International Academic Competitions

National Academic Bee

National Academic Bowl

2026-2027 Regional Tournament Study Guide – Academic Bee and Bowl

Instructions: This study guide should be your first step in preparing for the Regional Academic Bee and Bowl tournaments. Many of the facts below are found in this year's Academic Bee and Bowl questions. Other facts in the study guide may come up in other IAC question sets this academic year. **However, the majority of questions in the tournament are not referenced in the study guide.** The study guide is meant to help you get started. It is not meant to be fully comprehensive, as the essence of academic competition is not memorizing a list, but having wide-ranging knowledge.

As the questions are all short paragraphs on a particular topic, if a topic is found below, then it is a good idea to learn more about it (since additional facts about a topic will also be referenced in the question). It is also helpful to read the introduction of a Wikipedia page on a topic. Good luck!

Note 1: Unlike our History, Science, and Geography events, the Academic Bee and Bowl cover every subject: history, literature, fine arts, mythology, religion, philosophy, science, math, and geography. Literature and the arts are where students are most often caught unprepared, so this guide gives them extra space and ends with a section of tips for studying them. A list of additional terms is also included near the end. These are also likely to come up at some point in the tournament, but you will need to do some research to learn about the significance of each one.

Note 2: Dates of people's lives are provided mostly for reference. With very few exceptions (e.g. mentioning the year of an assassination), birth and death dates are almost never directly mentioned in questions. Please do not waste time trying to memorize any dates if they are only provided in parentheses below.

U.S. History

1. Thomas Paine (1737-1809) argued for American independence from Britain in his 1776 pamphlet *Common Sense*, and the Declaration of Independence, written mainly by Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826), was adopted on July 4, 1776.
2. Britain's Stamp Act of 1765 taxed printed paper in the Thirteen Colonies, and at the 1773 Boston Tea Party, the Sons of Liberty dumped British tea into Boston Harbor to protest taxes.
3. Paul Revere (1735-1818) made a famous midnight ride in 1775 to warn colonists that British troops were coming.
4. George Washington (1732-1799) crossed the Delaware River to win the Battle of Trenton in 1776 while commanding the Continental Army.
5. Pocahontas (circa 1596-1617), the daughter of the Powhatan chief, married the Jamestown colonist John Rolfe.
6. Sacagawea traveled with the Lewis and Clark Expedition, which explored the lands of the Louisiana Purchase and reached the Pacific Ocean.
7. The Missouri Compromise of 1820 admitted Missouri as a slave state and Maine as a free state, and it was ruled unconstitutional in the 1857 Dred Scott decision.
8. Harriet Tubman (circa 1822-1913) escaped slavery and then led many others to freedom along the Underground Railroad.
9. Franklin D. Roosevelt (1882-1945) launched the New Deal to fight the Great Depression, and the 1944 G.I. Bill paid for college and other benefits for returning World War II veterans.
10. Rosa Parks (1913-2005) sparked the Montgomery bus boycott in 1955 by refusing to give up her seat on a bus.

11. John F. Kennedy (1917-1963), the first Catholic president, commanded the patrol boat PT-109 during World War II.
12. Ronald Reagan (1911-2004) served as president from 1981 to 1989, and critics called his economic policies "trickle-down economics."

World History

1. King John (1166-1216) sealed the Magna Carta at Runnymede in 1215.
2. Henry the Eighth (1491-1547), who had six wives, including Anne Boleyn, broke with the Catholic Church and made himself head of the Church of England.
3. Louis the Fourteenth (1638-1715), the "Sun King," greatly expanded the Palace of Versailles, and Louis the Sixteenth was executed during the French Revolution, which began with the storming of the Bastille in 1789.
4. Napoleon Bonaparte (1769-1821) won the Battle of Austerlitz in 1805 but was finally defeated at the Battle of Waterloo in 1815.
5. Haiti became independent in 1804 after the Haitian Revolution, a successful revolt by enslaved people against French rule.
6. Florence Nightingale (1820-1910) pioneered modern nursing during the Crimean War (1853-1856).
7. The East India Company came to control much of the Indian subcontinent before the British government took over direct rule in 1858.
8. Grigori Rasputin (1869-1916) was a Russian mystic who gained great influence over the family of Tsar Nicholas the Second.
9. Saint Petersburg, founded by Peter the Great in 1703, was Russia's capital until the government moved to Moscow in 1918.
10. The Byzantine Empire ended in 1453 when the Ottoman Turks captured its capital, Constantinople.
11. The Mongol Empire, founded by Genghis Khan (circa 1162-1227), was the largest connected land empire in history, and the Venetian traveler Marco Polo (1254-1324) visited its court in China.
12. The Tokugawa family were the last shoguns, the military leaders who ruled the Japanese islands with the help of warriors called samurai.
13. The Berlin Wall divided East and West Berlin from 1961 until 1989, two years before the Soviet Union broke apart under its last leader, Mikhail Gorbachev (1931-2022).
14. The Korean War (1950-1953) ended in an armistice that created a demilitarized zone between North and South Korea.

Ancient History

1. The Bronze Age, named for an alloy of copper and tin, came between the Stone Age and the Iron Age.
2. The ancient Egyptians built the Great Pyramid of Giza and the Great Sphinx, and many pharaohs were buried in the Valley of the Kings, where Howard Carter found the tomb of Tutankhamun in 1922.
3. The pharaoh Akhenaten promoted the worship of the Aten, or sun disk; Egyptians wrote on sheets made from the papyrus plant and believed the jackal-headed god Anubis guided the dead.
4. Augustus (63 BCE-14 CE), the first Roman emperor, began the Pax Romana, a long era of relative calm across the empire.
5. The Roman emperor Hadrian (76-138) built a wall across northern Britain and rebuilt the Pantheon, a temple whose name means "all the gods."
6. Marcus Aurelius (121-180), the last of the "Five Good Emperors," wrote the philosophical *Meditations*.
7. Gladiators fought in the Colosseum, the largest amphitheater of the ancient Roman world.
8. The Roman town of Pompeii was buried by the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in 79 CE.
9. The Great Wall of China was built over many centuries to defend China against nomadic peoples from the north.
10. The Inca Empire, the largest empire in the Americas before European contact, was based in the Andes Mountains, with its capital at Cusco in modern-day Peru.

Literature

1. William Shakespeare (1564-1616) was born in Stratford-upon-Avon, and many of his plays debuted at London's Globe Theatre, which burned down in 1613.
2. Shakespeare's plays include *Romeo and Juliet*, *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, in which a king tests the love of his three daughters, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, in which the fairy Puck plays tricks on young Athenian lovers. He also wrote 154 sonnets, including "Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?"
3. Homer's epic poem *The Odyssey* follows Odysseus's ten-year journey home after the Trojan War.
4. The Mesopotamian *Epic of Gilgamesh*, one of the oldest surviving works of literature, follows a hero who searches for immortality after the death of his friend Enkidu.
5. The Old English poem *Beowulf* tells of a hero who slays the monster Grendel and later Grendel's mother.

6. Geoffrey Chaucer (circa 1343-1400) wrote *The Canterbury Tales*, in which a group of pilgrims traveling to Thomas Becket's shrine hold a storytelling contest.
7. Miguel de Cervantes (1547-1616) wrote *Don Quixote*, whose title character attacks windmills he believes are giants with the help of his squire, Sancho Panza.
8. Jane Austen (1775-1817) wrote *Pride and Prejudice*, featuring Elizabeth Bennet and Mr. Darcy, and her first novel, *Sense and Sensibility* (1811), about the Dashwood sisters.
9. Mary Shelley (1797-1851) wrote *Frankenstein*, subtitled *The Modern Prometheus*, after Lord Byron proposed a ghost-story contest at a villa near Lake Geneva.
10. Harriet Beecher Stowe (1811-1896) wrote the 1852 antislavery novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, and Louisa May Alcott (1832-1888) wrote *Little Women*, about Jo March and her sisters.
11. Emily Dickinson (1830-1886) of Amherst wrote poems such as "Because I could not stop for Death," and Robert Frost (1874-1963), who wrote "Mending Wall" ("Good fences make good neighbors"), was the first poet to speak at a presidential inauguration.
12. Mark Twain (1835-1910) created Tom Sawyer and *Huckleberry Finn*, and Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936) wrote *The Jungle Book*, in which the boy Mowgli outwits the tiger Shere Khan.
13. Lewis Carroll (1832-1898) wrote *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, featuring the Cheshire Cat and the Queen of Hearts.
14. Franz Kafka (1883-1924) wrote *The Metamorphosis*, in which Gregor Samsa wakes up transformed into a giant insect.
15. F. Scott Fitzgerald (1896-1940) wrote *The Great Gatsby* (1925), in which Jay Gatsby throws lavish parties on Long Island during the Roaring Twenties.
16. In *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee (1926-2016), the lawyer Atticus Finch defends Tom Robinson, and the story is narrated by his daughter Scout.
17. Jack London (1876-1916) wrote *The Call of the Wild*, about a dog named Buck who becomes a sled dog in the Yukon during the Klondike Gold Rush.
18. J. R. R. Tolkien (1892-1973) wrote *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*, and C. S. Lewis (1898-1963) wrote *The Chronicles of Narnia*, in which the Pevensie children meet the lion Aslan.
19. Classic children's books include A. A. Milne's *Winnie-the-Pooh*, J. M. Barrie's Peter Pan, E. B. White's *Charlotte's Web*, Carlo Collodi's *Pinocchio*, Frances Hodgson Burnett's *The Secret Garden*, and Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's *The Little Prince*.
20. Roald Dahl (1916-1990) wrote *Matilda*, Dr. Seuss created the Cat in the Hat and Thing One and Thing Two, and Beatrix Potter wrote *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*, in which Peter flees the gardener Mr. McGregor.
21. Picture books to know include *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* by Eric Carle and *Where the Wild Things Are* by Maurice Sendak.
22. Popular modern series include Harry Potter, whose owl Hedwig was a gift from Hagrid; Suzanne Collins's *The Hunger Games*, starring Katniss Everdeen; Beverly Cleary's Ramona books; and Peter Brown's *The Wild Robot*.
23. In *The Giver* by Lois Lowry, Jonas is chosen to be the community's Receiver of Memory.
24. Agatha Christie (1890-1976) wrote *Murder on the Orient Express*, and Ian Fleming (1908-1964) created the secret agent James Bond, code number 007.
25. H. G. Wells wrote *The War of the Worlds* (1898), about a Martian invasion, and Toni Morrison (1931-2019) wrote *Beloved* and *Song of Solomon*.
26. *One Thousand and One Nights*, also called *The Arabian Nights*, includes the stories of Aladdin and Ali Baba.
27. Literary terms to know: foreshadowing hints at later events; the setting is where and when a story takes place; a haiku is a Japanese poem with a 5-7-5 syllable pattern; a sonnet has fourteen lines; a limerick is a funny five-line poem; and an epic is a long poem about a hero.

Fine Arts

1. Impressionism takes its name from Claude Monet's (1840-1926) painting *Impression, Sunrise*, and its artists painted outdoors to capture changing light.
2. During the Renaissance, a name meaning "rebirth," Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519) painted the *Mona Lisa*, which hangs in the Louvre in Paris.
3. Michelangelo (1475-1564) sculpted the marble *David* and painted the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel and *The Last Judgment*, and his statue of Moses has horns because of a mistranslated Hebrew word.
4. Rembrandt (1606-1669) was a Dutch master painter whose works include *The Night Watch*.
5. Pablo Picasso (1881-1973) and Georges Braque (1882-1963) developed Cubism, which breaks subjects into geometric shapes.
6. Vincent van Gogh (1853-1890) painted a swirling night sky in *The Starry Night*, and Frida Kahlo (1907-1954) was a Mexican artist famous for paintings of herself.
7. Andy Warhol (1928-1987) was an American Pop artist known for his paintings of Campbell's soup cans and Marilyn Monroe.

8. Auguste Rodin (1840-1917) sculpted *The Thinker*, and Alexander Calder (1898-1976) created hanging, moving sculptures called mobiles.
9. Famous sculptures include the ancient Greek *Venus de Milo*, the Terracotta Army that guards the tomb of China's first emperor, and Mount Rushmore, which shows four U.S. presidents.
10. Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750) was a German Baroque composer who wrote the Toccata and Fugue in D minor for organ and the *Goldberg Variations* for harpsichord.
11. Antonio Vivaldi (1678-1741) wrote *The Four Seasons*, four violin concertos that are an early example of program music, music that tells a story or paints a scene.
12. Richard Wagner (1813-1883) wrote the four-opera cycle *The Ring of the Nibelung*, which includes the "Ride of the Valkyries," and Giuseppe Verdi (1813-1901) wrote the opera *Aida*.
13. George Gershwin (1898-1937) combined jazz and classical music in *Rhapsody in Blue* and wrote the opera *Porgy and Bess*.
14. Jazz greats include Duke Ellington (1899-1974) and Miles Davis (1926-1991), and jazz players often make up, or improvise, their solos.
15. In the ballet *The Nutcracker*, Clara's Christmas gift turns into a prince, and George Balanchine (1904-1983) was a famous ballet choreographer, someone who creates the steps for dancers.
16. The cellist Yo-Yo Ma (born 1955) is one of the world's best-known classical musicians, and The Three Tenors were the opera singers José Carreras, Plácido Domingo, and Luciano Pavarotti.
17. Andrew Lloyd Webber (born 1948) wrote the musical *Cats*, and The Beatles were a rock band from Liverpool whose main songwriters were John Lennon and Paul McCartney.

Mythology, Religion, and Social Science
1. In Norse mythology, the world tree Yggdrasil connects the nine worlds, Thor is the god of thunder who swings the hammer Mjölnir, and Loki is a trickster god.
2. In Greek mythology, Persephone, the daughter of Demeter, must spend part of each year in the underworld with Hades after eating pomegranate seeds.
3. Poseidon is the Greek god of the sea, who carries a trident, and the hero Perseus killed Medusa, whose gaze turned people to stone.
4. The ancient Greeks considered Delphi, home of a famous oracle of Apollo, to be the center of the world.
5. The Greek hero Heracles, called Hercules by the Romans, performed twelve labors, and the Greeks captured Troy by hiding soldiers inside the Trojan Horse, an idea credited to Odysseus.
6. Māui is a Polynesian hero who pulled up islands with his magic fishhook and appears in the Disney film *Moana*.
7. In the Bible, Moses received the Ten Commandments, and the Bible is the most translated book in the world.
8. Hinduism, the main religion of India, includes the epic *Ramayana*, and Muslims often recite the entire Qur'an during the holy month of Ramadan.
9. In a democracy, a name meaning "rule by the people," citizens choose their leaders in elections, and a census is an official count of a country's population.
10. Capitalism is an economic system based on private ownership, which Adam Smith described as guided by an "invisible hand"; prices are set by supply and demand, and inflation is a general rise in prices.

Science
1. Mitochondria, often called the "powerhouse of the cell," produce most of a cell's energy in the form of ATP.
2. In photosynthesis, plants use the green pigment chlorophyll in their chloroplasts to turn sunlight, water, and carbon dioxide into sugar.
3. In 1953, James Watson and Francis Crick described the double helix structure of DNA.
4. Edward Jenner (1749-1823) developed the first vaccine using cowpox, and vaccination later wiped out smallpox.
5. Marie Curie (1867-1934) won top prizes in both physics and chemistry for her work on radioactivity, including the discovery of radium.
6. Charles Darwin (1809-1882) proposed the theory of evolution by natural selection.
7. Isaac Newton (1642-1727) described the laws of motion, including the first law, also called the law of inertia; an object's momentum equals its mass times its velocity, and kinetic energy is the energy of motion.
8. Buoyancy is the upward force that lets objects float, described by Archimedes' principle, and friction, which comes in static and kinetic forms, opposes motion.
9. Alfred Wegener (1880-1930) proposed continental drift, a forerunner of plate tectonics, and the movement of tectonic plates causes earthquakes, which were once measured on the Richter scale.

10. Sedimentary rocks such as sandstone and shale contain most of the world's fossils, and scientists use the half-life of carbon-14, about 5,730 years, in radiocarbon dating.
11. In evaporation, a liquid becomes a gas, while in condensation, a gas becomes a liquid; distillation separates the parts of a liquid by boiling it and collecting the vapor.
12. Dmitri Mendeleev (1834-1907) created the first widely used periodic table, which begins with hydrogen, element number one; uranium has the chemical symbol U.
13. In about five billion years, the Sun will swell into a red giant, and a supernova is the enormous explosion of a star.
14. Nicolaus Copernicus (1473-1543) championed heliocentrism, the model in which the planets orbit the Sun.
15. The Hubble Space Telescope is named for Edwin Hubble (1889-1953), who showed that the universe is expanding and that there are many galaxies beyond our own.
16. The Apollo program put the first people on the Moon in 1969, when Neil Armstrong took "one small step," and the two Voyager probes, launched in 1977, have left the Solar System.
17. Nikola Tesla (1856-1943) helped develop alternating current electricity and invented the Tesla coil.
18. The platypus is a duck-billed mammal that lays eggs, the octopus has eight arms and can change its color, the tiger is the largest member of the cat family, and more than ninety-five percent of animal species are invertebrates, animals without a backbone.
19. The heart pumps blood through the body, the femur is the longest bone, and the pancreas releases insulin to control blood sugar.

Math and Technology

1. Euclid, the ancient Greek "father of geometry," wrote the *Elements*.
2. Archimedes (circa 287-212 BCE) supposedly shouted "Eureka!" after discovering how to measure the volume of a golden crown.
3. The Fibonacci sequence begins 1, 1, 2, 3, 5, with each term equal to the sum of the two before it.
4. The sieve of Eratosthenes is an ancient method for finding prime numbers, numbers greater than one whose only factors are one and themselves.
5. Isaac Newton and Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646-1716) each developed calculus, the math of changing quantities.
6. The integers, written with a bold capital Z, include the whole numbers and their negatives, and two shapes are congruent if they have the same size and shape.
7. A computer's central processing unit (CPU) is often called its "brain," and RAM is memory that loses its contents when the power is turned off.
8. Bill Gates and Paul Allen founded Microsoft in 1975, the company that makes the Windows operating system.
9. The Wright brothers made the first powered airplane flights at Kitty Hawk, North Carolina, in 1903.
10. James Watt (1736-1819) improved the steam engine, which powered the Industrial Revolution, and Alexander Graham Bell (1847-1922) patented the telephone in 1876.
11. Lasers produce narrow beams of light used in barcode scanners and to read discs such as DVDs.

Geography

1. Shanghai, China's most populous city, has a famous waterfront called the Bund along the Huangpu River, and Shenzhen was one of China's first special economic zones.
2. The Mariana Trench in the Pacific Ocean contains the Challenger Deep, the deepest known point on Earth.
3. The Colorado River carved the Grand Canyon in Arizona.
4. The Burj Khalifa in Dubai, at 828 meters, is the tallest building in the world.
5. Serengeti National Park in Tanzania protects a large area of savanna, a grassland with scattered trees.
6. Ethiopia, whose capital is Addis Ababa, became the world's most populous landlocked country after Eritrea became independent, and its Danakil Depression is one of the hottest places on Earth.
7. Cairo, the capital of Egypt, lies near the start of the Nile Delta; a river delta is a deposit of sediment at a river's mouth.
8. Tibet's main city, Lhasa, is home to the Potala Palace, and Mount Everest, the world's highest mountain, lies in the Himalayas.
9. Most people in the Canadian province of Quebec speak French, and Canada adopted its red-and-white maple leaf flag in 1965.
10. Albany, the capital of New York State, lies on the Hudson River near the eastern end of the Erie Canal.
11. Sweden, whose capital is Stockholm, joined NATO in 2024.
12. Cuba's capital is Havana, and the Rio Grande forms part of the border between the United States and Mexico.
13. Madagascar, a large island off the southeast coast of Africa, is the only place where lemurs live in the wild.
14. Iran's monarchy was overthrown in the 1979 Iranian Revolution, and Germany's city of Munich hosts the Oktoberfest festival.
15. The North Pole lies at 90 degrees north latitude, and everywhere north of the Arctic Circle has at least one day of midnight sun each year.

Terms for Further Study

1. Space Shuttle Challenger disaster
2. Sally Ride
3. Prague Spring
4. Marshall Plan
5. Strategic Arms Limitation Talks
6. Bill of Rights
7. Smithsonian Institution
8. Sputnik 1
9. Katherine Johnson
10. Alan Shepard
11. James Clerk Maxwell
12. Ceres
13. Kuiper Belt
14. Enceladus
15. *Paradise Lost*
16. Walt Whitman
17. Maya Angelou
18. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow
19. Thomas Malory
20. Holy Grail
21. Avalon
22. Merlin
23. Round Table
24. Pied Piper of Hamelin
25. Rumpelstiltskin
26. Baba Yaga
27. Hans Christian Andersen
28. Brothers Grimm
29. Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum
30. Jolly Roger
31. Blackbeard
32. William Kidd
33. privateer
34. John James Audubon
35. cassowary
36. Hollywood

Further Skills: Studying Literature and the Arts

1. **Learn the essentials for each major work.** For every book, play, or poem in this guide, know the author, the main characters, and the most famous scene or setting. Literature questions usually end with a clue like "George Wilson shoots a character named Jay in his swimming pool in what F. Scott Fitzgerald novel?"
2. **Learn character names.** Questions often name characters rather than describing the plot, so a character list can be more useful than a long summary.
3. **Read short works in full.** Poems (Emily Dickinson, Robert Frost, Walt Whitman), fairy tales, fables, and myths take only a few minutes to read and are easy to remember once you have read them yourself.
4. **Know the vocabulary of literature.** Learn common literary devices (foreshadowing, allegory, irony, metaphor) and forms (a sonnet has fourteen lines, a haiku follows a 5-7-5 syllable pattern, an epic is a long poem about a hero).
5. **Connect works to their time and place.** Group authors by country and era, such as Victorian novelists or American writers of the 1920s, since questions often use these as clues.
6. **Look at the art and listen to the music.** For each painter, look at their two or three most famous works and learn their titles. For each composer, listen to one well-known piece. Titles, subjects, and nicknames of works are common clues.
7. **Learn the major myths.** Know the main Greek gods and their Roman names, the major figures of Norse and Egyptian mythology, and the heroes of epics like *The Odyssey* and *Gilgamesh*.
8. **Use adaptations carefully.** Movies and musicals (*The Lord of the Rings*, *The Hunger Games*, *Little Women*) can help you remember a story, but questions are based on the original works, so check the details.