

John Oliver Simon Award (2026)
Presented by Poetry Promise, Inc.

The John Oliver Simon Award (formerly the Poetry Promise Award) celebrates a full-time student in or from Clark County, Nevada for exceptional promise in poetry. Awardees are selected blindly by the Poetry Promise Board of Directors.

The 1st Place Awardee will receive:

- Recognition for achievement in the art of poetry.
- \$500 to support the study and writing of quality poetry.
- A public reading with prominent Clark County poets on **Saturday, November 14, 2026.**

A **Runner Up** will be selected to receive \$200.

What to submit and when:

This application and three (3) pages of original poetry are due **Friday, September 18, 2026.** Label each poem with a title or number so we know when a new poem begins. Be sure to include page numbers. Print your name on **this application only**. Do not put your name on other pages.

Submit by email to awards@poetrypromise.org.

During the week of **Monday, October 5, 2026**, the top three poets will be notified that they have been selected to proceed to Round 2.

Round 2: Friday, October 16, 2026 - The top three poets should submit 10-15 pages of poetry and a two-page essay. Please reuse the three pages of poetry originally submitted. Label each poem with a title or number so we know when a new poem begins. Be sure to include page numbers. Print your name on the **cover page only**. Do not put your name on any other pages.

What should your essay be about?

Prompt: Write a brief statement on poetry, poets, and/or poetic traditions that you admire and influence you. Tell us why poetry is important to you. It should be 500 to 1,200 words (approximately 1-2 pages, single spaced, 13 pt font, Arial or Times New Roman). Please refer to the background information on the final page of this Application.

Questions? Please email awards@poetrypromise.org.

Application Form

Submit to awards@poetrypromise.org by Friday, September 18, 2026

1. What are your full name and preferred pronouns?

(Example: First M. Last, she/her/hers)

2. What is your phone number and area code? (Example: 702-706-2383)

3. What is your home address? (include city, state, and zip code)

4. Will you be 15 years old by October 15, 2026?

5. What is the name of the high school you attend(ed)?

6. Which college or university have you applied to? Or which colleges or universities do you want to apply to?

7. Which college or university do you attend if you're in college?

8. Please email this document and 3 pages of poetry to awards@poetrypromise.org.

You may print multiple poems on one page, but please submit no more than 3 pages. Good luck!

*** * * What Inspired the John Oliver Simon Award? * * ***

John Oliver Simon, a beloved Bay Area poet, devoted himself to teaching children to write poetry. He co-founded and taught at the People's Community School in Berkeley (1969-1973). He was a former president and board member of California Poets in the Schools (CalPoets) and served as the artistic director of Poetry Inside Out, a program of the Center for the Art of Translation. In 2013, he was named the River of Words Teacher of the Year by former U.S. Poet Laureate Robert Hass. John Oliver Simon and Bruce Isaacson were colleagues and John consistently encouraged Bruce to create a Nevada Poets in the Schools. He offered guidance, a listening ear, and encouragement to Bruce. Indeed, John Oliver Simon was the catalyst for our Nevada Poets in the Schools program. We re-named the Poetry Promise Award to honor John Oliver Simon, who passed away on January 16, 2018.

Inspiration for the award also came from reading of the life of poet **Arthur Rimbaud**. Arthur Rimbaud was perhaps born to be the most talented writer of his era. A lack of local understanding and opportunities led to his abandoning poetry at the age of 21 to become an adventurer and gun runner in colonial Africa. He has since been claimed as a prime inspiration by literary movements from the French Symbolists, Surrealists, Existentialists, Beats, the Punk movement, etc. Our hope in establishing the award and local workshops is to provide constructive avenues of engagement. We hope to encourage literary understanding and achievement by promising writers of all ages.