

# Rrooar Academy hosts speech competition

SUBMITTED BY MITCHELL SVANTNER

In February 2022, Rrooar Coding and Robotics Academy hosted their third annual Original Oratory Competition. The event, emceed by New Jersey educator Chris Wiseman, saw more than 100 students from across the country participate. Competition centered on the topic "Divided We Fall." Speakers were split into Group 1 (grades 1 – 4) and Group 2 (grades 5 – 8). They competed in qualifying rounds before proceeding to the national event the next weekend.

Participants were tasked with writing and performing an original speech on Zoom. The judges panel included Stephanie Olson, EEO discrimination attorney and Trustee of Lammersville School District; Shakti Pothini, engineering leader at Bio-Rad Labs; Sharan Kaur, former Trustee of New Haven School District and entrepreneur; Paul Romero, licensed school psychologist; Amanda Chagoya, lifetime public speaker and marketing professional; Megan Wingo, Fresno County Public Defender; and

Christa Cannon, professional actress and singer.

Judge Romero stated that in accordance with the idea of "Divided We Fall," each participant "is united in bringing forth information and experiences to the public... This is why we create poems, writings and speeches: to share this information with the world."

Medha Koudinya, a third grader from Forest Park Elementary in Fremont, was declared the winner of Group 1; and Shriyadita Poduval, a fifth grader from Kolb Elementary in Dublin, won first place for Group 2.

Medha's speech began by relating sports like tug-of-war and cricket to the importance of teamwork and cooperation when tackling pollution. She stated, "If all we think about is our own needs and comforts, then it's only a matter of time until life on Earth falls apart." Later, she impressively subverted her own opening by explaining that "reality is not as simple as tug-of-war... we must act now and act together to save our only home."

Shriyadita offered a nuanced discussion on having different opinions versus being "divided." She observed that in our country's struggle to confront issues such as gun violence, COVID-19, and homelessness, we may often "stick to our egos and blind beliefs," which halts discussion and prevents progress. She added that having different opinions on these problems is "an opportunity to learn from each other," but this is not what she sees happening in our political landscape.

In addition to the overall winners, selected students received special awards. Diya Dileep was recognized as the event's "Motivational Speaker," Vihaan Ailiani as "Thought Leader," Group 1 winner Medha Koudinya as "Budding Orator," and Arnay Shah won the company's "Rrooaring Ahead Into the Future" award.

Participants spent months preparing for the competition through Rrooar's coaching sessions, hosted by entrepreneur and theater activist Ish Amitoj Kaur. In these classes, students learned how to incorporate the open-ended theme "Divided We Fall"

into topics they were passionate about.

As a result of creative freedom and encouragement throughout the speech-writing process, the children were confident with what they'd written. Attendees heard speeches on issues ranging from cyberbullying, environmentalism, and foreign policy, to gymnastics, dance, and family dynamics.

The third Original Oratory Competition saw an increase in scale from last year's contest. In addition to nearly doubling the number of students, this year's event was opened up to a national level, as kids from Texas to Chicago and the East Coast had the chance to enroll in coaching sessions and compete in the qualifying rounds. National Original Oratory Champion, JJ Kapur, and U.S. Representative, Josh Harder, were special guests for the final round.

Rrooar Academy hopes to continue the pattern of growth they have seen over the last few years, expanding both their student base and curriculums.

## Rrooar's Original Oratory Championship Winners



Medha Koudinya  
1st Place Group 1  
Special Award - Budding Orator  
Forest Park Elementary  
Fremont CA



Vihaan Ailiani  
2nd Place Group 1  
Special Award - Thought Leader  
Warm Springs  
Fremont CA



Bhsha Kalwal  
3rd Place Group 1  
Forest Park Elementary  
Fremont CA



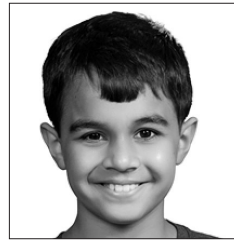
Shriyadita Poduval  
1st Place Group 2  
Kolb Elementary  
Dublin CA



Diya Dileep  
2nd Place Group 2  
Special Award - Motivational Speaker  
Peter Hansen Elementary  
Mountain House CA

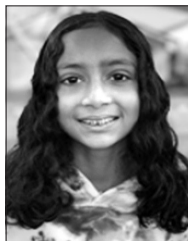


Ronit Parikh  
3rd Place Group 2  
Forest Park Elementary  
Fremont CA



Arnay Shah  
Special Award - Rrooaring Ahead  
Into The Future  
Peter Hansen Elementary  
Mountain House CA

## Winners from Qualifying Rounds



Trisha Thyagarajan  
Hopkins Junior High  
Fremont CA



Jessica Chen  
Forest Park Elementary  
Fremont CA



Anita Yang  
Forest Park Elementary  
Fremont CA



Kirti Jethwani  
Hollified Station  
Ellicott City MD



Tamaira Batra  
Delaine Eastin Elementary  
Union City CA



Ishana Padmanabhan  
Forest Park Elementary  
Fremont CA



Ariyaa Perez  
Challenger  
Newark CA



Tanya Shah  
Forest Park Elementary  
Fremont CA



Saarvi Ingole  
Forest Park Elementary  
Fremont CA