



**For immediate release—March 11, 2013**

## **Spokane high school student repeats win at *Poetry Out Loud* State Finals**

Olympia—Langston Ward of Mead High School, in Spokane, won the state *Poetry Out Loud* finals Saturday with his recitations of *The Gift* by Li-Young Lee, *The Bad Old Days* by Kenneth Rexroth, and *A March in the Ranks Hard-Prest, and the Road Unknown* by Walt Whitman. As the winner of the state final competition, Ward won a \$200 prize. In addition, his school receives \$500 for the purchase of poetry books, and Ward earns an all-expenses-paid trip (with a chaperone) to compete in the National Finals in Washington, DC, on April 29-30, 2013. This is the second state championship for Ward, who represented Washington state in the 2012 national finals. He placed in the top nine students nationally last year.

The runner-up, Tom Zbyszewski, a senior from Liberty Bell High School in Winthrop won \$100 and a \$200 stipend for his school. Three students received honorable mentions: Ben Caldwell, a senior from the Vancouver School of Arts and Academics in Vancouver; Mennah El-Gammal, a freshman from Northshore Junior High School, Bothell; and Meghan Mulcahy, a junior from Olympia High School, Olympia.

More than 23,000 students from 76 schools in Washington state participated in *Poetry Out Loud* this year. Following classroom-level and then school-wide competitions, top students from the schools continued on to one of seven regional finals, held in Northwest Washington, Southwest Washington, Central Washington, Eastern Washington, Southeast Washington, and the Puget Sound region.

Thirteen students advanced to the state finals, which took place Saturday, March 9, at Theatre on the Square, in Tacoma. Through three rounds of poetry recitations the students performed works selected from an anthology of more than 600 classic and contemporary poems. Participants were judged by a panel of experts in poetry and performance. The panelists scored each student based on presence, level of difficulty, evidence of understanding, accuracy, and other criteria.

*Poetry Out Loud* is sponsored by the Washington State Arts Commission, the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), and the Poetry Foundation. This is the eighth year that high school students in Washington state took part in *Poetry Out Loud*, a national arts education program that encourages the study of great poetry. This year, the *Poetry Out Loud* National Finals will award a total of \$50,000 in scholarships and school stipends, with a \$20,000 college scholarship for the National Champion.

Visit [www.poetryoutloud.org](http://www.poetryoutloud.org) for more information on this national program or visit [www.arts.wa.gov](http://www.arts.wa.gov) to learn more about the local competition.

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Media contact: Cathy Cochrane, Communications Manager, 360-586-8093, [cathy.cochrane@arts.wa.gov](mailto:cathy.cochrane@arts.wa.gov)