

Spoken Word in Saskatchewan Music Festivals



The Saskatchewan Music Festival Association (established in 1908) is committed to promoting excellence in music and spoken word by providing performance and educational opportunities through competitive music festivals in the Province of Saskatchewan. In addition to the production of 47 district music festivals, SMFA provides a provincial Syllabus, entrance to the annual Provincial Competitions, Concerto Competition and Opera Competition,

as well as partnering in presenting the Canada West Performing Arts Festival. Member festivals are organized by local volunteers and judged by qualified professional adjudicators.

Areas of competition for include: voice, piano, guitar, strings, woodwinds, brass, percussion, pipe and electronic organ, choir/school music, multicultural, **spoken word including classes for students in speech therapy (choral speech, solo poetry, prose, public speaking, storytelling, sacred reading)**, small ensembles, as well as band and orchestral classes. Entrance to SMFA festivals is accessible to all ages, all ethnic groups and people of all faith communities across the province. Students may choose to enter competitive or non-competitive classes.

What is Spoken Word/Speech Arts?

Spoken Word is a discipline or skill that includes speech writing and public speaking; improvisation; storytelling; literary analysis; and the dynamic and effective performance of poetry, prose, and drama. Spoken Word includes the study of vocal variety, body language and physicality, eye focus, characterization, and emotional awareness, in addition to speech structure and the organization of ideas.

Benefits of studying Spoken Word

Spoken Word studies help individuals gain the skills and techniques that will enable them to become more confident speakers and give them an increased awareness of the power and flexibility of their natural voices. Because Spoken Word use the tools of literature and theatre to practice good vocal and performance habits, they also help students become more critical and creative thinkers and encourage them to explore and express their creativity.

Learning Spoken Word gives students the skills and confidence to be clear communicators in a variety of speaking situations, from conversation to interview settings to professional presentations and appearances. The fear of public speaking has long been understood as the number one phobia among individuals across society, which can make it difficult for even the most skilled, talented, and innovative individuals to express themselves before an audience. Speech studies help students to channel and control that fear and give them the confidence that will make them stand out among academic, personal, and professional settings. Students gain an awareness of the impact they can have on the world through the expression of their ideas.

Why get involved in Spoken Word/Speech Arts?

Spoken Word directly align with the three goals of the Saskatchewan K-12 English Language Arts curricula.

Comprehend and Respond (CR) – Students will develop their abilities to view, listen to, read, comprehend, and respond to a variety of contemporary and traditional grade-level-appropriate texts in a variety of forms (oral, print, and other media) from First Nations, Métis, and other cultures for a variety of purposes including for learning, interest, and enjoyment.

Compose and Create (CC) – Students will develop their abilities to speak, write, and use other forms of representation to explore and present thoughts, feelings, and experiences in a variety of forms for a variety of purposes and audiences.

Assess and Reflect (AR) – Students will develop their abilities to assess and reflect on their own language skills, discuss the skills of effective viewers, listeners, readers, representers, speakers, and writers, and set goals for future improvement.

(Ministry of Education, 2010)

Hmm....my students would love to perform in the music festival! How can I tie that experience into what we are already doing in my classroom?



Through preparing for and performing in spoken word/speech arts, students develop their ability to speak with purpose to an audience. Students also develop the ability to assess and reflect on their performance and learn skills of effective speakers. The following chart outlines how the festival's speech arts classes connect to the kindergarten to grade four curricula:

Kindergarten	ELA	<p>CCK.3 Use oral language to converse, engage in play, express ideas, and share personal experiences.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Converse on personal experiences, preferences, and topics of interest: share poems, rhymes, songs, and fingerplays
Grade 1	ELA	<p>CC1.3 Speak clearly and audibly about ideas, experiences, preferences, questions, and conclusions in a logical sequence, using expression and dramatization when appropriate.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use applicable pragmatic, textual, syntactic, semantic/lexical/ morphological, graphophonic, and other communication cues and conventions to construct and communicate meaning when speaking. Rehearse and deliver brief short poems, rhymes, songs, stories (including contemporary and traditional First Nations, Métis, and Inuit poems and stories) or lines from a play and oral presentations about familiar experiences or interests.
Grade 2	ELA	<p>CC2.3 Speak clearly and audibly in an appropriate sequence for a familiar audience and a specific purpose when recounting stories and experiences, giving directions, offering an opinion and providing reasons, and explaining information and directions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand and apply the appropriate cues and conventions (pragmatic, textual, syntactical, semantic/lexical/morphological, graphophonic, and other) to construct and communicate meaning when speaking. Deliver brief recitations (e.g., recite poems, rhymes, verses, and finger plays), participate in choral readings, and give oral presentations about familiar experiences or interests, organized around a coherent focus.
Grade 3	ELA	<p>CC3.3 Speak to present ideas and information appropriately in informal (e.g., interacting appropriately with others to share ideas and opinions, complete tasks, and discuss concerns or problems) and some formal situations (e.g., giving oral explanations, delivering short, simple reports, demonstrating and describing basic procedures) for different audiences and purposes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand and apply the suitable pragmatic, textual, syntactical, semantic/lexical/morphological, graphophonic, and other cues and conventions to construct and communicate meaning when speaking. Retell a narrative including an oral story from a First Nations and Métis perspective. Read prose, scripts, and poetry including First Nations and Métis texts aloud with fluency, expression, and appropriate pace, using intonation and vocal patterns to emphasize important ideas and passages of the text being read. Plan and present, with clear diction, pitch, tempo, and tone, dramatic interpretations of experiences, stories, poems, or plays.
Grade 4	ELA	<p>CC4.3 Speak to present and express a range of ideas and information in formal and informal speaking situations (including giving oral explanations, delivering brief reports or speeches, demonstrating and describing procedures) for differing audiences and purposes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand and apply cues and conventions including pragmatic, textual, syntactical, semantic/lexical/morphological, graphophonic, and others to communicate meaning when speaking. Recite brief poems (e.g., two or three stanzas), monologues, or dramatic dialogues using clear diction, tempo, volume, and phrasing.

Spoken Word can be:

Poetry

This is the best place to start! For this class, choose a poem, memorize it, and perform it in a way that will communicate the poet's meaning to your audience. The SMFA Syllabus has many choices of solo poetry classes, including different styles and eras of poetry, Classroom Solo Spoken Word, Non-Competitive Spoken Word, and Non-Competitive Spoken Word Workshop/Masterclass.

Choral Speech

This is a **group** performing a piece of poetry or a story together. The group is **conducted**, and the piece may include everyone speaking together, mixed with individual (or small group) spoken lines.

Prose

Prose includes anything that is not a play or a poem. It might be a short story or a portion of a book. Choose a portion that stands alone well without the rest of the book around it! This will be performed from memory, sitting or standing.

Solo Scene

This is where you perform a part of a play where only one person speaks. It can be from Shakespeare or from any other play...but keep your audience and setting in mind and be sure to choose something appropriate. You may use a costume and (limited) props and feel free to move as the character would. The SMFA Syllabus also has classes for Duologue Shakespeare Scene, in which two individuals depict two different characters.

Public Speaking

In this class, the speech artist prepares a speech on a topic of their own choosing and delivers the speech to an audience. Prompt cards should be used. This class may appeal to 4-H members who are involved in public speaking in their clubs. Why not take advantage of another opportunity to perform your speech...AND get feedback from an expert adjudicator?

Storytelling

Who doesn't love a good story? In these classes, stories may be taken from fairy tales, fables, and folk stories of any tradition or culture. Stories should not be memorized word-for-word, but rather should be told in your own words, without notes, and using eye contact with the audience.

Sacred Reading

This involves reading a passage from the Bible or other great sacred works, such as the Koran or Talmud. Specific passages are listed in the SMFA Syllabus, and memorization is optional.

Spoken Word can be for any age and level of ability!

The SMFA Syllabus has Spoken Word classes beginning at 8 years of age and continuing through to the senior level (up to age 28 competitively, but there is no age limit on performing for adjudication only). Some District Festivals have added classes for students as young as 5 years old!

Visit <https://smfa.ca/syllabus-regulations/> to find the Spoken Word classes in the current SMFA Syllabus. To find a District Festival near you, visit <https://smfa.ca/district-festivals/> and click on the appropriate festival. Each District Festival has an addendum (list of additional classes specific to their festival) posted on their web page, as well as contact information for their local festival.

Once you've made the fabulous decision to perform Spoken Word/Speech Arts in the music festival, the next question is...what piece should I perform? Of course, there are thousands of answers to that question. This resource is intended to help you get started. Once you've started, you'll find that you have your own ideas.

GENERAL GUIDELINES (FOR TEACHERS AND STUDENTS):

- Visit <https://smfa.ca/district-festivals/> to determine festival dates, entry information and the entry close date for the festival near you.
- If transportation is an issue for your class, reach out to your local festival committee. Some festivals are able and willing to make arrangements to bring the adjudicator to you.
- Choose your selections (see general regulations on the SMFA Syllabus) and be sure to have original copies available to hand in to the adjudicator. Organize this before entering your selections, to avoid the dilemma of being unable to find original copies at festival time! If, for any reason, you do not wish to enter competitively, you may mark your entry "for adjudication only". In this case, you will have the opportunity to perform and receive a written and verbal adjudication, but no mark and no eligibility for awards.
- Choose works that appeal to YOU/YOUR STUDENTS. There are thousands of poems, stories and scenes available. Choose something you like that is appropriate for a family audience.
- When trying to choose a piece, read it OUT LOUD. You'll find that your feelings about the piece are more clear doing it this way rather than reading silently. Poems, in particular, have sound devices that are more enjoyable when spoken aloud.

PLACES TO LOOK FOR SPEECH SELECTIONS:

- SMFA Speech Arts Resource Manual was published in 1997, and the SMFA Syllabus is revised every three years, the class numbers in the Speech Arts Resource Manual no longer align with the current Syllabus. The repertoire samples, however, remain relevant and qualify as original copies for use in the festival. Copies of the Speech Arts Resource Manual are available from the SMFA Provincial Office. Contact us at sask.music.festival@sasktel.net to order a copy.
- The Royal Conservatory of Music offers exams in Speech Arts and Drama. The RCM Speech Arts and Drama Syllabus is free to download from their website at www.rcmusic.ca and offers great advice.
- Consider performing literature you are currently studying at school.
- Saskatchewan has a topnotch province-wide library system, and all you need is a library card. Order a book online from any library in the province, and it will be shipped to your local library.

MORE ABOUT THE ROYAL CONSERVATORY OF MUSIC SPEECH ARTS AND DRAMA SYLLABUS:

- Go to <https://www.rcmusic.com/learning/examinations/academic-resources-and-policies/syllabi-look-for-any-syllabus-below> and select the Speech Arts and Drama Syllabus. Download it for free!
- The syllabus advises students to work one grade below their grade in school – so if you are in Grade 4 in school, look at the Grade 3 list for suggestions of poetry and prose. This will give you a guideline for the type and length of selection suitable for your age. Keep in mind, however, that in the festival, classes designated "Own Choice" are just that. So a selection from ANY grade list of the RCM Syllabus may be performed in ANY age category in the festival.
- The background information on pages 14-17 of the RCM Syllabus has great advice on each type of speech arts performance, but keep in mind that their rules are not SMFA rules. Use this as a resource for additional information.
- For someone who wants to delve more deeply into the world of spoken word/speech arts, the resource lists at the end of the RCM Syllabus offer some very good books to use for more information.

SOME HINTS FOR PROSE SELECTIONS:

Prose is a really great type of speech arts to do! It gives students a chance to take on various voices within a selection, which builds acting skills, and it allows them to perform out of any book they enjoy! Here are some things to consider (these are not rules):

- Choose a passage from any book that you like, or a selection from the RCM syllabus for a grade appropriate to you.
- It is okay to do a descriptive passage, but it's really most fun to do an excerpt that has a narrator as well as characters speaking. That way you get to be more than one person within the performance.
- The prose selection is not staged. Yes, you may use character voices and character placement focus, but there should be only minimal movement, and no costumes. It is not a scene.
- You can look at the RCM syllabus for some hints on making cuts to prose, but here are a few:
 - It's okay to make cuts in prose. (Unlike poetry, which should, generally, not have cuts made.)
 - As long as you maintain the author's intent, you can use a few paragraphs then skip something and continue with another few paragraphs.
 - If you are doing a good job of differentiating your characters, it's okay to leave out words like "he said".
 - In order to make your excerpt flow well, you can leave out a character who is not essential to this part of the story.
- Follow time guidelines – before the entry deadline make sure you have read the excerpt aloud to time it.
- Sometimes your piece might be a whole story – a children's book, or a short story. But most often it will be a part of a larger story. Try to choose an excerpt that stands alone well, that has a beginning, a middle and an end.
- The introduction you make up can fill in any necessary details your audience needs to understand the story. (Something like: This is an excerpt from "Anne of Green Gables" by Lucy Maude Montgomery. *"So far in our story, the little orphan girl, Anne, has been mistakenly sent to a couple who wanted to adopt a little boy."*)

SOME HINTS FOR SOLO SCENE AND SHAKESPEARE SCENE

- Choose something appropriate for your audience and for yourself!
- Yes, you can and should stage it out. Not too many props or sets, keep it minimal. It's also okay to not have a costume, or just to have a shawl or something that suggests a costume.
- Sometimes you will do a scene where another character has a line or two. Yes, you should leave those lines out, but your character will probably be aware of them being said. "Place" the other character out above the heads of the audience and respond to that imagined character.
- Monologue books such as *A Perfect Piece* and *Another Perfect Piece* are good places to FIND a solo scene but – if you are performing a solo scene you should read the whole play. Use the library. In order to perform that character intelligently you need to know the whole story.
- For Shakespeare scenes, an easy place to get some background information is on www.sparknotes.com.

FAVOURITES!

Do you have any poems, books, stories, plays that you especially like to use for performance pieces? If so, let us know and we'll add your favourites to this page. If it's a specific piece, please suggest an age. If it's a book, try to give the complete title, author, and publisher so it's easy for people to find. Thanks!

- 'Til All The Stars Have Fallen – this is a great little book of Canadian poetry for children, and is readily available in the library.
- Robert Munsch – kids LOVE Robert Munsch books. Choral Speech doesn't always have to be poetry – you can use an excerpt from books like his for Choral Speech, or as a soloist it can go in the Prose class. One of the side effects of speech arts is a love of literature and of reading – so books with rhythm and flow and energy in them really work towards that goal.
- The Broadview Anthology has poetry from various centuries, appropriate to mid-teens and up.

SASKATCHEWAN POETRY IDEAS:

We would like to encourage students to work on poetry by Saskatchewan writers. What follows is not a complete list – there are many others to consider. You can search your library for these authors, or other Saskatchewan authors, or choose different selections from these books. The ages are only suggestions.

- Circles by Jessica Layne Bird; AuthorHouse
 - Sr: *Unbiased Potential*
 - 18: No Hope for Hope Happening
 - 18: A Young Man's Pride
 - 16: Hated Like Spiders
 - 16: Wings
 - 14: Unfinished Angels
- Love of Mirrors by Gary Hyland, Coteau Books
 - Sr: That Small Rain Poem AND Small Rain Deceit
 - Sr: Vortal Tomb, Poul nabrone, Ireland
 - 18: Throats of Stone
 - 18: The Wild Yird-Swine
 - 18: A Brief History of Zero
 - 16: Heroes in Coffins
 - 16: Learning Time
 - 16: Reflections: The Love of Mirrors
 - 16: A Safe and Easy Thing
 - 16: Stakes in the River
 - 16: The Doctor
- Red Ceiling by Bridget Keating, Hagios Press
 - Sr: A Letter to My Daughter
- A Sudden Radiance; Saskatchewan Poetry, Coteau Books
 - Sr: Poem About Nothing by Lorna Crozier
 - 18: Marjorie by Jerry Rush
- Going Places, Coteau Books
 - Sr: *Journey Begins* by Don Kerr
- Dancing Visions by Glen Sorestad, Thistledown Press
 - Sr: *Yellow Warblers*
- Famous Roadkill by Allan Safarik, Hagios Press
 - 18: *The Incident*
 - 18: *The Natural History of the Striped Skunk*
- Before the First Word, The Poetry of Lorna Crozier, Wilfred Laurier University Press
 - 18: *On the Seventh Day*
- What We Bring Home, Coteau Books
 - 16: *Dawn* by Judith Krause
- Who Greased the Shoelaces by Lois Simmie, Stoddart
 - 14: *Jimmy Lorris*
 - 12: *Jeremiah*
 - 12: *Lyle*
 - 10: *Handy Insect Identification Guide*
 - 10: *Running in the Family*
 - 8: *Face-off*
 - 8: *Fussy*
 - 8: *Pterodactyl*
 - 8: *Triceratops*
- Listening with the Ear of the Heart: Writers at St. Peter's, St. Peter's Press, Muenster
 - 14: *At Night The Writers* by David Carpenter
- New Canadian Poets, 1975 – 1985, McClelland and Stewart
 - 14: *The Child Who Walks Backwards* by Lorna Crozier
- Silence Like the Sun, Thistledown Press
 - 14: *A Gift Withheld* by John V. Hicks
- Renovated Rhymes by John V. Hicks
 - Any two *may* be done as a sonnet sequence, or one as a poem.
- Prairie Jungle, Coteau Books
 - 14: *Nightmare* by Rick Hillis
 - 10: *Hydrophobia* by Barbara Sapergia
 - 10: *Trip to the Zoo* by Lois Simmie
 - 8: *The Song of Two Cats* by Sandra Church
 - 8: *The Horrible Morning* by Lois Simmie
- White Crane Spreads Wings, Coteau Books
 - 14: *Midnight Skater* by Gary Hyland
- Number One Northern, Coteau Books
 - 14: *St. George* by Nancy Senior
- Hold the Rain in Your Hands, Coteau Books
 - 14: *Morning of the Hoar Frost* by Glen Sorestad
- Inscriptions: A Prairie Anthology, Turnstone Press
 - 12: *Loon Song* by Lorna Crozier
- From The Top of a Grain Elevator by Barbara Nickel, Beach Holme Publishers
 - 12: *At Batoche*
 - 12: *Forty Below*
 - 12: *Gopher Tales*
 - 12: *Prairie Hallowe'en*
 - 12: *The Wind in May*
 - 10: *Saskatoons*
- 200% Cracked Wheat; Coteau Books
 - 12: *help* by Lois Simmie
 - 10: *God lives in Saskatchewan* by Cathy Jewison
 - 8: *How to Tell What You're Eating* by Lois Simmie
- Animals on Parade; Bayard Canada Books
 - 8: *Bee Dance* by Helaine Becker
- Hands Reaching in Water by Gary Hyland, Hagios Press
 - 18: *Dream Place*
- Penned: Zoo Poems, Signal 2009
 - 16: *Santiago Zoo* by Lorna Crozier

