

HINTS FOR SPECIFIC EVENTS

POETRY

Poetry must be memorized. It is important NOT to prompt them. Some will even ask you to do it. Please do not. If they have to start over, it's OK— just deduct points. It is not unusual for the student to do an outstanding job on the first few lines and then fall apart. You can easily tell who worked hard on preparing the piece and who did not. Bear in mind the final relative length of the text compared to the other students. Remember not to ask them any questions about meaning, etc. Their job is to recite from memory.

PROSE

Prose must be read. It does not have to be held with both hands as in some other competitions. Well prepared kids often seem to have memorized the piece but as long as they hold the copy to read, this does not count as memorization and does not disqualify them. Sometimes there are last minute deletions of text. It may be marked out. It's OK for them to do that. They may mark their own text in any way. Your copy must be clean except for any deletions. Just bear in mind the final relative length of the text compared to the other students. As in poetry, they sometimes make an excellent start and then falter badly. Same about questions, etc as in poetry.

SIGHT READING

All they have to do is read the text. There is only one per level but they are different in preliminaries, semi-finals and finals. Give them two minutes to look through it – silently or out loud -- no dictionaries or other help. It's tempting to ask them about their piece but that's not part of the competition.

I always looked quickly through the piece for a few key words and phrases like *en haut*, *observer*, *films*, *mœurs* and the like to use as a guide.

GUIDED SPEAKING (I wrote a lot because this where there seems to be the most questions)

Again, it's very tempting to want to help them or correct them. **Please do not.** They should have a choice of three pictures or, in the more advanced levels, a series of pictures that tell a story. Turn them upside down and let them pick. They have 2 minutes to prepare -- without any help -- and a maximum of 3 to talk. You are looking for the overall quality of the French – variation of vocabulary and idioms, correctness of grammar, richness of language – rather than a narrative or complete story. Of course, the more narrative-like it is, the better, and it should get more complicated as the level advances. Bear in mind that the level of language that they can produce on a test at school is higher than what they can produce on-the-spot at Symposium.

In level 1 you might expect to hear a lot of *il/elle s'appelle*, *il/elle est*, *il/elle fait*, *il y a*. In 2, they may know some reflexive verbs and be able to go through *se lever*, *se laver s'habiller*, etc. They should be able to do short sentences and may be able to use sequencing words like *d'abord*, or *ensuite*. In 3, you should expect some *passé composé*, *futur proche*, maybe some object pronouns and definitely some solid sentences in some kind of order. In 4 and above, they should be able to vary tenses, use lots of adjectives and maybe even throw in a subjunctive or two. They should be able to tell a story, not necessarily complete, and/or create a coherent narrative,

It's a good idea to tell them before they start that when they're done, they're done. Sometimes they try to keep going for the full time and really make a mess of it! This is especially true at the lower levels when there can be tears (really!) after they've only said a couple of things and are stuck.

If you have been involved with oral testing in schools, please take into account that when a student knows the topic and vocabulary in advance as on a chapter exam, they do much better. At Symposium they have no idea of what will turn up and they are even more nervous than for a test in class.

DRAMA

Basically the same as poetry but with dramatic interpretation at the forefront so be sure to look at them! For a group, the ensemble is of utmost importance. Like everything else, keep in mind the final relative length of the text compared to the other students. If you are in a regular classroom, I suggest you clear a space or have the first group do it for you. There should be some helpers from the host school around who would be glad to give you a hand. The host school is responsible for putting things back in order. The students may move anywhere in the room and use anything that is normally found in a classroom as long as they did not bring it with them. They are allowed no other props or any costumes – although some wear “school clothes” I bet they wouldn’t be caught dead in elsewhere!

ART

Some are FABULOUS ...and some are not... Each school may enter 1 piece per category so there can be over 25 pieces, or as few as 5. Some do not meet the criteria for a category - say, a pastel entered as water-base. You can’t switch the category because you don’t know if the school has a piece in that one so it must be disqualified. Pieces must be dry or they are disqualified too!!! Please state the reason for disqualification on the ballot. Give at least one point per category. The more the work addresses the criteria the more points it gets. If the work is completely original, it does not infringe on any copyright and should get the full 5 points. This has been confusing to some who have awarded no points here. A close version of a copyrighted work should be disqualified. An interpretation can receive anywhere from 1-5 points at your discretion

Once you see how many pieces there are in a category and what they’re like you can switch categories with another judge and/or help each other. As long as everything gets judged and ranked, it doesn’t really matter who judges it. I always liked having someone with whom I could discuss final choices whether or not I was the only judge for a category. In many cases it was extremely difficult to rank the final 6. With the variation in the number of works and their quality, it can take from ½ hour to 3! But it’s fun - ☺. I’m trying to schedule two judges per category if I can. It goes much faster when there is someone with whom you can discuss the pieces without having to interrupt someone judging another category to ask for input.

VOCAL MUSIC

There are no levels and music does not have to be memorized. I’ve only done solos but this is important and happens every year – they **MUST** have the score **AND** the lyrics! Often they only have the lyrics. Not only do the rules say they need both, I found it helps to have the notes to mark exactly where they miss. I don’t know if the groups forget, but they also need both. I’ve been told that a reason they may forget to bring the music is that it’s not required in UIL. I don’t know if that’s true but it would explain a lot. If they have musical accompaniment, it is up to them to provide the equipment and set it up. If the Francophone composer is not well-known they should have some information for you.

INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC & PIANO

Désolée! Can’t help you there but I assume it helps you to have the score - ☺ As in vocal, I’ve been told that a reason they may forget to bring the music is that it’s not required in UIL Again, I don’t know if that’s true but it would explain a lot. All know is that it doesn’t have to be memorized and there are no levels. I’m assuming that each member of a group must play an instrument which has music in the score. As in vocals, if the Francophone composer is not well-known they should have some information for you.

And, once again, we cannot thank you enough for judging
and hope you enjoy the experience!