 2025 Frederick Douglass Oratorical Contest Guidelines

**OBJECTIVE:** Students will develop their own oratorical skills while learning about history through the powerful messages delivered by Frederick Douglass.

**ELIGIBILITY:** Students Ages 6-18

**GUIDELINES:** Four Douglass speeches have been selected for this year’s contest and are available online at [Annual Oratorical Contest - Frederick Douglass National Historic Site (U.S. National Park Service) (nps.gov)](https://www.nps.gov/frdo/learn/kidsyouth/oratorical-contest.htm). **Participants must choose one of these four speeches** for their oration for this year’s contest. If you participated in the contest in 2024, you may not use the same speech that you gave in 2024.

* *Our Composite Nation*- speech delivered by Frederick Douglass on December 7, 1869, in Boston, Massachusetts
* *What to the Slave is the Fourth of July* – Speech delivered by Frederick Douglass, July 5, 1852, at Corinthian Hall in Rochester, New York
* *The Race Problem* – Speech delivered by Frederick Douglass, October 21, 1890, at the Metropolitan AME Church in Washington, D.C.
* *Frederick Douglass on Women’s Suffrage –* Speech delivered by Frederick Douglass, March 31, 1888, in Washington, D.C.

Contestants must memorize a selection from one of the above speeches based on the time requirement outlined for their age group division. If you wish to use a middle section of the speech, you may add lines from earlier in the speech as an introduction. You may also remove a paragraph in the middle of your section of the speech to make the length fit the time limit for your age group*–*just be careful not to change the meaning of the speech. This kind of editing is acceptable to make your speech flow well and have good dramatics while sticking to the length required. *You may not change Douglass’ words from the speech nor add your own words. You must ensure that your version of the speech still matches the meaning or message that Douglass is trying to covey.*

**LENGTH OF PRESENTATION:**

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Division** | **Ages\*** | **Time** |
| Elementary | 6 - 8 | 2-4 minutes |
| Junior | 9 - 11 | 4-6 minutes |
| Junior High | 12 - 14  | 6-8 minutes |
| Senior High | 15 - 18  | 8-10 minutes |

\**Use the age that you will be on November 18, 2025*

Please note that your total presentation time does not include your required introduction (see contest rules for what needs to be included in your introduction).

While you may wish to memorize a longer portion of a speech, you must stick to the maximum length of speech for your age group. **Going over or being under on your speech performance time will result in a deduction of points from your overall score.**

**Students delivering their oration remotely by computer** will be using the platform Microsoft Teams to do their presentations. Online contestants will be scheduled for November 18th and 19th between the hours of 9 am and 5 pm EST or the afternoon of the 2oth between 1:00 and 5:00 pm EST.

**Students delivering their speeches in person** will be delivering their orationat:

**Frederick Douglass National Historic Site**

**Visitor Center**

**located at 1411 W Street, S.E., Washington, D.C. 20020.**

In person contestants will be scheduled between the hours of 9:00 am and Noon on Thursday, November 20th or between 9:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. EST on Friday, November 21st and Saturday, November 22nd.

*The site will make every effort to group siblings and groups who are traveling together in time slots that are close to each other.*

**Application Requirements:**

**Applications will be accepted** on a first-come, first selected basis beginning August 27th until all timeslots are filled or until November 12th, whichever comes first. The Park will also maintain a waiting list in the event that someone changes their mind about participation. This year’s application is an online form that will be on the website [Annual Oratorical Contest - Frederick Douglass National Historic Site (U.S. National Park Service) (nps.gov)](https://www.nps.gov/frdo/learn/kidsyouth/oratorical-contest.htm) beginning August 27th.