

## VDOE Report for VATE August 2, 2008

- Assessment committees will finish their work this week. The Superintendent's Memorandum announcing the application process for these committees usually posts in November. The deadline for applications each year is January 30.
- The purpose of Poetry in the Schools Program is to support educators in meeting their learning objectives and to encourage young people to enjoy both creating and listening to poetry. There are opportunities for teachers to have poets in their classrooms to share works or to present programs. The Real Virginia Poets Program encourages individual students of poetry to connect with one published poet by phone, email, or letters in order to conduct in-depth research about the development and the process of this genre of literature. Besides offering classroom support, we encourage students to enter our annual contest in January of each year. To learn more about these programs please visit our website at <http://poetrysocietyofvirginia.org/sys-tmpl/htmlpage39/> or contact Beth Huddleston at [bethhud@shentel.net](mailto:bethhud@shentel.net)
- The Council for America's First Freedom announces the 16<sup>th</sup> annual **First Freedom Student Competition**. This **national essay contest** offers **9<sup>th</sup> - 12<sup>th</sup> grade** students an opportunity to compete for a **\$3,000, \$1,500 and \$750 award**, as they examine the First Amendment and the history and relevance of religious freedom in America and the world today. This year's topic introduces students to George Washington's famous statement about "mere" toleration in his 1790 letter to the Jewish congregation of Newport, Rhode Island. Students will identify the basic principles of religious liberty espoused in this primary document and will further research and assess how well the United States has lived up to Washington's ideal. For details, registration, a student flyer and classroom poster, visit: [www.firstfreedom.org](http://www.firstfreedom.org).
- The Big Read for 2009 is- *Their Eyes Were Watching God* . I will send out information about getting the teaching materials once they have been finished. Companion pieces for younger readers include Mary Lyon's books: *Sorrow's Kitchen: The Life and Folklore of Zora Neale Hurston* (Scribner, 1990, Aladdin pb 1992) Grade 8+
- *Roy Makes a Car* (Atheneum 2004) Ages 6-8, For additional information, please visit <http://www.lyonsdenbooks.com/>

- American Shakespeare Center in Staunton, VA has spring and fall seasons. Contact Kristie Dillon at 540-885-5588 ext.19, or at [Kristie@americanshakespearecenter.com](mailto:Kristie@americanshakespearecenter.com) for more information or to book a group. Study guides are available for *The Taming of the Shrew*, *The Merchant of Venice* (spring shows). You may also request study guides from previous shows. They also offer tours of the Blackfriars Playhouse along with lectures and pod casts.
- The Poe Museum has a great new exhibit: *Poe in Comics*; this is a great exhibit for struggling readers. The museum will give away a number of Poe in Comics exhibition catalogues. These catalogues are also free to school libraries. The Library of Virginia is working with the Poe Museum for the 2009 bicentennial. Stay tuned for additional details. They are also seeking partners for their History Channel grants to bring Poe programs into schools. The grant will cover all expenses, so there would be no cost to the schools, but they must have a commitment from schools as grant recipients.  
In honor of Poe's bicentennial celebration, the Library of Virginia, Poe Museum and others have joined forces with a new website, [www.poe200th.com](http://www.poe200th.com). The site will be launched in August. For additional information please contact Katrina (Kat) Spears at 804-648-5523 or [kat@poemuseum.org](mailto:kat@poemuseum.org)
- Middle School Vocabulary Videos will be posted sometime this fall. These short videos best practices for vocabulary instruction can be used as a professional development tool.