

First Prize Winner Grades 5-8:

Student: Gabrielle Courte

Prize: \$2,000 for student and \$1,000 for Department/Classroom of Teacher

City: Cochrane, AB

The packed theatre fell silent as Rupri Kaur took the stage. As she spoke, she seemingly came alive, gesturing vividly with her hands while she recited her poems, her voice captivating the audience. Even though many consider poetry to be outdated or old-fashioned, Rupri's work resonates with many people in today's society.

With 3.2 million followers on Instagram, Kaur has gained an immense number of fans through social media. She uses Instagram, as well as Tumblr, to appeal to a generation of technology. In her writing, she touches on many subjects that afflict today's society such as immigration, sexual assault, femininity, loss, love, and trauma.

As a young woman, Rupri was sexually assaulted. As a form of coping, she took up poetry and art. After years of filling notebooks with sketches, poems, and prose, she decided to self-publish her first book: *Milk and Honey*. The collection was a huge success; it has sold 3 million copies, was on the New York Times bestseller list for over a year and has been translated into over 35 languages.

Native to Punjab, India, Kaur immigrated to Canada when she was four years old. In a number of her poems, she describes the struggles of moving to a new country such as learning a new language and dealing with racism or discrimination. Many Canadians can relate to the hardships Rupri describes since, in 2018 alone, 330,000 immigrants have arrived here.

This December, Rupri will visit Edmonton, Vancouver, and Toronto to perform poetry from her latest collection, *The Sun and Her Flowers*, which was released as a #1 global bestseller and sold one million copies within the first three months of its debut. A fierce advocate for women's rights, mental health, and immigration, Rupri Kaur continues to be an influential voice in Canadian society.