

Tips and Resources for German Contests

A compilation from various teachers and German professors

Arts

General:

- review policy on documenting approximate value of materials you used that you already owned;
- in events where German wording is part of the project (club album, photo essay, poster, T-shirt, video), have the students come up with the original wording, but have a more-experienced speaker (teacher, exchange student, German speaker from community) check it for grammar and syntax;
- LABEL the entry with name, school, city, and any other information requested in rules! You would not believe the number of entries we get that aren't labeled!

Club Album: make it the responsibility of your German Club and/or German NHS secretary and/or historian.

Gingerbread House: winning entries tend to approach the maximum allowable dimensions; small may be cute, but it generally does not win.

Declamation

General:

- Create a collection of suitable poems and prose pieces (binder?). Number the lines on each piece. Arrange collection by length. If you judge one of those categories at contest, keep the copies for your bank!
- Build a collection of digital recordings of the pieces: teacher or some other native speaker. Easy recording software: Audacity. When I make a recording, I read the piece through once “normally,” then I go through the entire piece explaining the literal meaning and any insights I have about interpretation plus highlighting common pronunciation pitfalls, then I read it a second time very slowly and distinctly, and then I read it a third time as dramatically as I can.
- Advise students regarding composure and preparation: enter room confidently, greet judges, hand them their copies; for reading, have the piece in a sturdy folder so you're not standing there holding a floppy piece of paper; SAY THE TITLE AND AUTHOR; make at least occasional eye contact with the judges.
- Meet individually with students to listen to them recite their pieces and/or have them record it for you digitally (one suggestion: www.lingtlanguage.com). Just before contest, have them recite it in front of the class to get used to doing it in front of an audience.

Sources:

- <http://gutenberg.spiegel.de>
- Old InterNationes publications that used to be available from AATG: *Vorschläge/Vorschläge 2/Vorschläge 3* by Hans Weber, *Anspiel* by Dietrich Krusche and Rüdiger Krechel, *Aufschluss* by Dietrich Krusche, *Mit der Zeit* by Dietrich Krusche
- Invest in one or two anthologies of German poetry: for example, *The Penguin Book of German Verse*, ed. Leonard Forster, ISBN 0-14-058546-X; *Deutsche Gedichte: Von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart*, ed. Benno von Wiese, ISBN 3-464-57000-2 (Cornelsen); *Listen & Enjoy German Poetry* (book and CD).
- Prose: *Kurzgeschichten* (Cideb), ISBN 978-88-530-0052-1; *Lesehefte: 55 gewöhnliche und ungewöhnliche, auf jeden Fall aber kurze and Kürzestgeschichten* (Klett), ISBN 3-12-261070-1; collections of short stories by Franz Hohler or Heinrich Hannover.

- For some more modern piece options: (courtesy of Ewa Siwak, Texas State University)
 - 1) The link below has a list and articles about several new(er) German authors - the articles will give teachers an idea what to expect. <http://www.goethe.de/ins/eg/prj/mal/jda/dtl/deindex.htm> At the bottom of each article there are links, and they often include *Leseproben*. This might be a start.
 - 2) This site has several authors and each includes a pdf version of a Leseprobe as well. <http://www.litrix.de/buecher/belletristik/deindex.htm>

Text Ideas: (courtesy of Professors of German, Christopher Wickham and Silke Schade, UTSA and Evelyn Saucier, retired from Westwood HS)

Poetry Level I:

Der Panther (Reading)
 Einen Brief soll ich schreiben (Reading)
 Sachliche Romanze (Reading)
 Fallersleben: Einigkeit und Recht und Freiheit (Memory)
 Du (Memory)
 Erziehung (Memory)

Poetry Level II or III:

Heine: Sie saßen und tranken am Teetisch
 Hofmannsthal: Was ist die Welt?
 Rilke: Herbsttag
 Lasker-Schüler: Mein blaues Klavier
 Van Hoddiss: Weltende
 Kästner: Sachliche Romanze
 Der erste Schnee (Reading - II)
 Mein Kind (Reading - II)
 Hund und Katze (Reading - II)
 Max und Moritz (Memory – II)
 Wer sagt das Mädchen (Memory – II)
 Mein Bär (Memory – II)
 Mein Berlin (Reading - III)
 Wiegenlied (Reading - III)
 Nachtgedanken (Reading - III)
 Mein Kind wir waren Kinder (Memory – III)
 Traum und Leben (Memory – III)
 Der Werwolf (Memory – III)

Poetry Level IV:

Heine: Die Wanderratten
 Bachmann: Nebelland
 Trakl: De Profundis
 Droste: Am Turme
 Die Granadiere (Reading)
 Handstand auf der Lorelei (Reading)
 Handschuh (Reading)
 Das Karussell (Memory)

Die Teilung der Erde (Memory)
 Willkommen und Abschied (Memory)

Prose:

Grimm: Der süße Brei
 Grimm: Die Sterntaler
 Bichsel: Der Milchmann
 Özdamar: Ein japanisches Sprichwort sagt . . .
 Purzelhans (Reading - I)
 Der Suesse Brei (Reading - I)
 Der Bauer und der Esel (Reading - I)
 Der Schulinspector zu Besuch (Memory – I)
 Der Bauer und der Dieb (Memory – I)
 Alis Probleme (Memory – I)
 Ein schlechter Tag (Reading – II)
 Friedrich und der Kaffee (Reading – II)
 Friedrich der Große und Mendelssohn (Reading – II)
 Friedrich der Grosse (Memory – II)
 Kannitverstan (Memory – II)
 Muenchhausens Abenteuer (Memory – II)
 Emil (Reading – III)
 Der König von Sachsen (Reading – III)
 Das Loch im Strumpf (Reading – III)
 Der Arzt erzählt (Memory – III)
 Gutes Wort, Böse Tat (Memory – III)
 Schildbürger und Dummheiten (Memory – III)
 das Steinerne Brot (Reading – IV)
 der Bauer und der Teufel (Reading – IV)
 das Verlorene Gesicht (Reading – IV)
 Sterntaler (Memory – IV)
 Martin Luther (Memory – IV)
 Wie Eulenspiegel auf dem Seil lief (Memory – IV)

Drama

Depending on the make up of your classes, you may have more boys than girls one year or vice versa. It's easy to change characters around to make them work for your class dynamic!

Duet Acting: possible source: *101 Szenen für 2 Personen*, ISBN 3-89487-481-3 (but be careful, some of the scenes are translations from plays by non-German authors, but it also has quite a few scenes from German plays). Otherwise, simply mine plays that you have in your personal collection or that you read in your classes.

Puppet Show: Most schools do fairy tales, although there is no requirement to do so.

Skit: You can use published materials, but my recommendation is to assemble your group and then brainstorm a skit that fits the particular group size and personality: fairy tale, modern riff on a fairy tale, smash-up of several fairy tales, common TV formats such as game shows or talk shows. Untried idea: pick a theme for the year and have all your skits center on that theme. At least this gives you a starting point for your brainstorming. I'll be taking my students this spring to the Wagner opera *Tristan und Isolde*, so my idea for this year is to have all our skits based on the plot of that opera.

Music

For chorus, classical ensemble, and vocal solo, I don't get involved in choosing music. I refer the students to the choir/orchestra teachers or their private tutors/coaches, who are usually willing to help them find a piece.

Polka Band:

- Fest-Musik-Haus, Box 162, Medina, TX 78055, www.festmusik.com, 830-589-2268, contact: Herbert Bilhartz
- www.sheetmusicplus.com, do a search for "polka band strauss"

Folk Dance: If you're not already doing folk dance, the best way to break into this event is to 1) find a coach and 2) find a teacher who already has a team to mentor you. Rustin Buck doesn't know a single folk dance himself, but he is willing to help you with advice and will make you a copy of a binder of folk dance instructions and CDs that was put out some years ago by the Texas folk dance groups. Valina Witte in the Houston area is very willing to help as a coach and, if you're not in the Houston area, she might be able to put you in touch with people in your area who could coach (www.valinapolka.com). It can be done without a coach: get a copy of the binder and then comb Youtube for videos of the dances.

Oral Tests

Directed Dialogue: Direct students to question banks posted on State and Houstonfest websites. Use www.lingtlanguage.com to create mock interviews that students must complete at home, perhaps 5 questions per week.

Sight Reading: Use www.lingtlanguage.com to post a "text of the week" (any text from internet will do) and have students record it for you. Website allows you to give written feedback to student.

Pass auf!

Divide topics among students: research a topic, create sample questions to build up a question bank, become the expert on that area. Consult the culture section of the document "Tips for Written Testing Events" that can be found on State, Houstonfest and Sprachfest websites for ideas on subtopics that students need to be familiar with. It is essential that the students also keep up with current events; a certain number of questions every year will be from recent news, and Terry Smith says this is often the deciding factor in a match.

Research Paper

In choosing a topic, the more specific and locally-based, the better. Try to steer students away from the old stand-bys: Prince Carl, Meusebach, Adelsverein. It can be a family history. Or focus on a local German building, organization, church. Consult the journal of the German-Texan Heritage Society (www.germantexans.org) for inspiration. Contact the nearest chapter of the Texas German Society (www.texasgermansociety.com) to see if they know of any stories that are just waiting to be told.

Scavenger Hunt

Use the Pass Auf! Erkunde Wortschatz list as a vocabulary tool.

Written Tests

Direct students to document “Tips for Written Testing Events” on State, Houstonfest and Sprachfest websites. Use old National German Exams for listening and reading practice.

Perspective from retired veteran teacher, Evelyn Saucier (Westwood):

I never had trouble getting kids to go. There were always more kids than I could use, and so I had a grade cut off (85 or higher) because there didn't seem a fair way to do it. The 85 was in German, but then I always checked out their grades in other classes as well.

The kids who didn't go to contest had a project to do. Depending on the class and ability level, it may have been something to research in either English or German. German related, of course.

Some days I could take a class to the library for research, and then just work with those going to contest on a one-on one basis.

I usually had the contest kids perform for the class a few days before Sprachfest. I gave them a grade for their performance. If it was supposed to be memorized, and it had better be memorized. The kids got a grade for their preparedness, and bonus points if they did very well at competition. No one got to do just one thing, although of course the better kids always had more to memorize.

Sometime between Thanksgiving and Christmas I would explain what all could be done for competition (overhead). I did pass a sheet around for sign up, but I generally picked the parts kids played, what they memorized or read, and which tests they took. I tried to listen to their preferences, but I made the final decisions. Needless to say, I didn't use the same material each year. I did try to choose poems and prose works that I thought would fit a particular student.

I always had a full bus of kids going, and often had parents drive the extras or the ones that had to leave early or come late for whatever else was going on. As I said, I usually had to turn kids away because there are only so many slots open for the testing, readings, and memory works, and one bus load was more than enough.