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Kentuckian finishes high in poetry contest

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Kentucky's Kendra Holloway was among the 12 top finishers in the Poetry Out Loud National Finals.

Held in Washington, D.C., on May 16, the event brought 51 (state and District of Columbia) champions to the city's Lincoln Theatre in a competition co-sponsored by the National Endowment for the Arts and the Poetry Foundation.

Holloway, who is finishing up her junior year at Christian County High School, won Kentucky's Poetry Out Loud finals on March 30, reciting Dudley Randall's "Ballad of Birmingham" and Lady Mary Chudleigh's "To the Ladies."

At nationals, she competed in the Midwest Region against 16 others. "I just tried to be calm. ... I was a little nervous before I went on stage," she said in an interview. "As soon as I stepped on stage everything kind of settled in, and I was me.

"There was a lot of stiff competition," she continued. "You didn't know who was going to win because there were so many people who were so close."

Jackson Hille, a high school senior from Ohio, won the first prize of a \$20,000 scholarship (reciting Billy Collins' "Forgetfulness"). New Hampshire's Teal Van Dyke took the \$10,000 second prize, and Hawaii's Kelli Taulia Anae took third place and \$5,000.

As a finalist, Holloway won \$500 for her school to use to buy poetry books. The NEA and the Poetry Foundation gave \$500,000 apiece in support of the 2006 competitions.

What's next for Holloway?

"I'm going to just work hard and travel as much as I can over the summer," she said. "Hopefully I can do some more writing over the summer and see where that takes me."