

Dr. Robert S. Nelsen
Literary Merit Judge
Interview by Sue Staats

Literary Death Match is unlike any other reading event in that the participants appear before a panel of judges. The readers are evaluated on their literary merit, performance and intangibles. We've pulled together a supremely talented panel of judges, including none other than the esteemed president of Sacramento State, Dr. Robert S. Nelsen. We wanted to know how he was preparing for this awesome responsibility and, more importantly, if he had any clue what Literary Death Match was prior to accepting our invitation.

Sue: Had you ever heard of Literary Death Match before you agreed to do it?

Dr. Nelsen: No, I had not heard of the Literary Death Match before it showed up in my inbox. I asked my Chief of Staff if I should do it. She said it was about time I had some fun. So, I said yes.

Sue: When Jessica and Joshua asked you to be a judge, what was your first question?

Dr. Nelsen: "Why me?"

Sue: How did they convince you to take on this literary responsibility?

Dr. Nelsen: They made it clear that the event would be lighthearted and would bring some joy to the audience.

Sue: What's your most outstanding qualification as a judge for Literary Death Match?

Dr. Nelsen: I taught creative writing for over 20 years and I used to write plays.

Sue: All three judges will be assessing different qualities. You're the one judging the readers on literary merit. What will you be looking for?

Dr. Nelsen: Honest emotions, sincerity and a dash of daring. Proper English will help.

Sue: Do you think that being a judge for LDM will (a) enhance your professional standing or (b) torpedo your career? Or, possibly, something in between or completely different?

Dr. Nelsen: I am retiring from Sac State. Not much anybody can do to me now as I ride out of town. Let's have fun!