

Science Fiction & Fantasy Poetry Association

SFPA Rhysling Awards & Anthology Official Policies & Procedures

The Rhysling Awards are presented annually by the Science Fiction & Fantasy Poetry Association (SFPA) for the best speculative poetry, in the short (11–49 lines) and the long (50–299 lines) categories. Nominations may be for any speculative poem (member or not) published in the previous year and are selected by the membership of the SFPA. The membership votes with up to three choices for each category.

Rhysling Chair

The Rhysling Chair oversees the Rhysling Awards process and manages anthology production. If desired, the Chair may delegate tasks to an assistant or assistants; however, the ultimate responsibility for the following tasks belong to the Chair unless otherwise noted.

Rhysling Jury

The Rhysling Jury selects finalists from the list of eligible nominees. They report to the Rhysling Chair and ultimately to the SFPA Executives.

Poem Eligibility:

- Poems must have been first published during the previous calendar year (unless a given publication was not available during its nominal year of appearance, the official date of the issue is to be used).
- Poems must be nominated for one category.
 - **Short poems:** 11–49 lines (101–499 words for prose poems)
 - **Long poems:** 50–299 lines. (500–1999 words for prose poems)
 - Excerpted sections of longer poems are not eligible for awards unless the excerpted section was first published as a distinct poem, or part of a series of distinct/titled poems.
- A poem may only be eligible for the Rhyslings, Elgins, or Dwarf Stars: one poem is not eligible for multiple SFPA awards.
 - Poems eligible for Dwarf Stars (10 lines and under, 100 words and under for prose poems) are not eligible for the Rhysling.
 - Poems eligible for the Elgin Award (10+ pages, here defined as 300+ lines; 2000+ words for prose poems) are not eligible for the Rhysling.
 - If a poet accepts a Rhysling nomination, and the poem fits the guidelines for Elgins or Dwarf Stars, the poem becomes ineligible for additional SFPA awards.
- Eligible poem length does not count the title, dedication, stanza breaks, or epigraph (unless the epigraph is fictional/written by the poet).
- Prose poems that are mixed prose and line-broken will be determined proportionately.
- Multimedia works or illustrated poems are ineligible.

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- Poems need not be by SFPA members and may be self-published, including on blogs and social media
- Substantial revisions of published poems, or revisions transforming an ineligible work to become eligible, are not allowed.
- Works containing potentially offensive content counter to the SFPA values of inclusiveness and community may be deemed ineligible at the discretion of the Chair.
- Poems must be speculative in nature (see definition)

Definition of Speculative

The SFPA favors a broad definition of speculative poetry that is inclusive of diverse genres and sub-genres (e.g., science fiction, science, fantasy, horror, "what if"). For this reason, Rhysling Chairs and jurors should be familiar with the speculative rubric as defined by organizational guidelines, and publication history, and manifestations of speculative poetry in the wider, global community. While it is important to remain true to our organizational purpose to spotlight speculative poetry as a distinct category and art form, the Chair is encouraged to apply generous standards when determining the eligibility of nominated works.

Translations

Works translated into English are eligible for all SFPA awards. The original can come from any time period: past, present, or future. Only the English version needs to have been published within the last year. Permission to publish is also needed from the original author unless the work is in the public domain. Line or word count will be based on the English language translation.

Nomination Procedure

The SFPA membership is informed that nominations are open on **January 1 and close February 15** through SFPA Mailchimp notices.

- Active SFPA members may submit one short- and one long-form nomination.
- Members may not nominate their own work or the work of an immediate family member. This includes partners, spouses, parents, children, and siblings.
- Members submit their nominations through the webform created and maintained by a member of the executive team.
- A spreadsheet generated by the form tracks the nominator, poet, poem title, publisher, email address, and other information. The form automatically sends the nominator a first acknowledgement of receipt (Chair does not need to send receipt notifications). The chair notifies the nominator whether the nomination is determined to be eligible or not.
- Questions and nominations may arrive through the email rhysling@sfpoetry.com. The chair is responsible for responding to incoming email within three (3) days.

The Chair ascertains eligibility as poems come in and should notify a nominator immediately should a nomination be found ineligible, citing the reason(s) for disqualification and informing the nominator that they may select another poem in the same category. Extensions beyond the

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nomination deadline may be considered on a case-by-case basis, though nominators should be urged to select replacement poems as soon as possible. *Nominators may request a reconsideration of the Rhysling Chair's determination, as described below.*

Posting of Nominations

1. All nominated poems must be reviewed by the Rhysling Chair and one other assistant or designee to confirm that the nominated work is
 - nominated by current SFPA members
 - first published in the eligible year
 - meets the length requirements of the category for which it was nominated
 - can be categorized as speculative, even by the broadest interpretation of that term
 - does not contain offensive content that is counter to the SFPA values of inclusiveness and community.
2. The Chair submits eligible works to the Website Coordinator and jury once the nominees are verified. The long list is to be posted after the nomination period has closed: no sooner than February 16, and no later than February 28.

Reconsideration Requests

Note: publication in a primarily speculative market (magazines, journals, anthologies, collections, etc.) or professional qualifications of the nominator will not, in and of themselves, be considered justification for a decision reversal.

1. The Rhysling Chair has first authority to determine eligibility of nominated works. Should a nominated poem be deemed ineligible due to offensive content OR lack of speculative content, the nominator may request a reconsideration of the Chair's decision.
 - **Requests must be received within one week of the Rhysling Chair's initial determination of ineligibility.**
 - Requests must be directed to the Chair, in writing, to the same email designated for Rhysling nominations.
 - Requests must include a statement by the nominator justifying the use of content deemed offensive and/or detailing the perceived speculative content of the contested poem.
2. The Rhysling Chair must review requests for reconsideration immediately, and to deliver a determination in writing within three (3) days of receipt.
 - If the Chair deems the nominator's explanation to be sufficient, the initial decision will be reversed, and the poem will be added to the posted list of nominated works on the SFPA website.
 - Should the Chair determine that the nominator's explanation is not sufficient to reverse the initial decision, the Chair is directed to provide the nominator with an explanation for why the determination of ineligibility has been upheld.

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- The Chair will also inform the nominator of their right to file an appeal with the SFPA executive committee.

Appeal Process for Ineligible Works

Should a nominator request a reconsideration and wish to appeal the Rhysling Chair's determination of ineligibility, the nominator may then file an appeal with the SFPA executive committee. No appeals will be considered without first requesting reconsideration by the Chair.

- Appeals must be directed in writing to the SFPA Secretary within three days of the Rhysling Chair's response to reconsideration requests. Appeals should include a transcript of the reconsideration request along with a detailed rebuttal from the nominator explaining why the nominator feels the Rhysling Chair's decision should be overturned.
- The Executive Committee will review appeals immediately and will deliver a determination in writing to the nominator and the Rhysling Chair within three-five days. The Executive Committee must reach a unanimous decision to uphold the Chair's ruling; if one or more members of the Executive Committee deem that the poem should be considered eligible, the Executives will overturn the Chair's ruling.
- Should the Executive Committee unanimously agree to uphold the Chair's determination of ineligibility, the nominator of the disqualified poem may select a replacement poem; extensions to the nominations deadline (February 15) will be granted on a case-by-case basis; however, due to time constraints, replacement poems selected after the February 15 deadline will not be eligible for reconsideration or appeal.

Jury Process

Nominated and verified works will be provided by February 28 to the Rhysling Jury for each category. The juries will provide their selections to the Chair no later than April 30. The jury for the short is tasked with providing the Chair with a list of no more than 50 poems. The jury for the long category is tasked with providing the chair with a list of no more than 25 poems.

Only finalist poems selected by the jury will appear in the *Rhysling Anthology*, which serves as the document for the membership at large to evaluate and vote on winners.

Jury Overview and Selection

The position of jury member is unique in the Science Fiction & Fantasy Poetry Association (SFPA) in that it requires acting as a team of editors in terms of poem selection. Jurors should be familiar with the definition of speculative. The SFPA Executive Committee will have the sole discretion of selecting the Jury Members, and they will evaluate candidates based on their knowledge and experience with speculative poetry.

The SFPA will strive to include a range of identities and backgrounds among the jury members. SFPA membership is not required to serve on the jury, though volunteers from within the organization are welcome. SFPA Executives will serve on the jury only where there is a lack of qualified volunteers.

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A separate jury will consider each Rhysling category, short and long. Each jury will include no fewer than three (3), and no more than six (6) individuals. A person may serve on both the short and long jury within the same year. Jurors are not paid, but they will be credited in the *Rhysling Anthology* for the year in which they served, with the thanks and gratitude of the SFPA.

General Expectations and Responsibilities

While each jury is given general freedom to determine their own best methods for ranking and selecting finalists, they are expected to advance only speculative poems that they believe are strong candidates to win the award or that reflect superior achievement in the field. Likewise, a simple score-and-average approach may not be sufficient to thoroughly evaluate each work. The jury is expected to provide the finalists without assistance from the Chair.

Rhysling jury members are expected to:

- ...select a spokesperson to communicate with the Chair and Executives.
- ...read and consider every poem nominated while developing their own understanding.
- ...apply their judgment without favor or favoritism.
- ...remain open to many ways of evaluating quality—not seeking to advance one approach or technique.
- ...engage with their fellow jurors respectfully.
- ...avoid discussion about the nominees with others outside the jury, Chair, and Executives.
- ...maintain impartiality until voting has closed and winners have been announced. (Blogging or campaigning for or against any particular poem or poet is strictly prohibited and is grounds for termination.)
- ...provide timely responses to all official communication during deliberations.
- ...send their final selections to the Chair by April 30.
- ...notify the Chair and Executives immediately in the event that they are unable to fulfill these duties by the deadlines.

Limitations

- Any poems by a juror are ineligible to advance as finalists in the same category as the juror is evaluating.
- A juror must notify the group of any conflicts of interest that arise (poems by a family member, employer/employee, student/instructor; poems they edited; etc.) and recuse themselves from the decision-making for that work.
- The Chair will be the primary resource to settle disputes or ties among jurors.
- A juror may not serve more than two consecutive terms.
- Jurors may be removed by the Executives at any time for any reason.

Permissions & Discounts

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Permission from the copyright holder (generally the poet and/or the publisher) is needed to reprint each finalist poem in the *Rhysling Anthology*. The Chair will obtain reprint permissions for all poems nominated, as well as the poet's e-mail address for sending the .pdf proof and mailing address for a print copy of the anthology.

Poets whose work appears in the *Rhysling Anthology* will receive a 50% discount on additional copies of the *Rhysling Anthology*. Nominated poets who are not currently members of the SFPA are invited to join at a special 50% discount.

Cover Art

The Chair is responsible for locating cover art and making arrangements for its use. The Chair should begin to pursue artwork well in advance of the publication date. **Artwork must be supplied to the designated layout designer no later than June 1.**

Information for cover artists: SFPA currently pays \$10 and a copy of the anthology. The finished size of the anthology is 5.5 x 8.5 inches, perfect-bound; front cover—printable size of 5.625 x 8.75 inches, including bleed, 300 dpi; the image must be at least this size and of similar proportions unless a cropped detail can be used, or unless it is framed by a background. Note that the title and Chair's name will be placed on the front cover.

Layout

Text of the finalists, permissions, poet e-mail addresses, publication credits, cover art, and Editor's Note should be provided to the designated layout designer by June 1 (layout can be finished while some permissions are still pending).

Proofs

The Chair, subject to approval of the poet, will correct typos. Proofs will be sent to contributors by June 5 so that contributors may have an opportunity to review their work as it will appear in the anthology. **Any corrections to proofs must be forwarded to the Chair (or designee) by June 14.** Contributors who do not respond to proofs by this deadline waive their right to do so unless alternative arrangements have been reached with the Chair prior to the deadline.

Voting

Voting opens July 1 with the release of the anthology. Voting is normally handled with an online form to which several officers and staff have access for validation. The form URL is given via email and in the July issue of *Star*Line*. A mailing address is provided where eligible members without internet access can send in their votes.

Votes are weighted with 5, 3, and 1 points awarded to each member's first, second, and third selection. The points are totaled to determine winners and honorable mentions.

The Rhysling Chair, the officers, and designated assistants will confirm the count. **The voting deadline is September 15.**

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The Rhysling Chair will notify winners; results will be announced as soon as confirmed and published online and in the October issue of *Star*Line*.

Awards

SFPA staff will send the award to the winners and certificates to the second and third places.

Publicity

The Rhysling Chair is expected to actively promote the anthology on social media and elsewhere within the literary community. The Chair will receive up to 10 additional copies of the anthology for publicity distribution.

Impartiality

The Chair agrees to maintain impartiality during the nomination and voting periods. Blogging or campaigning for or against any particular poem or poet is strictly prohibited and is grounds for termination as chair.

Deadlines

In consideration of the SFPA's international membership, all deadlines defined within these guidelines pertaining to nominations and voting will be understood to fall at midnight relative to the latest time zone on Earth.

Forfeit of Duties

The Chair is expected to notify the officers immediately in the event that they are unable to fulfill these duties by the deadlines described herein.

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TIMELINE

October 1	Chair announced in <i>Star*Line</i> and/or on social media
October 31	Jury members announced by SFPA Executives
January 1	Nominations open
February 15	Nomination deadline
Feb 28	Permissions, publication credits, poet info due
March 1	Jury deliberations begin
April 30	Jury presents finalists to chair
June 1	Chair's intro and cover art due
June 5	Proof due to contributors
June 14	Corrections due from contributors
June 15	Final Printing deadline
July 1	Voting Opens
July 7 - 15	Paper anthology mailed with <i>Star*Line</i>
September 15	Voting Deadline
October 1	Winners published in <i>Star*Line</i>

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RHYSLING CHAIR CONTRACT

Please review the Rhysling Chair Guidelines. Initial each item below and sign at the end to indicate your agreement to this contract.

I have read the guidelines and agree to meet all obligations described, including the following:

initials

	Promote nominations and voting every two weeks on Facebook, on SFPAnet, through other social media sites, and to other organizations
	Determine poem and nominator eligibility
	Confirm line length and correct category
	Edit for typos
	Obtain permission from each poet and publisher for use in the anthology
	Obtain cover art for the anthology
	Submit intro, cover art, permissions, publication credits, and poet info by March 1
	Supply proofs to the nominees by June 5
	Submit all final corrections to the designer by June 14
	Remind membership of voting dates, July 1 - September 15, at least every two weeks
	Supply a completed nomination tracking spreadsheet to SFPA executives at the completion of Chair duties
	Notify nominators regarding ineligible poems as outlined
	Inform the executive immediately if incapable of fulfilling duties

Name:

Email address:

Phone number:

Date:

Authorized electronic signature:

(okay to type your name)