Conservatory Program

**2nd place:** American Shakespeare Center Theatre Camp

**3rd place:** \$1000

Although we are hopeful that the threat of Covid is behind us, we feel it is in the best interest of our branches to continue providing COVID-related information, which highlighted in **red throughout this handbook**. The remaining information is as in previous years and presupposes a live competition.

As we embark on our 2024 ESU National Shakespeare Competition, we acknowledge the unwavering commitment of our members to Sir Evelyn's vision. It is with profound gratitude that we serve our branches, and we recognize that their generosity is what keeps this competition alive. Without our branches, and their officers and members, there could be no competition. We are inspired by your kindness every day and we look forward to working with you to make 2024 the very best competition yet!

With warm regards,

Maryellen Liotta  
Shakespeare Programs Manager

## Program Overview

### What is the Competition?

The English-Speaking Union (ESU) National Shakespeare Competition is a nationwide competition in which high school students read, analyze, perform and recite Shakespearean monologues and sonnets in three qualifying stages: school, ESU Branch, and national.

### Competition History

The ESU National Shakespeare Competition began thirty-seven years ago with 500 students in New York City. Now the competition involves approximately sixty ESU Branch communities nationwide. Thousands of high school students and their teachers, from Honolulu to Boston, participate in the program each year. Over the competition's history, nearly 360,000 young people of all backgrounds have rediscovered Shakespeare's writings and learned to express his words with understanding, feeling and clarity.



The ESU National Shakespeare Competition has been recognized by the Globe Center (USA), the Children's Theatre Foundation of America, and the American Academy of Achievement. Judges for the competition have included: Andre Braugher, Kate Burton, Maurice Charney, Blythe Danner, Barry Edelstein, Lisa Gay Hamilton, Helen Hayes, Edward Herrmann, Dana Ivey, Peter Francis James, Kristin Linklater, Peter MacNicol, Jesse L. Martin, Cynthia Nixon, Tina Packer, Annie Parisse, Sarah Jessica Parker, Nancy Piccione, Phylicia Rashad, Christopher Reeve, Louis Scheeder, Carole Shelley, Jean Simmons, Richard Thomas, Courtney B. Vance, Sam Waterston, Dianne Wiest, Gene Wilder, and Irene Worth.



### Competition Structure: School → ESU Branch → National

The program begins in the classroom as an integral component of a Common Core-aligned ELA, Humanities and/or Theater curriculum, affording teachers the opportunity to use performance as a learning tool. A school-wide competition is held in the Fall/Winter semester, in which students perform a monologue from one of Shakespeare's plays and declaim a sonnet from his 154 sonnet cycle. The school competition winner advances to the ESU branch (community) competition in the winter. The branch competition winner advances to the national competition held remotely in the spring; all of the winners perform their monologue and sonnet virtually. Seven to ten of those contestants are chosen for the final round of the competition. The finalists perform their selections again for a second panel of judges.

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## Awards

Additional prizes at branch level vary by branch. Some branches also provide awards for the branch winners' teachers.

National Awards: The three winners of the ESU National Shakespeare Competition ordinarily receive the following scholarships or a cash awards. Exact prizes may change or may vary.

1<sup>st</sup> place: A scholarship to the Midsummer Conservatory at the British American Drama Academy in Oxford, U.K.

2<sup>nd</sup> place: A scholarship to the American Shakespeare Center's Theatre Camp in Staunton, VA.

3<sup>rd</sup> place: \$1000

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## National Competition Dates

**TENTATIVE Competition Dates and Prizes:** Because of necessary planning, including hotel and restaurant reservations, we respectfully ask our branches to please keep to the dates on this timeline in order to ensure that the competition goes smoothly.

The 2024 ESU National Shakespeare Competition Branch Winner Forms will be due by **March 10, 2024.**

Branch Champions must return their Winner Packets by **March 17, 2024.**

The live competition finals are tentatively scheduled for **Monday, April 24th, 2024.**

(To be confirmed in early 2024.) Location to be announced.



### **Conditions of ESU Branch Participation**

*In order for a branch to participate in The English-Speaking Union National Shakespeare Competition, it must meet the criteria listed below. Only those schools whose competitions meet these criteria will be eligible to send contestants to the national competition.*

#### Branch Eligibility

- The branch must meet all the national deadlines and pay the Branch Participation Fee of \$600. In MMOA branches unable to pay the fee, the participating schools will be charged \$75 per school to offset costs.
- The competition must be open to all high schools in the area the branch targets for the program.
- A minimum of six schools must each agree to hold a school competition from which a winner will be selected to advance to the branch competition. (Exceptions may be made for smaller communities, but requests must be approved by ESU National.)
- All stages of the competition must be judged by a panel of at least three individuals familiar with Shakespeare's works. We recommend that a branch representative be present during the judges' deliberations.
- Branches must provide a prompter (school or branch volunteer) during live via internet competitions but not in recorded competitions. See Instructions for Prompters (pg. 15) for more information.
- Branches are no longer required to share written evaluations with the students and their teachers but may invite judges to share feedback with students.

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*All schools in the competition must meet the following criteria. The branch should ensure school eligibility.*

#### School/Home School Eligibility

- The school must register with the ESU via the School Participation Form available on our website.
- The school competition must be open to all students enrolled in the 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> grades or the equivalent for home school students.
- The school competition must involve a minimum of three students. Home school students must also advance from a competition of three or more students.
- School and home school competitions must be judged by a panel of at least three individuals familiar with Shakespeare's works.

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*The branch should ensure that all students participating in the competition meet the following criteria.*

#### Contestant Eligibility

- Contestants must be enrolled in the 9<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grade or the equivalent for home school students.
- Contestants *may not* act for pay on television, the stage, or in film during the 2023-2024 school year.
- Contestants should be available to represent their school at the national competition. If, for any reason, the branch winner is unable to participate, the branch should send the first runner-up.
- Previous school and/or branch winners may participate each year they are eligible regardless of results in past competitions. Schools and/or branches may not limit contestant participation except for the above mentioned eligibility requirements.

### Selection Eligibility: Monologue & Sonnet

*The selections that your contestants perform must meet the following criteria. The branch coordinator should check that contestants' selections meet these guidelines.*

Contestants must select their monologues from this year's Monologue Packet, provided by the ESU on our website. The packet includes over 250 monologues from more than 120 characters in all 38 plays. The selections offer a variety of monologues, of 15 to 22 lines a piece; students may select any monologue, regardless of gender. Selections have been taken from the Folger Digital Texts resource (folgerdigitaltexts.org). **The monologues chosen by last year's national finalists have been removed and will not be eligible at this year's ESU National Shakespeare Competition.**

**No alterations may be made to the monologues. They must be performed as written in the packet.**

Sonnets must come from Shakespeare's 154 sonnet cycle. These are all listed in this year's Sonnet Packet and are available at folgerdigitaltexts.org. Students must declaim the complete sonnet; **no alterations are allowed. The sonnets chosen by last year's national finalists will not be eligible at this year's ESU National Shakespeare Competition.**

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### Branch Competition Rules

*The branch must adhere to the following rules at their competition.*

- Each contestant must select, memorize and perform/declaim one monologue and one sonnet.
- Contestants may perform/declaim their selections (monologue and sonnet) in whatever order they prefer.
- Contestants' order of performance should be determined by lot.
- Contestants should introduce themselves by name *only*.
- They should **not** state where they are from or which school they attend.
- Contestants should identify their selections before they begin their performance.
- Contestants *may not* wear costumes or use props of any kind (including chairs, jewelry, items of clothing, and hair/hair clips). The use of props is grounds for immediate disqualification.
- Contestants should speak naturally in their own voice (rather than affect a British accent).
- Contestants are expected to memorize their selections. If necessary, however, prompting is allowed.

#### Note on Cold Readings

Branch competition (optional): Some ESU branches with a large number of contestants also include a cold reading of a monologue in the final round of their branch competition. Cold readings are chosen by ESU branch representatives.

**National competition: national finalists will no longer perform a cold reading of a monologue.**

**If you and your branch are prepared to participate in this year's program, please complete the [2024 Branch Participation Form](#).**

***Please complete this form by the deadline September 15, 2023.***

## ESU Branch Deadlines

- **September 15, 2023:** Branch Participation Form due
- **September 30, 2023:** Branch Participation Fee of \$600 due.  
Payment may be made by credit card via Paypal or by check made payable to The English Speaking Union of the United States. Schools in MMOA branches unable to pay the fee will be charged a \$75 fee per school.
- **October 1 - February 16:** School Participation Form and School Winner Entry Forms to be completed by participating schools and submitted online. A form for each participating branch can be found on the Shakespeare homepage of the website.
- **March 10, 2024:** DEADLINE to hold all branch competitions and submit Branch Winner Form available on the website under Branch Resources. *As soon as your competition has concluded*, please submit the Branch Winner Form. We will share the Winner Packet directly with the winning student directly.
- **May 6, 2024:** Branches should complete all financial documentation and present this package to the branch treasurer.

## Funding & Partnering

### Funding the Competition

The ESU National Shakespeare Competition is a relatively inexpensive program for your branch to run. Most branches fund this program through their branch treasury, member contributions and in-kind donations.

### Common Competition Expenses

- Branch Participation Fee
- Branch winner prizes
- Prizes for teachers
- Tech subscriptions
- Judges' expenses
- Technology costs
- Printing/copying

### Cost-Cutting Suggestions

- Begin with your own membership. Ask members if they are involved in or have contacts with organizations and businesses that can provide discounted or pro-bono goods and services.
- Ask your venue if they offer a nonprofit rate or will donate the space.
- Talk to judges and see if they will volunteer their services or take a reduced honorarium.
- Ask local businesses to donate prizes for the students and/or teachers. Try bookstores for Shakespeare volumes and memorabilia and theater companies for tickets and discounts to student classes or camps.
- Talk to new local eateries or catering companies. Ask them to donate food for the competition.
- Ask local printing/copying stores for a nonprofit rate or to donate the printing in exchange for an ad in the program.

*Remember:* All donations should be acknowledged in your branch competition program.

### Partnering with Other Organizations

*Your branch competition is the perfect opportunity for your branch to partner with other local organizations. Partnerships may potentially offset the cost of the competition through in-kind donations. Identify and contact organizations or businesses in your community who would be interested in this program. Many branches collaborate with local arts and academic organizations (including local Shakespeare and theater companies, colleges, universities, libraries and museums).*

### Suggested Areas of Partnership:

- Venue
- Judges
- Prizes
- Staffing & volunteers (training)
- Publicity
- Outreach to teachers/schools
- Printing/copying
- Food & other supplies

### Partnering Events:

- Reception
- Meal (brunch, luncheon, dinner)
- Teacher workshop
- Student workshop
- ESU branch meeting

## Outreach to Teachers & Schools

*Informing schools in your target area about the competition is essential. Email is the most convenient way to contact teachers and schools about the competition; email addresses for public schools and their teachers are easily accessible online.*

### Tips for Finding Teacher Contact Information (for Public Schools Only)

- Search the desired target area's Board of Education website and find a school directory.
- Identify any schools eligible for the competition and go to their individual websites.
- Search their school's online faculty directory to find email addresses for appropriate teachers (English and Drama departments as well as Speech and Debate coaches).
- Save these emails in a mass contact list.

Contact information for private, charter, parochial, and home schools may be more difficult to find. We recommend online directories like [www.greatschools.org](http://www.greatschools.org) or [www.privateschoolreview.com](http://www.privateschoolreview.com) to find a list of schools in your target area. Once you have a list of eligible schools, follow the same tips as above. For home school groups, contact a home school organization(s) in your area and ask them to distribute information about the competition to their members.

We also recommend you gather email addresses for each of the eligible schools' principals and assistant or vice principals and inform them about the program and its benefits. Gaining support for the competition in these administrative offices is extremely advantageous for both the teachers in those schools and the branch itself. The Teacher Handbook includes a sample memo to teachers for teachers to share with their principals and administrators to garner support for bringing the program to their schools.

### Additional Information Sources

- Existing teacher contacts: ask current teachers to forward information about the ESU National Shakespeare Competition to colleagues and suggest contacts.
- Websites of local networks: educator organizations and unions, speech and debate associations such as the National Speech and Debate Association, the National Council of Teachers of English, American Alliance for Theatre & Education, Educational Theatre Association, etc.
- State and local/district Board of Education electronic bulletin board.
- Mailing/contact lists for any organization(s) with which your branch is partnering for the competition.
- Local graduate schools/universities (for alumni currently teaching high school).

## Storing Contact Information

Create a master list of teacher contacts (electronic preferred). Include any teachers who reach out to you about the competition. You should record their name, school name and email. School and/or home mailing address and telephone number may also be included if the information is available.

PLEASE NOTE: National will provide outreach to publicize resources and events available to competition teachers. As each branch understands and knows their community of teachers best, all initial outreach and recruitment is best received when coming from the branches.

### **Email Etiquette**

Branch coordinators are representatives of their local ESU branch and of The English-Speaking Union. Therefore, all correspondence between teachers and the branch should adhere to the following guidelines:

- The sender's "Branch Title," their local ESU branch's name and "The English-Speaking Union" should be included at the bottom of each email.
- For mass email mailings, place all recipients in the "BCC" (blind carbon copy) section of the "To" field.
- The subject line of all emails should include "ESU National Shakespeare Competition."

We also strongly encourage branch coordinators to use their branch's ESU email account for their correspondence with the teachers and schools rather than their personal email. This allows for a smooth and constant connection between the teachers/schools and the branch throughout the years no matter who is the branch coordinator from one year to the next. Additionally, in the age of spam and hackers, teachers will delete messages from unknown addresses.

## Consistent Outreach

Outreach to teachers and schools should not cease after your branch competition is complete. Stay in touch with teachers via email and in person throughout the year.

Here are some suggestions for keeping in touch with teachers:

- After the branch competition, send a thank-you email for participating in program.
- Hold a teacher reception to celebrate and recognize their support of the competition. ● Add to your branch's newsletter mailing list.
- Invite them to branch events.
- Encourage them to become more involved in your branch and its programs.
- Send information on other ESU education programs, such as TLab study abroad opportunities.
- Send news and press releases from the national competition.
- Send links to local press coverage of the national competition.

*Remember:* Word-of-mouth is our best advertisement and outreach tool. Always encourage teachers to pass along relevant information about the ESU National Shakespeare Competition and the English-Speaking Union to interested colleagues.

## Mailings to Teachers

### 1st Step: Recruiting and Signing Up Schools

This initial mailing should be sent to teachers/schools (preferably by email) in early fall and repeated several times prior to the registration deadline.

#### Necessary Materials

- Sample Memo to Teachers: Introduces teachers to the competition and includes essential information about both the school and branch competitions (to be completed and sent by the branch.) If possible, include a date for the branch competition.
- School Participation Form: Registration form for schools to participate in the competition.

#### Instructions

- Place the Sample Memo to Teachers in the body of an email. Please update/edit this text with information about your branch competition.
- Include a link and instructions to complete the School Participation Form in the email.
- Please keep in mind that students are eligible to participate in the school and branch competitions *even if they have previously won a school and/or branch competition.*
- Email in a mass mailing to teachers and school administrators in your target area.

### 2nd Step: Soliciting Information on School Winners

This follow-up mailing should be sent (preferably by email) *only* to teachers/schools who have completed the School Participation Form.

#### Necessary Materials

- School Winner Entry Form: Registration form for the school winner who will advance to the branch competition (to be completed by the school coordinator and the school winner).
- Photo Release Form: Permission form to participate in the branch competition (to be signed by the student and their parent and returned to the branch coordinator).

#### Instructions

- Write an email stating the details of your branch competition. Be sure to include the date, time, Zoom or other internet directions), and any other necessary details that the teacher and/or student may need.
- Request any additional details that the branch may need from teachers for the branch competition.
- Include links and instructions to complete the School Winner Entry Form and the Photo Release Form in the email.

*Remember:* Send each mailing multiples times and ask teachers to forward them to others.

## Publicity

*Your branch competition is meant to be seen, heard, and enjoyed by your community. Publicize the event and generate positive visibility for your branch. Advertise to local schools and educators as well as your branch members. Celebrate and share students' achievements with all!*

### Publicity Outlets:

- Newspaper (print and online) ● Television
- Radio ● Newsletters (school/community/branch)
- Social media ● Websites (school/community/branch)

### Prior to the School Competitions

- Visit schools and talk about the program at school/department meetings.
- Attend teacher conferences in your local area. Distribute competition materials.
- Identify educator and arts organizations in your area. Encourage them to forward competition information to their teacher contacts.
- Encourage schools to post competition information on their website as well as in newsletters and school papers.

### Prior to the Branch Competition

- Send a pre-competition press release (on our website) to local media outlets (radio, newspaper, television, etc.).
- Post a reminder with any relevant details on your branch's website.
- Suggest schools announce their winner(s) on their school website, newsletter and social media.
- Ask the local Board of Education to include details of the branch competition on their website, newsletter, etc. Encourage them to announce the program at local meetings.
- Contact your local newspaper and/or radio and invite a reporter (usually in the Life/Style, Arts and City/Metro divisions) to attend the branch competition.

### **Publicity Etiquette:**

**Every contestant in your branch competition must sign a Photo Release Form.** A parental signature is required for anyone under the age of 18. Without this release form, you may not publish or distribute any photos or videos of the contestants. You should distribute the Photo Release Form via email ahead of time. Before the start of your branch competition, remember to collect any remaining, completed photo release forms (if applicable).

### Following the Branch Competition

- Send a post-competition press release (available on our website) and photos to local media outlets. Highlight any stories unique to your branch competition.
- Encourage members and participating students and teachers to post about the competition on social media outlets (Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, Instagram, etc.).
- The official hashtag for this year is #ESUNSC2024 - please include it in all of your social media posts!
- Invite students to perform for members/donors at other ESU branch events.
- Encourage the branch winner to perform their selections at other community events/locations (such as Shakespeare festivals, libraries, public spaces, etc.).
- Send any press coverage, as well as photos and videos, to ESU National.

### Following the National Competition

- A national press release will be sent from ESU National directly to the branch winner (national semi-finalist), their parent(s), teacher(s), branch coordinator and branch president.
- Send the national press release to local media outlets (radio, newspaper, television, etc.) Also send to the national semifinalist's school, guardians, and any other interested local organizations.

## Organizing the Branch Competition if Still Affected by COVID

### Selecting a Date

Most branch competitions take place between January and early March and must be held by March 10, 2024. If you are having a LIVE VIA INTERNET competition, we recommend you hold your competition on a weekday afternoon (late enough for the contestants and their teachers to finish the school day) or a weekend.

When selecting a date, please be mindful of:

- School breaks
- Holidays (religious and national)
- State and standardized testing days (SAT, ACT)
- Teacher/professional development days
- Competing education programs
- Other community events

If your branch competition will have **fewer than 10 contestants**, we recommend allowing the participating schools' first runners-up to enter your event. These additional contestants create a more diverse and well-rounded lineup and ultimately add to the audience's enjoyment of the program.

### Securing a Virtual Venue

We recommend you use Zoom if you choose to have a Live Via Internet competition. Students should submit their video links on the school winner forms.

### Inviting an Audience:

Depending on your Zoom account, you may have the capacity to invite up to 100 people to watch your competition or even more if you choose a higher priced Zoom membership. This will allow you to invite people to watch your Live via Internet competition.

The branch competition can be open to the public even now via viewing parties of the recorded competition or as described above for Live via Internet competitions. Having a public competition is beneficial for both the local community (who will enjoy the program) and the local ESU branch (it increases awareness of the program and support for the English-Speaking Union and its mission). If possible, please invite the following:

- All ESU branch officers and members
- Local Board of Education officials
- Any prominent members of the community interested in the arts and/or education (arts reporters and critics, heads of arts organizations, professors of English and Drama, etc.)
- Contestants' families and friends
- Contestants' teachers
- Contestants' school communities (including school administrators, other teachers and fellow classmates)

Send a pre-competition press release to local media outlets to garner interest in your competition.

*Remember:* Use your branch competition as a hook to interest more students, teachers and schools in the program for next year; seeing the contestants onstage reciting Shakespeare engages future students and teachers. Create a target list of schools and home schools that the branch would like to participate in the program the following year. Invite those teachers, school administrators and other school officials to attend your branch competition and then have a branch member/representative speak about the program.



## Step by Step Directions for Digital Competition Formats:

Recommended Platforms: We recommend YouTube for students to submit their videos. We recommend using Zoom for Live via Internet competitions. Although there are other available providers, national is most familiar with these. School Competition formats: We highly recommend that branches allow teachers to hold their competitions in whichever way they deem safest for their school community. Branches should expect to have competitors who have advanced from multiple types of school-wide competitions in their branch level competition.

Technical information and resources will be available on our website: Additional technical resources and links will be posted to our website soon.

**Recorded Competition:** Same format as 2022 National Semi-Finals. This option is less reliant on technological expertise but does not allow for community involvement in the selection process. Lowest cost format.

1. Teachers sign up via School Participation Form, as usual and will hold school competitions.
2. Once school competitions have concluded, teachers will upload a video of their school winner's performance to YouTube and provide a link on the school winner form. Instruct teachers to make these "unlisted" so that only people with the link can see them. This is a highly detailed instructional video that may be of help. <http://bit.ly/YouTubeUploadInfo>
3. Branch coordinators will receive these forms. Once they have reached the deadline for school winner forms, they will email the links to their panel of judges.
4. Just as in a live competition, judges must be provided their resources such as judges handbooks, and monologue and sonnet packets, only now this may be done by sharing a link via email. The branch may also provide printed copies although this should not prove necessary. Coordinator sets up a time/date for the judges to meet and select winner via Zoom meeting or conference call.
5. Judges will adjudicate independently and then gather at the scheduled time to select a winner
6. Winner is announced via press release and email by branch and the Branch Winner Form is sent to National.
7. Branches may wish to organize a viewing party of the recorded performances, however, please be aware that at present, Zoom lacks this capability.

**Live via Internet:** Same format as the 2022 National Finals. This option requires purchase of a Zoom account, scheduled meeting (s), and an MC or host to keep the proceedings moving and cue the students. As it is live, there are more potential issues with failed technology in this option, such as power/cable outages, and access to technology.

Branches should decide their own policy should a contestant's technology fail during a performance.

1. Teachers sign up via School Participation Form as usual. Coordinators visit <http://bit.ly/ZoomBasicInfo> to better familiarize themselves with Zoom.
2. Branches schedule a Zoom meeting and share date on the website. No link is provided to maintain security.
3. Once the branch coordinator receives the school winner forms, students and judges are emailed by the coordinator with the Zoom link, date/ time, and performance order. We highly recommend requiring passwords and registration to avoid issues with people "crashing" the event.
4. We also recommend holding a brief rehearsal to check for potential technology issues about one week before the competition. This will help avoid tech failures and the need to disqualify anyone for an incomplete performance and gives students a chance to buy or borrow more reliable technology.
5. At the competition, MC provides opening remarks and introductions, asks for applause to held until the end and silences all microphones except that of the next performer.
6. The first student performs as they would at a live competition. On completion their mic is silenced.
7. MC cues each student in turn, making sure that mics are on for performers and off for everyone else.
8. After the last performer, MC turns on all mics and asks for a round of applause. MC then escorts judges to breakout room on Zoom to deliberate. All others remain in main meeting.
9. MC and Judges return with the results. All mics silenced until end of announcement. MC asks for applause once more, closing remarks and ends meeting.
10. Coordinator submits the Branch Winner Form.

Branches should choose what is most comfortable and works best for them and their schools. We recommend engaging teachers, students, and members with the necessary skills to assist with tech needs.

## Staffing the Branch Competition

*The branch competition is a wonderful example of the English-Speaking Union's mission in action. Therefore, we encourage the entire branch to be involved in the program. Send out information to all branch officers and members informing them about the competition and the different volunteer positions. Solicit your Shakespeare and TLab teachers and scholars to take on leadership roles as well.*

### Staff Positions

- **Branch Coordinator** (1): An active ESU branch member familiar with the local education system or a current/retired teacher familiar with the ESU. This person acts as a liaison between the branch and the local teachers/schools, so good communication and computer skills are required. The coordinator is responsible for outreach to local teachers and schools and running the branch competition. The branch coordinator is also responsible for sending in the appropriate paperwork to ESU National. We recommend that each branch coordinator have at least one co-coordinator.
  - **(Optional) Branch Co-Coordinator(s)**: Other ESU branch members or members of an affiliate organization partnering with the ESU for the competition. Co-coordinators are responsible for assisting the branch coordinator with all planning of the competition. Some branches decide to have a Shakespeare committee made up of ESU members fill this role.
- **Master of Ceremonies** (at least 1): An ESU branch officer or a prominent member of the community familiar with the ESU. The MC will narrate the branch competition to the audience (provide introductory remarks, introduce judges and announce the winners).
- **Judges** (at least 3, more if qualifying round(s) are needed): Judges should be professionals with expertise in Shakespeare studies, production or education. We recommend local members of the community (such as actors, directors, theater educators, professors and teachers). The ideal judging panel is comprised of a diverse group of professionals.
- **Judges' Liaison** (1): This person should be familiar with the judges and the Judge Handbook. This role may be filled by the branch coordinator or one of the co-coordinators.
- **Prompter** (1): Responsible for prompting the contestants during the branch competition. The prompter follows along with the text as the contestants perform/declaim their selections.
- **Technology Assistance** Recruit college students, non-competing teachers, retired teachers, and others with a background in technology to help you with the needs of your remote competition. It is helpful to have someone to answer technical questions from parents and students. After months of remote teaching, most teachers are sufficiently familiar with the internet, YouTube, Zoom and other platforms to be a real resource and will not need much guidance in that respect.

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### Instructions for Prompters

As the contestants perform/declaim their selections, follow along in the prompting book. Please be aware that contestants may perform/declaim their selections in any order. We suggest having highlighters and sticky notes onhand. Alert the judges' liaison to any issues as the judges move to deliberate.

- Do not give a line prompt unless the contestant says "Line." Sometimes contestants take very, very long and dramatic pauses; do not be fooled into thinking they want a prompt.
- If a contestant **adds lines to their monologue** that are not in the prompting book, quickly try and mark the added lines. **Do not interrupt the competition in any way.** At the end of the prompting session, put a sticky note with the note "added lines" on the appropriate page. This is particularly important; contestants must perform their monologues as they are written in the Monologue Packet.
- If a contestant **drops lines from their monologue and/or sonnet**, cross out the sections that they did not speak. **Do not interrupt the competition in any way.** At the end of the prompting session, put a sticky note with the note "dropped lines" on the appropriate page. This is very important; contestants who drop lines from their monologue and/or sonnet will be penalized by the judges.

## Judges

*Judges are obviously essential elements of your branch competition. **You require at least 3 judges. Please be mindful and sensitive to any conflicts of interest (actual or perceived) within your judging panel.** This may include (but is not limited to) judges who are past or present teachers at participating schools, relatives or friends of participating students/teachers or anyone who is otherwise familiar with the students (coach, director, etc.).*

### Soliciting Judges

- Your judging panel should be diverse. Try to strike a balance between judges with an **academic** background (English teacher/professor, Shakespeare educator), **artistic** background (Drama teacher/professor, director, teaching artist, actor), and another person familiar with Shakespeare (casting director, theater critic, administrator, etc.) Try to not have a panel of only artists/actors.
- Select appropriate candidates from local organizations with which your branch has worked in the past, or use the competition as an opportunity to work with new organizations and individuals.
- **Judges must not have previous experience with any of the contestants that they will be judging.**
- Contact prospective judges and describe the program. Mention other judges who will be on the panel (if known) or people who have judged in the past.
- Inform them of the details of the branch competition (date, time, place and time commitment).
- Select a follow-up date to discuss judging criteria.
- Request a short biography to include in the branch competition program.

### Preparing Judges

- Send your judges the Judge Handbook, which includes competition rules/guidelines and instructions for judging at the branch level. Copies of the Monologue Scoring Rubric, Sonnet Scoring Rubric and Judges' Evaluation Form are included in this handbook.
- Familiarize yourself with the Judge Handbook so that you may better answer any questions.
- Schedule an orientation or conference call prior to the competition, so that your judges may ask questions and receive consistent scoring advice.
- Encourage your judges to view videos of the national competition finalists' performances online at [www.YouTube.com/EnglishSpeakingUnion](http://www.YouTube.com/EnglishSpeakingUnion). Suggest that your judges practice scoring these performances in order to prepare themselves for the actual branch competition.
- Send the contestants' selections to your judges prior to the competition, so that they may familiarize themselves with any unusual pieces.

### Guidelines for Judges during the Competition

- Judges should not interact with the contestants or with the audience until the winners are announced at the end of program.
- Judges should not see a copy of the branch competition program until the winners are announced.
- Judges should be made aware of the fact that the rubrics and evaluation forms will be shared with the contestants and their teachers.
- If possible, separate the judges from the rest of the audience, so that they are not distracted by anyone.
- Do not allow audience members to sit behind the judges. This ensures that no audience member can see the judges' evaluations as they score and take notes on contestants' performances.
- Judges should be informed by the judges' liaison of any issues with a contestant's performance (i.e. an ineligible monologue, added or dropped lines from a sonnet and/or monologue or use of a prop).
- Have a Judge Handbook on hand during the competition, for reference.

### After the Competition

- Some judges like to speak to the contestants after the competition. They are welcome to offer constructive feedback.
- Collect the completed rubrics and evaluation forms and share the results with the contestants and their teachers.
- *Review all forms and take necessary steps to omit feedback that is not constructive. You may choose to average the scores and summarize the comments. Do not send the evaluations as one document to everyone; rather just send the individual evaluation report to the student and their teacher.*
- Thank the judges. Acknowledge them in the branch newsletter, etc.
- Invite them to join the ESU (if they are not already members) and/or participate in other ESU events and programs.

## Branch Competition Supplies

*The following supplies are necessary for your branch competition. All documents will be made available online at [www.esuus.org](http://www.esuus.org) in the ESU National Shakespeare Competition section.*

### For Contestants/Teachers

**Awards:** You may choose to award the top contestants and their teachers. Some suggestions for contestant awards include:

- Books
- Tickets
- T-shirts
- Trophies/medals
- Workshop/camp scholarships
- Other Shakespeare memorabilia

Some suggestions for teacher awards include all of the above, and teaching materials.

We encourage you to use your branch's funds for teacher education and TLab Scholarships rather than large monetary awards for contestants.

### For Contestants

- **Certificate of Participation (1:Contestant)**
  - Available upon request, to be signed by the branch president
- **Winner Packet (branch winner only)**
  - This document will be emailed by National upon receipt of the branch winner form.

### For Judges

- **Scoring Book (1:Judge)**
  - Email or otherwise provide copies of the Scoring Rubric and Judges' Evaluation Form for each contestant in the order of performance.
- **Judge Handbook (1:Judge, 1:Judges' Liaison)**
  - A copy of this handbook (available for download online) should be emailed or otherwise provided to all judges. Please point out the sections on rules, rubrics and evaluations.

### For the General Audience

- **ESU Promotional and Membership Materials**
  - Your branch competition is a great place to distribute membership, TLab brochures and other promotional materials.
- Create an email **program** for the branch competition. It should contain the following:
  - Contestants' names
  - Participating teachers
  - Participating schools
  - List of contestants' selections (monologues and sonnets)
  - Judges' names and biographies
  - Awards
  - Local funders/donors
  - Volunteers' names

List the contestants' names separate from their teachers and schools in the program. By keeping the contestants' affiliations unknown, you reduce bias and help maintain the integrity of the competition.

For Competition Staff Members

- Branch Handbook (1)
- **Prompting Book (1:Prompter)**
  - The prompting book consists of large-font copies of the contestants' selections (both monologues and sonnets) in order of performance. You can print these from the Monologue and Sonnet Handbooks.
- **Additional Materials**
  - Directional signs & tape
  - Extra copies of judging materials
  - Pens and highlighters
  - Sticky notes
  - Refreshments
  - Camera or smartphone

## **Competition Follow-Up with ESU National Headquarters**

*We thank you and your branch for your dedication and hard work in service of this vital educational program. Additionally, please complete the following steps for ESU National.*

### 1st Step: Submit the Branch Winner's Information to ESU National

This step should be completed **immediately** upon the announcement of the branch winner.

- Submit the Branch Winner Entry Form by **MARCH 10, 2024** (coming soon to the website). National will handle all details from this point forward.
- If the branch winner is unable to attend the national competition (**tentatively scheduled for April 29, 2024**), the first runner-up should be allowed to attend.

## Checklist for ESU Branch

### Late Summer/Early Fall

- Choose a branch coordinator, co-coordinator and/or Shakespeare competition committee.
- Fill out and submit Branch Participation Form.
- Pay Branch Participation Fee.
- Select a date(s) for your branch competition.

### Fall

- Compile school/teacher contact information for program target area.
- Update any documents for first mailing to schools/teachers with information specific to your branch (Sample Memo to Teachers and School Participation Form). Send out monthly reminders.
- Send out first mailing to schools/teachers.
- Compile email with branch competition information for second mailing.
- Send out second mailing to registered schools/teachers.

### Winter (Pre-Competition)

- Recruit judges from your community and email them copies of the Judge Handbook.
- Buy/solicit prizes for contestants and teachers.
- Send a pre-competition press release to local media outlets to garner interest in your branch competition.
- Compile and print a prompting book for your branch competition (monologues and sonnets for each contestant).
- Create a program for your branch competition (with acknowledgment/s of any donors).
- Compile and email scoring books for judges.
- Create participation certificates for contestants (copies available on website under documents)
- Print out any other materials (certificates, ESU materials, etc.)
- Hold your branch competition.

### Winter (Post-Competition)

- Submit the Branch Winner Entry Form (include the first runner-up's information) to ESU National.
- Inform ESU National if your winner has documented disabilities.
- Begin promoting your winner in the People's Choice Award. Your winner's number will be emailed to you.
- Send post-competition press release (coming soon) to local media outlets.

### Spring

- Join us online for the national competition online!
- Complete the Branch Competition Questionnaire online (May).
- Send any pictures, videos and/or press from the event to ESU National.
- Forward the national press release to your branch winner's school and any local press.
- Stay in touch with local schools/teachers (send ESU mailings/newsletters, invite them to branch events, etc.)

Competition Forms are available on the ESU website under Documents and Forms

Document Name	Recipient
Branch Participation Form Review Conditions of Branch Participation and Participation Deadlines	ESU National
Sample Memo to Teachers	Teachers
Sample Memo to Principals & Administrators	Principals and/or administrators
Teacher Handbook <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Invitation/Letter</li> <li>● Information for School Coordinators</li> <li>● Information for Participating Teachers</li> <li>● Lesson Plans</li> </ul>	Teachers
School Participation Form	Completed by school coordinator; forwarded to branch coordinator
Student Handbook <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Invitation/Letter</li> <li>● Instructions (Monologue and Sonnet)</li> <li>● Judging Advice</li> <li>● Rubrics</li> </ul>	Students
School Winner Entry Form	Completed by school winner and school coordinator; forwarded to branch coordinator
Photo Release Form	Completed by school winner prior to branch competition; returned to branch coordinator
Judge Handbook <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Monologue Scoring Rubric ●</li> <li>● Sonnet Scoring Rubric</li> <li>● Judges' Evaluation Form</li> </ul>	Judges
Monologue Packet	Students and teachers
Sonnet Packet	Students and teachers
Branch Winner Entry Form	Completed by branch winner and branch coordinator; sent to ESU National
Winner Packet	Branch winner



**Financial Information for Branch Competitions  
Reporting Competition Expenses**

The following information is provided by the Finance Department at the ESU to assist branch treasurers with 990 forms and other financial documentation. Please contact [branchfinancials@esuus.org](mailto:branchfinancials@esuus.org) for more information.

The costs that the Branch pays directly in hosting local workshops, competitions, and supporting your branch winner in any cost associated with participation at the national competition needs to be captured and reported to your branch treasurer for the fiscal year end IRS 990 report. Please retain all receipts and categorize them in the following categories for your branch treasurer.

SHAKESPEARE WORKSHOP EXPENSES		
830.1	Shakespeare WORKSHOP Exp– Consultant/Advisors	Consultant/advisor expenses related to WORKSHOP programming
830.2	Shakespeare WORKSHOP Exp – Rentals	Rental expenses related to WORKSHOP programming; venue, chairs, A/V
830.3	Shakespeare WORKSHOP Exp – Supplies	Supplies expense related to WORKSHOP programming; notebooks, pens, etc.
830.4	Shakespeare WORKSHOP Exp – Postage & Shipping	Postage expense related to WORKSHOP programming; invitations
830.5	Shakespeare WORKSHOP Exp – Printing	Supplies expense related to WORKSHOP programming; Fliers, signage
830.6	Shakespeare WORKSHOP Exp – Marketing/Advertising	Marketing & advertising expenses related to WORKSHOP programming; posters, fliers, adverts
830.7	Shakespeare WORKSHOP Exp – Catering	Catering expenses related to WORKSHOP programming ; food for workshop
830.8	Shakespeare WORKSHOP Exp – Entertainment	Entertainment expenses related to WORKSHOP programming; movie rentals
830.9	Shakespeare WORKSHOP Exp – Travel Expenses	Travel expenses related to WORKSHOP programming
830.10	Shakespeare WORKSHOP Exp – Other Direct Exp	Any other expense paid not covered in above categories. In 990 survey please list
A/C #	ITEMS	Description
SHAKESPEARE COMPETITION EXPENSES		
831.1	Shakespeare BRANCH COMPETITION Exp – Fee to ESU National	Fee paid to ESU National for Competition participation
831.2	Shakespeare BRANCH COMPETITION Exp – Consultant/Advisors	Consultant/advisor expenses related to Branch Competition programming
831.3	Shakespeare BRANCH COMPETITION Exp – Judges	Judges expenses related to Branch Competition; travel, honorariums, etc.
831.4	Shakespeare BRANCH COMPETITION Exp – Rentals	Rental expenses related to Branch COMPETITION programming; venue, chairs, A/V
831.5	Shakespeare BRANCH COMPETITION Exp – Supplies	Supplies expense related to Branch COMPETITION programming; notebooks, pens, etc.
831.6	Shakespeare BRANCH COMPETITION Exp – Postage & Shipping	Postage expense related to Branch COMPETITION programming; invitations
831.7	Shakespeare BRANCH COMPETITION Exp – Printing	Supplies expense related to Branch COMPETITION programming; Fliers, signage

831.8	Shakespeare BRANCH COMPETITION Exp – Marketing/Advertising	Marketing & advertising expenses related to Branch COMPETITION programming; posters, fliers, adverts
831.9	Shakespeare BRANCH COMPETITION Exp – Catering	Catering expenses related to Branch COMPETITION programming ; food for workshop
831.10	Shakespeare BRANCH COMPETITION Exp – Postage	Entertainment expenses related to Branch COMPETITION programming; movie rentals
831.11	Shakespeare BRANCH COMPETITION	Catering expenses related to Branch COMPETITION

	Exp – Catering	programming ; food for workshop
<del>831.12</del>	<del>Shakespeare BRANCH COMPETITION COMPETITION Exp – Entertainment programming</del>	<del>Entertainment expenses related to Branch programming; movie rentals</del>
<del>831.13</del>	<del>Shakespeare BRANCH COMPETITION – Local Travel Expenses programming</del>	<del>Travel expenses related to Branch COMPETITION Exp</del>
<del>831.14</del>	<del>Shakespeare BRANCH COMPETITION COMPETITION Exp – Prizes/Awards programming</del>	<del>Prizes &amp; awards expenses related to Branch programming; 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> place prizes as well as any trophies/medals/certificates</del>
831.15	Shakespeare BRANCH COMPETITION Exp – Other Direct Exp	Any other expense paid not covered in above categories. In 990 survey please list
<b>SHAKESPEARE NATIONAL COMPETITION EXPENSES</b>		
832.1	Shakespeare NATIONAL Any travel expense reimbursement paid to the branch winner	COMPETITION Exp – Travel pd to support their attending the ESU National competition. recipient
832.1	Shakespeare NATIONAL Any travel expense purchased directly on the behalf of	COMPETITION Exp – Travel pd to the branch winner to support their attending the ESU directly National competition.
832.1	Shakespeare NATIONAL COMPETITION Exp – Travel pd to ESU	Any travel expense reimbursement paid to ESU National to support the branch winner attending the ESU National competition.
832.1	National Shakespeare NATIONAL Any expense/reimbursement paid in relation to supporting	COMPETITION Exp – Other Direct the branch winner attending the ESU National competition.
	Expense	

**Donations:**

If your branch receives donations that cover expenses of branch workshops or competitions, please include a list of those items when reporting expenses to your Branch Treasurer. **Prizes:** Competition winner’s prizes fall under the IRS designation as “prizes or awards” which are taxable under IRS Section 74. This means that the branch must provide any winners who receive more than \$600 and the IRS the with form 1099 Miscellaneous Income for the amount received. If the payment is made by ESU National, i.e., the National winner, than ESU National will provide the recipient the 1099 Miscellaneous Income form.

**Reporting Competition Expenses:**

Your branch treasurer needs a clear understanding of the expenses and donations that support your branch Shakespeare activities for the IRS990 filing the branch treasurer completes at year end.

Expenses are separated into three activity brackets, that of:

- Workshop expenses
- Branch competition expenses
- National competition expenses

The above table lists the expense code, category name and a short description of each expense that you can write on all receipts and invoices you receive. We suggest that you reach out to your branch treasurer to see how they best like to receive the information, but we suggest that you print all receipts and invoices, note they correct code on each and supply the complete package to your treasurer once all expenses are captured. If you have any questions or need help coding your expenses, please contact [branchfinancials@esuus.org](mailto:branchfinancials@esuus.org) and the national finance team will assist you.



**To: High School Educators**  
**From: Education Department, ESU**

## **2024 Memo to Teachers Interested in Participating in the ESU National Shakespeare Competition**

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Dear Educator,

We are pleased to invite you and your school community to participate in the **English-Speaking Union (ESU) National Shakespeare Competition**. Over the past 40 years, we've helped educators empower nearly 400,000 students by connecting them with Shakespeare. The **ESU National Shakespeare Competition** is a unique, performance-based education program providing multiple points of entry for students to engage with rigorous material and practice essential skills such as critical thinking and close reading. High school students from across the country read, analyze, perform, and recite Shakespearean monologues and sonnets. They connect with peers, increase their self-confidence, and relate to classic works.

Provided online resources help you begin the competition in your classroom. It then progresses through three qualifying stages.

- Ninth through twelfth graders first participate in a school-wide competition.
- The school winner then advances to a competition sponsored by your local ESU Branch.
- Branch winners will then compete on the national level via a remote competition.

Prizes may include scholarships to the Midsummer Conservatory at the world-famous [British-American Drama Academy](#) for first place, the prestigious Drama Summer Camp at the [American Shakespeare Center](#) in Staunton, Virginia for second place, and \$1000 cash prize for the third place.

The English-Speaking Union of the United States was founded in 1920, on the conviction that a shared language could bring individuals together, despite differences in nationality or background. Entering its second century, the ESU is dedicated to supporting teachers and learners of English through programs such as the National Shakespeare Competition, our Teachers Learning Abroad (TLab) program and the ESU Middle School Debate League. Like you, we understand that mastery of the English language is vital to students' success in the 21st century. Please visit our website at <https://www.esuus.org/esu/> to learn more.

If you have not participated before, we hope you'll consider offering this exciting, educational opportunity at your school this year. To past participants, we extend our deep appreciation for your dedication to both your students and this program. We look forward to working with you to make 2024 our best competition ever!

Please see next page for important information regarding the competition and COVID.



## **Important Information Regarding the Competition, COVID and Your Community:**

The ESU National Shakespeare Competition Finals are scheduled to place in New York City. We understand that conditions still vary from community to community and we recommend that all schools conduct their competitions in whatever manner is safest. Please check with your local branch for more information about their requirements.

1. **Recorded Competition:** Students record their performance, upload a video to YouTube, and provide a link to their teacher. Teachers then forward these links to a panel of judges who deliberate separately or via call or online to choose a winner. Once the school-wide winner has been chosen, the teacher provides a link to the performance on the school winner form for their branch.
2. **Live via Internet:** Schools set up a Zoom meeting (or another platform) for a live via internet competition. Teachers provide students and judges with a Zoom link, date/ time, and performance order. Judges then retire to a breakout room on Zoom to adjudicate and return with the results. Once the school-wide winner has been chosen, the teacher records the winning student and provides a link to the performance on the school winner form for their branch.

Once the branch coordinators have received all the links from their participating schools, they can choose whether to have a recorded or live via internet competition. Please check branch webpages for information on the specifics of the branch competition. Visit the ESU site for resources and technical information.

### **General Fast Facts**

**What:** A nation-wide competition open to high school students. Please see the teacher handbook, available on our website, for specific rules and information.

**When & Where:** You can start your classroom and school competitions as soon as you'd like! Please contact your local branch, visit the website or refer to the handbook for deadlines, dates and information.

**Why:** Because our mission is to support teachers as they educate and engage students. It's never too early or too late to develop their love for reading, analyzing and speaking the English language, especially Shakespeare! We hope to become an asset to your practice.

**Who:** Celebrating our next 100 years in 2022, the English-Speaking Union is a non-profit organization dedicated to supporting teachers and learners of the English language. The **ESU National Shakespeare Competition** is just one of many programs that help us achieve that goal. Please visit our site to learn about scholarships for teachers to learn abroad.

**How:** Participating is easy! First, complete the [School Participation Form](#) for your local ESU branch. You will find all the necessary materials and resources right on our [ESU National Shakespeare Competition](#) website. Hold a school-wide competition to determine your school's representative at the branch competition. We provide a [Monologue Packet](#) and a [Sonnet Packet](#) from which all performed pieces **must** be selected. Submit the School Winner Entry Form (available on our website starting in mid-October) to qualify your student for the branch competition.

Thank you for your interest in the English-Speaking Union National Shakespeare Competition. Please contact [shakespeare@esuus.org](mailto:shakespeare@esuus.org) or your local ESU Branch with any questions.



**To: High School Principals & Administrators Across the Country From: Education Department, ESU**

## **2024 Memo to Administrators Interested in Participating in the ESU National Shakespeare Competition**

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Dear Administrator,

The English-Speaking Union is pleased to invite you, your staff, students and school community to participate in the **English-Speaking Union (ESU) National Shakespeare Competition!**

Since 1982, the **ESU National Shakespeare Competition** has partnered with educators and schools to make Shakespeare's work come alive. This unique, performance-based education program provides your students with multiple points of entry to engage with rigorous material and allows them to practice essential, college-readiness skills such as critical thinking and close reading.

The ESU National Shakespeare Competition provides an engaging opportunity for student-centered learning. In a recent poll by Teach-Plus, over 27% of teachers cited student empowerment as the most important condition affecting student learning. In the thirty-eight year history of the competition, the ESU has helped educators empower nearly 390,000 students to create and convey their own unique perspectives to an audience. High school students from across the country read, analyze, perform and recite Shakespearean monologues and sonnets. They connect with like-minded peers and increase their self-confidence.

In another Teach-Plus poll, teachers cited the provision of additional classroom resources as the most effective teacher-retention strategy available to administrators. Open to 9th through 12th graders, the ESU National Shakespeare Competition is designed for ease of implementation by high school teachers. The competition integrates seamlessly into existing curriculum and is aligned with state and national standards. Participating schools are provided with lesson plans, judging guides and preselected monologues and sonnets for ease of use. These resources facilitate collaboration across departments, competition across grade-levels, and help to create an opportunity for community involvement.

2024 prizes include scholarships to the Midsummer Conservatory at the world-famous [British-American Drama Academy](#) for first place, the prestigious Drama Summer Camp at the [American Shakespeare Center](#) in Staunton, Virginia for second place, and \$1000 cash prize for the third place.

The English-Speaking Union of the United States was founded in 1920, on the conviction that a shared language could bring individuals together, despite differences in nationality or background. As we enter our second century, the ESU is dedicated to supporting educators and learners of English through programs such as the National Shakespeare Competition. Please visit our website at <https://www.esuus.org/esu/> for all of the details.

