Poem in Your Pocket Day

April 29, 2021

Every April, on Poem in Your Pocket Day, people celebrate by selecting a poem, carrying it with them, and sharing it with others throughout the day at schools, bookstores, libraries, parks, workplaces, and on social media using the hashtag #PocketPoem.

Join us in celebrating Poem in Your Pocket Day this year!
Poem in Your Pocket Day was initiated in April 2002 by the Office of the Mayor, in partnership with the New York City Departments of Cultural Affairs and Education, as part of the city’s National Poetry Month celebration.

The Academy of American Poets, which launched National Poetry Month in 1996, took Poem in Your Pocket Day to all fifty United States in 2008, encouraging individuals across the country to join in and channel their inner bard.

The Academy of American Poets and the League of Canadian Poets, the latter of which has organized National Poetry Month in Canada since 1998, have teamed up to extend the reach of Poem in Your Pocket Day in North America.

**Ideas for Celebrating Poem in Your Pocket Day**
The beauty of Poem in Your Pocket Day is its simplicity. Individuals and institutions have generated many creative ways to share poems virtually or in-person on this special day—from having children create handmade pockets to tuck their favorite poems into, to handing out poems to commuters at transportation hubs, to distributing poem scrolls in hospitals, nursing homes, and local businesses. The ideas are endless, but here are a few to get you started. And, of course, we invite you to share poems on any day during National Poetry Month and year-round!
In Your School
• If you’re a school principal or administrator, organize a school-wide Poem in Your Pocket Day giveaway using the following curated collection of poems.
• Encourage students to choose a poem from our collection, print it out, and post it in a designated area, such as the school cafeteria, hallways, or the student lounge.
• Hold a virtual student reading of the poems they’ve selected.

In Your Classroom
• Have your students choose a poem from our collection. Ask them to write a letter to a far-away friend or relative detailing what they like about the poem and why they think the recipient would enjoy it. Send the letters and poems so they arrive on Poem in Your Pocket Day.
• Ask your students to select their favorite poem from our collection, choose their favorite lines, and add those lines to a bookmark they can decorate with drawings. Collect the bookmarks and redistribute them, letting each student pick one that’s not their own for ongoing use in class.
• Ask your students to memorize a poem and share it with the class.
• Have your students choose a poem to give away. Ask them to print out 20 copies of the poem and come up with a creative way to distribute it, such as in the form of a folded-paper animal or object (see the Appendix for instructions on how to create a folded swan), a decorated scroll, a poem tree, or a bookmark.
• Devote a class lesson to teaching your students about the haiku, a three-line poem with seventeen syllables, written in a 5/7/5 syllable count. (See the Appendix for more about the haiku.) Ask your students to write their own haikus and share them with the class by reading them aloud. Have your students decorate a copy of their haikus with drawings and stickers, then encourage them to give their poems to a family member or friend.
• Organize a class trip for students to visit a nursing home or community center and to read and share their favorite poems.
In Your Community

- Encourage local businesses to participate in Poem in Your Pocket Day by offering discounts to customers who bring in a poem, by posting poems in their establishments, or by distributing poems on bags, cups, or receipts.
- On April 1, write to your local newspaper asking them to publish a poem by a local poet on Poem in Your Pocket Day or to syndicate Poem-a-Day, a digital series available for free from the Academy of American Poets. (For more information, visit www.poets.org/poem-a-day)

In Your Workplace

- Stand outside the entrance of your place of work and distribute poems to employees and coworkers as they begin their day.
- Organize a lunch during which your employees or coworkers can take turns reading their favorite poems aloud.
- Ask your employer to encourage employees to choose their favorite poems and post them around the office.
- Place printouts of poems on people’s desk chairs before they arrive to work.
- Add a poem or link to a poem to your email signature. In addition to the poems here, you’ll find thousands more at Poets.org.
- Email a poem to employees and coworkers, encouraging them to read and share their own favorites throughout the day.
- Jot a favorite line of poetry on the back of your business cards before distributing them.
- Tape a poem to the watercooler.

Online

- Post poems, links to poems, or photos of poems on Facebook, Instagram, Tumblr, or Twitter using the hashtag #PocketPoem.
- Record a video of yourself reading a poem, then share it on your favorite social media platform.
- Schedule a video chat and read a poem to your loved ones.
Poems to Share by Contemporary American Poets

O Small Sad Ecstasy of Love by Anne Carson

For Keeps by Joy Harjo

Social Distancing by Juan Felipe Herrera

Mosquito by Jane Hirshfield

Eating Together by Li-Young Lee

Instructions on Not Giving Up by Ada Limón

Making History by Marilyn Nelson

Making a Fist by Naomi Shihab Nye

In the Company of Women by January Gill O’Neil

In Brazil by Tracy K. Smith

In the High Country by David St. John

Female Rain by Laura Tohe

Kissing in Vietnamese by Ocean Vuong

This Body II by Renée Watson

Ongoing by Jenny Xie
I like being with you all night with closed eyes.
What luck—here you are
coming
along the stars!
I did a road trip
all over my mind and heart
and
there you were
kneeling by the roadside
with your little toolkit
fixing something.

Give me a world, you have taken the world I was.
Sun makes the day new.
Tiny green plants emerge from earth.
Birds are singing the sky into place.
There is nowhere else I want to be but here.
I lean into the rhythm of your heart to see where it will take us.
We gallop into a warm, southern wind.
I link my legs to yours and we ride together,
Toward the ancient encampment of our relatives.
Where have you been? they ask.
And what has taken you so long?
That night after eating, singing, and dancing
We lay together under the stars.
We know ourselves to be part of mystery.
It is unspeakable.
It is everlasting.
It is for keeps.

MARCH 4, 2013, CHAMPAIGN, ILLINOIS

Reprinted from Conflict Resolution for Holy Beings by Joy Harjo. Copyright © 2015 by Joy Harjo. Used with permission of the publisher, W. W. Norton & Company, Inc. All rights reserved.
Social Distancing

Juan Felipe Herrera

love flourishes for the first time

in your eyelashes and their walks in

grocery bags have a tendency to wobble

you can crash into the toy section

peace opens, fists and accolades

Healing begins

flaring stars create another star

the power between us is miraculous

a chile bowl will wreak havoc by itself

the basketball will dunk you up

blushing will take you down

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Mosquito

Jane Hirshfield

I say I
&
a small mosquito drinks from my tongue

but many say we and hear I
say you or he and
hear I

what can we do with this problem

a bowl held in both hands
cannot be filled by its holder

x, says the blue whale
x, say the krill
solve for y, says the ocean, then multiply by existence

the feet of an ant make their own sound on the earth

ice is astonished by water

a person misreads
delirium as delphinium
and falls into
a blueness sleepy as beauty when sneezing

the pronoun dozes

From The Beauty (Knopf, 2015). Copyright © by Jane Hirshfield. Used with the permission of the author.
In the steamer is the trout
seasoned with slivers of ginger,
two sprigs of green onion, and sesame oil.
We shall eat it with rice for lunch,
brothers, sister, my mother who will
taste the sweetest meat of the head,
holding it between her fingers
deftly, the way my father did
weeks ago. Then he lay down
to sleep like a snow-covered road
winding through pines older than him,
without any travelers, and lonely for no one.
More than the fuchsia funnels breaking out of the crabapple tree, more than the neighbor’s almost obscene display of cherry limbs shoving their cotton candy-colored blossoms to the slate sky of Spring rains, it’s the greening of the trees that really gets to me. When all the shock of white and taffy, the world’s baubles and trinkets, leave the pavement strewn with the confetti of aftermath, the leaves come. Patient, plodding, a green skin growing over whatever winter did to us, a return to the strange idea of continuous living despite the mess of us, the hurt, the empty. Fine then, I’ll take it, the tree seems to say, a new slick leaf unfurling like a fist to an open palm, I’ll take it all.
Making History

Marilyn Nelson

Blue and White Orlon Snowflake Sweater, Blue Snowpants, Red Galoshes
—Smoky Hill AFB, Kansas, 1955

Somebody took a picture of a class standing in line to get polio shots, and published it in the Weekly Reader. We stood like that today. And it did hurt. Mrs. Liebel said we were Making History, but all I did was squinch up my eyes and wince. Making History takes more than standing in line believing little white lies about pain. Mama says First Negroes are History: First Negro Telephone Operator, First Negro Opera Singer At The Met, First Negro Pilots, First Supreme Court Judge. That lady in Montgomery just became a First by squwunching up her eyes and sitting there.
Making a Fist

Naomi Shihab Nye

For the first time, on the road north of Tampico,
I felt the life sliding out of me,
a drum in the desert, harder and harder to hear.
I was seven, I lay in the car
watching palm trees swirl a sickening pattern past the glass.
My stomach was a melon split wide inside my skin.

"How do you know if you are going to die?"
I begged my mother.
We had been traveling for days.
With strange confidence she answered,
"When you can no longer make a fist."

Years later I smile to think of that journey,
the borders we must cross separately,
stamped with our unanswerable woes.
I who did not die, who am still living,
still lying in the backseat behind all my questions,
clenching and opening one small hand.
In the Company of Women

January Gill O’Neil

Make me laugh over coffee,
make it a double, make it frothy
so it seethes in our delight.
Make my cup overflow
with your small happiness.
I want to hoot and snort and cackle and chuckle.
Let your laughter fill me like a bell.
Let me listen to your ringing and singing
as Billie Holiday croons above our heads.
Sorry, the blues are nowhere to be found.
Not tonight. Not here.
No makeup. No tears.
Only contours. Only curves.
Each sip takes back a pound,
each dry-roasted swirl takes our soul.
Can I have a refill, just one more?
Let the bitterness sink to the bottom of our lives.
Let us take this joy to go.

From Misery Islands (CavanKerry Press, 2014). Copyright © 2014 by January Gill O’Neil. Used with the permission of the author.
In Brazil

Tracy K. Smith

for Adélia Prado

Poets swagger up and down the shore, I’ll bet,
Wagging their hips in time to the raucous tide.
They tip back their heads and life sears a path
Down the throat. At night they dance, don’t they,
Across tiles that might as well be glass, or ice.
And if they don’t want to spend the evening alone,
They don’t. And if they want to wear snow-angels
Into the sheets of some big empty bed, that’s
What they do, until a dark form takes shape
On the ceiling overhead. Then they put on a robe
And kick around looking for some slippers.
When the poem finally arrives, it grins
And watches back with wide credulous eyes.
Poem in Your Pocket Day

In the High Country

David St. John

Some days I am happy to be no one
The shifting grasses

In the May winds are miraculous enough
As they ripple through the meadow of lupine

The field as iridescent as a Renaissance heaven
& do you see that boy with his arms raised

Like one of Raphael’s angels held within
This hush & this pause & the sky’s lapis expanse?

That boy is my son & I am his only father
Even when I am no one

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Female Rain

Laura Tohe

Female Rain

Dancing from the south
cloudy cool and gray
pregnant with rainchild

At dawn she gives birth to a gentle mist
flowers bow with wet sustenance
luminescence all around

Níltsą Bi’áád

Níltsą bi’áád

Shá’dí’ááhdęę’go dah naaldogo’ alzhish
k’ós hazlį
honeezk’áz
níltsą bi’áád bitázhooll bijooltsą
áádóó níltsą bi’áád biyázhí bidii’na

Naaniiniilkahgo

níltsą bi’áád biyázhí hazlı
ch’il látaah hózhóón dahtoo’bee ’alch’į’ háazhah
áádóó nihik’inizdidlāád

From Songs from This Earth on Turtle’s Back: Contemporary American Indian Poetry (Greenfield Review Press, 1983). Copyright © 1983 by Laura Tohe. Used with permission of the author.
Kissing in Vietnamese

Ocean Vuong

My grandmother kisses
as if bombs are bursting in the backyard,
where mint and jasmine lace their perfumes
through the kitchen window,
as if somewhere, a body is falling apart
and flames are making their way back
through the intricacies of a young boy’s thigh,
as if to walk out the door, your torso
would dance from exit wounds.
When my grandmother kisses, there would be
no flashy smooching, no western music
of pursed lips, she kisses as if to breathe
you inside her, nose pressed to cheek
so that your scent is relearned
and your sweat pearls into drops of gold
inside her lungs, as if while she holds you
death also, is clutching your wrist.
My grandmother kisses as if history
never ended, as if somewhere
a body is still
falling apart.
This Body II

Renée Watson

My body is
perfect and
imperfect and
Black and
girl and
big and
thick hair and
short legs and
scraped knee and
healed scar and
heart beating and
hands that hold and
voice that bellows and
feet that dance and
arms that embrace and
my momma’s eyes and
my daddy’s smile and
my grandma’s hope and

my body is masterpiece and
my body is mine.

Ongoing

Jenny Xie

Never mind the distances traveled, the companion she made of herself. The threadbare twenties not to be underestimated. A wild depression that ripped from January into April. And still she sprouts an appetite. Insisting on edges and cores, when there were none. Relationships annealed through shared ambivalences. Pages that steadied her. Books that prowled her until the hard daybreak, and for months after. Separating new vows from the old, like laundry whites. Small losses jammed together so as to gather mass. Stored generations of filtered quietude. And some stubbornness. Tangles along the way the comb-teeth of the mind had to bite through, but for what. She had trained herself to look for answers at eye level, but they were lower, they were changing all the time.

From Eye Level (Graywolf Press, 2018). Copyright © 2018 by Jenny Xie. Used with the permission of Graywolf Press.
Contributors’ Notes

Anne Carson is the author of many books of poetry and translation, including *The Beauty of the Husband: A Fictional Essay in 29 Tangos* (Alfred A. Knopf, 2001), winner of the T.S. Eliot Prize for Poetry; *Autobiography of Red* (Alfred A. Knopf, 1998); and *Short Talks* (Brick Books, 1992). Her awards and honors include the Lannan Literary Award, the Pushcart Prize, the Griffin Poetry Prize, a Guggenheim fellowship, and the MacArthur Fellowship. She currently teaches in New York University’s creative writing program.

Joy Harjo is the current poet laureate of the United States. Her poetry collections include *Conflict Resolution for Holy Beings* (W. W. Norton, 2015) and *How We Became Human: New and Selected Poems* (W. W. Norton, 2002). In 2015, she received the Wallace Stevens Award from the Academy of American Poets. Her other honors include the PEN Open Book Award and the American Indian Distinguished Achievement in the Arts Award. A Chancellor of the Academy of American Poets, she lives in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

Juan Felipe Herrera was the U. S. Poet Laureate from 2015 to 2017 and served as a Chancellor of the Academy of American Poets from 2011 to 2016. He is the author of many collections of poetry, including *Notes on the Assemblage* (City Lights, 2015) and *Half of the World in Light: New and Selected Poems* (University of Arizona Press, 2008), a recipient of the PEN/Beyond Margins Award. He lives in Fresno, California.

Jane Hirshfield’s poetry collections include *The Beauty: Poems* (Alfred A. Knopf, 2015), which was nominated for the National Book Award, and *Come, Thief* (Alfred A. Knopf, 2011). In 2004, the Academy of American Poets awarded her the Academy Fellowship for distinguished poetic achievement. Her other honors include the Poetry Center Book Award and numerous fellowships. She served as a Chancellor of the Academy of American Poets from 2012 to 2017, and she lives in the San Francisco Bay Area.

Li-Young Lee is the author of *The Undressing* (W. W. Norton, 2018); *Behind My Eyes* (W. W. Norton, 2008); *Book of My Nights* (BOA Editions, 2001), which won the 2002 William Carlos Williams Award; *The City in Which I Love You* (BOA Editions, 1990), which was the 1990 Lamont Poetry Selection; and *Rose* (BOA Editions, 1986), which won the Delmore Schwartz Memorial Poetry Award. His awards include a Lannan Literary Award, a Whiting Writer’s Award, the PEN Oakland/Josephine Miles Award, the I. B. Lavan Award, three Pushcart Prizes, a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, as well as a Guggenheim Foundation fellowship. He lives in Chicago, Illinois.
Ada Limón is the author of five poetry collections, including *The Carrying* (Milkweed Editions, 2018), which received the National Book Critics Circle Award, and *Bright Dead Things* (Milkweed Editions, 2015), which was a finalist for the National Book Award. The recipient of numerous honors and awards, including a grant from the New York Foundation for the Arts, Limón lives in Lexington, Kentucky, and Sonoma, California.


Naomi Shihab Nye is the author of several poetry collections, including *The Tiny Journalist* (BOA Editions, 2019), as well as several children’s books. In 1988, she received the Academy of American Poets’ Lavan Award, and in 2009, she was elected a Chancellor of the Academy of American Poets. She has also received awards and fellowships from the International Poetry Forum and the Guggenheim Foundation, among others. She lives in San Antonio, Texas.

January Gill O’Neil is the author of *Rewilding* (CavanKerry Press, 2018), recognized by Mass Center for the Book as a notable poetry collection for 2018; *Misery Islands* (CavanKerry Press, 2014), winner of a 2015 Paterson Award for Literary Excellence; and *Underlife* (CavanKerry Press, 2009). The recipient of fellowships from Cave Canem and the Barbara Deming Memorial Fund, O’Neil was awarded a Massachusetts Cultural Council grant. She is an associate professor of English at Salem State University and lives in Beverly, Massachusetts.

Tracy K. Smith was the U. S. Poet Laureate from 2017 to 2019. She is the author of four poetry collections, including *Wade in the Water* (Graywolf Press, 2018) and *Life on Mars* (Graywolf Press, 2011), which received the 2012 Pulitzer Prize. The recipient of numerous honors and awards, including the 2014 Academy of American Poets Fellowship, Smith is a Chancellor of the Academy of American Poets and lives in New Jersey.
David St. John's many books of poetry include *Study for the World’s Body: New and Selected Poems* (1994), which was nominated for the National Book Award. St. John is the recipient of many honors and awards, including National Endowment for the Arts Fellowships and a Guggenheim Fellowship. In 2016 he was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. He is a Chancellor of the Academy of American Poets and currently teaches in the PhD Program in Creative Writing and Literature and is the Chair of English at the University of Southern California. He lives in Venice Beach, California.

Laura Tohe is the author of *Tseyi / Deep in the Rock* (University of Arizona Press, 2005), which received the Arizona Book Association's Glyph Award for Best Poetry and Best Book; *No Parole Today* (West End Press, 1999), which was named Poetry Book of the Year by the Wordcraft Circle of Native American Writers and Storytellers; and *Making Friends with Water* (Nosila Press, 1986); among others. Tohe is Sleepy-Rock People clan and born for the Bitter Water People clan. A Poets Laureate fellow of the Academy of American Poets, she is the current poet laureate of the Navajo Nation.

Ocean Vuong is the author of *Night Sky with Exit Wounds* (Copper Canyon Press, 2016), which received the T. S. Eliot Prize. Vuong, who was born in Saigon, Vietnam, is the recipient of a Lannan Literary Fellowship, a Ruth Lully and Dorothy Sargent Rosenberg Poetry Fellowship, and a Whiting Award, among other honors. He teaches at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst and lives in Massachusetts.

Renée Watson is the author of *Piecing Me Together* (Bloomsbury, 2017), which received a Coretta Scott King Award and Newbery Honor, and *Harlem’s Little Blackbird: The Story of Florence Mills* (Random House Books for Young Readers, 2012), which received an NAACP Image Award nomination in children’s literature. Watson founded I, Too Arts Collective, a nonprofit that was housed in the home of Langston Hughes from 2016-2019. She lives in New York.

Jenny Xie is the author of *Eye Level* (Graywolf Press, 2018), the winner of the 2017 Walt Whitman Award and finalist for the National Book Award. Xie was born in Hefei, China, and raised in New Jersey. She holds degrees from Princeton University and New York University, and has received fellowships and support from Kundiman, the Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown, the Elizabeth George Foundation, the New York Foundation for the Arts, and Poets & Writers. In 2020, she received a Vilcek Prize for Creative Promise in Literature. Xie teaches at New York University and lives in New York City.
Poems to Share by Contemporary Canadian Poets

Spotted Owl as Desire by Yvonne Blomer

Brother by Marilyn Bowering

Today I Will Different by Karin Cope

Dawn by Stephanie Cui

Crushed by Lorne Daniel

O Sea of Troubles We Did Not Take Arms Against by Adebe DeRango-Adem

Ode to Chopsticks by Fiona Lam

Beekeeping by Allison LaSorda

Constellations Retreat before This Truck Stop Night by D. A. Lockhart

Jazz (A Variation) by Lorie Miseck

[Untitled] by kjmunro

Glom Glom Sunraises by Charlie Petch

Still be still be still be by Harry Posner

I Have a Problem by Greg Santos

Visit by Sarah Tsiang
Spotted Owl as Desire

Yvonne Blomer

After Robert Bateman’s Mossy Branches, Spotted Owl

Barking owl. Whistling.
Hooted notes fall from mossed trees.
Your eyes a lure. Shoulder-hunched owl. Padded in your brown mottled cloak, what are you tracking?
Fogged-in owl, muffle-feathered owl, patience is your domain. Bone-lichen feathered. Lour-browed.
Old strix. What are you making me into?

While he studies the stars outdoors, model airplanes spin on fine webs in his room. Already he is lifting into the air, wings on his heels, a small Hermes signaling to the Great Bear. He reaches the outermost planets, he passes the edges of travel, and I can no longer steer him homeward.

Still, they say a womb is like a lochan on a hill, made of rills and rain and tears, and I can watch him from there when I am water as I was before.

Forthcoming in *What is Long Past Occurs in Full Light* (MotherTongue Publishing, 2019).
Today I Will Different

Karin Cope

You wake, you say
today will be different, today
I will do what I do what I must what I will
today I will efficient today
tasks completed today organized today
my desk in order.
Today I will different.
Do today as if some other un-waylaid by wind
or whim or want. Someone of will, not wanton
wondering. What song will you sing then when
salsa flings you circumsolar when
lightslant leaps across your foot when
urgency, like sucking sand, slips seaward and
beckons you to swim?

Previously published on the Visible Poetry blog in April 2017.
Dawn

Stephanie Cui

Out in the moonlight
The trees are glowing white.
They are fully dressed and await the wind’s call.

But the wind is a shy girl at four in the morning,
And she does not come out to play.
Dawn slowly tip-toes, blueing the sky.
I am lost on a path so familiar.

Does darkness lock up my eyelids
With a key that only belongs to dawn?
I sneak by buildings,
They seem unrealistic against the early light.
Windows lit here and there, like the fading stars.

My footsteps are shaky,
My voice—the only echo remaining in the world.
The sun rows the moon across the sky, claiming its throne.
And I step into the day drunk with awe.
The bad news this week relentless, rolling 
past my glazed face. Addictions, 
elections, deaths of the wrong 
people, hypnotic grief. Dazed 
at the roadside today I breathe hot exhaust. Blurred 
tires hiss, rut and groove the grey 
just a step away. Over, over. 
On the shoulder, waiting for a break, 
me and this sleek crow, its cape 
tucked and trim. Light disappears 
or plays, iridescent, depending 
on the moment, the angles between us. 
What impresses me as a semi blows by, 
buffeting, is — yes— that unruffled coat 
but too the shining 
absence of concern. Unblinking. 
Legs spring-loaded, ready 
to jump to some small grain, 
fresh-crushed and nourishing.
O Sea of Troubles We Did Not Take Arms Against

Adebe DeRango-Adem

for many moons we were complete like a single river
how beautiful we drifted & how delirious
were the times we pretended not to bear the thirst
of a hollow earth as such perhaps we were
not a river but a collection of rapids & yet those pangs
a clever mix of love & fear of the real
a longing soon to transform
into a longing to disappear somehow into the familiar
softening, from the dusts of the world
skylines—do you remember how we slept
in mangled ways looking out to the Atlantic
being in our element but no I will not spend my life
wading waiting wading
the answer is that I have arrived with scars
to haunt or to be haunted is the question

From The Unmooring (Mansfield Press, 2018).
Ode to Chopsticks

Fiona Lam

Grandfather sets the bowl full of marbles before me.
I pick up the chopsticks and hover,
then picture my hand as a heron
with a long, long beak plunging down
to pluck each orb, lift it
through air and held breath
in a tremulous trip toward the saucer.

Five thousand years of evolution in hand:
branches honed to stir ancient cauldrons
become sleek batons of ivory, gold or jade
adorning an aristocrat’s table.
With their deft dance and dip,
more adroit than a fork.
Twin acrobats poised
to hoist choice morsels—
crisp shard of duck skin,
noodle strands, fish cheeks,
single green pea.

Let your elders lead, he tells me,
Never point your chopsticks at a guest.
Never spear your food like a fisherman.
Don’t tap the side of your bowl like a beggar.
Keep them by the plate when you rest
or across the bowl at meal’s end. But never
upright like incense burning
in an urn for the dead.

While he watches, stiff bamboo
grows nimble. One by one
each small glassy planet arcs up
then lands with a clink!
The bowl gleams, empty.
He nods.

We don white hats and veils to check on your hive—
push toward each other’s newness, curtailed by safety devices.
A sting’s purple welt glares on your left calf. From the box,
you pull bee-crowded sleeves: workers’ movement steady

but erratic, sun strobes their effort. Pointing to hexagons,
you explain some house larvae, others reflect light
in honey, still others plastered over with wax. I pretend
to notice the distinctions, drifting into a future self

who readies ice and tends to your stung skin. A tin smoker
calms, masks alarm pheromones, & simulates forest fire,
during which bees will gorge on honey to save their bounty
and escape. It’s not panic, exactly, it’s instinct. Still, I relate
to the threat of an ending—the impulse to make meaning by holding
everything inside yourself at once, as much as you can carry.
After sunset these prairies
hide their absence of rise
in the evenness of darkness.
Backlit Flying J road sign
declaring this strip of Wyoming
belongs to the constellation
drawn from diesel vapour
of long-haul truckers coast
bound. Private showers, ample
parking, and 24 hour steak dinners
just rewards for crossing the space
between. In this September hour
you know you make your own
gospel and the only surety
of the upcoming season
is the gristle of your 2 am sirloin
Here, under this portioned out
license plate of a settler highline
across Lakota land, that surety
carries the weight it must
before you sleep through till
dawn in a Ford Ranger cab
at great remove from the sign
that bleaches out the horizon
and expanse of stars beyond.
Jazz (A Variation)
Lorie Miseck

A minor key swings open the blue door of the heart. Brassed and unhinged sound unwinds. Sunset slides down the day’s spine. Slides down to the hour of smoke and wine, to artless sway of belonging. To the one, to the lonely, to the only to each of us held in evening’s aching arms. Listen to the division of chord and time. And time again. Listen. Listen, we take our night with one part wisdom and five parts song.

And the darkness goes on for miles.
[untitled]

kjmunro

low winter sun

the mist

from a mandarin
Dawn was especially noisy today,
as the three suns sprouted from horizon,
as the lamprey loons sung whale songs,
as your tentacle slipped from my gilled side.

I opened one eyeball,
to see the shine of us.
Watched feathered spider flies
steal the dust of our skin.

Having no other eyeball to open,
I slip from our volcano dome,
to scavenge hopplepops for our breakfast,
follow their giggles to find them.

Your 7 limbs seem heavy for you today.
So we turn off the magnets
and float instead,
tango in mid air.

You push branches from my cheek,
ask if I want to go see our egg sack.
I spin around your head three times,
because this is how we spell love.
Still be still be still be still be

Harry Posner

Still be still be still be
Calm or calm or calm or
Placid oh placid oh placid oh
Relax relax relax relax
Ding for pleasure
Ding for dinner
Ring for treasure
The pleasure of your
Company your tympani
Your thrum drum not
Hum drum you’re some fun
You are we are when we are
To gather our each our sweet
Peach the reach of fresh flesh
Enmeshed arms legs held
Melded melted to gather
in the cool pool so still
be still be still be still
my beating heart
All I care about is everything.
I like to lie down and look up at the stars,
even when there are none.
I am almost nothing but thoughts and water.

I find mirrors unbearably off-putting.
My children find them droll.
Do you feel that too?
My left hand feels like a cataclysmic storm.

I will never tire of looking at my wife.
Her smile is like a constant sonar beep
in the depths of my chest.
I hear rain even when it’s sunny out.

Have you ever squinted at the ocean
so the sky and the water blend until
you don’t know where one ends and the other begins?
I’m doing that right now with you.
Visit

Sarah Tsiang

I saw my father yesterday,
sitting on the wall of his mausoleum.
He held my hand and told me he forgave me
and I asked, for what?

He smelled of apples, an autumn of leaves
for skin. I remember you like this, I said,
a harvest—an orchard of a man.

He opened his shirt, plucked a plum
from his lungs and held it out to me.
Everything, he said, is a way of remembering.

From Sweet Delivery (Oolichan Books, 2011).
Contributors’ Notes


Marilyn Bowering is a poet and novelist. She lives on Vancouver Island.

Karin Cope is the author of scholarly works, popular histories, short stories, policy papers, blogs and poetry; her artworks include photographs, installations, performances, videos, guerrilla theatre and mixed media and online works. She teaches at NSCAD University in the Division of Art History and Contemporary Culture.

Stephanie Cui received the League of Canadian Poets’ 2018 Jessamy Stursberg Poetry Prize for young poets.

Lorne Daniel has published three books of poetry, and his work has been included in anthologies and periodicals across Canada, the U.S. and the U.K.. He lives in Victoria, British Columbia.

Adebe DeRango-Adem is the author of three full-length poetry collections: *The Unmooring* (Mansfield Press, 2018); *Terra Incognita* (Inanna Publications, 2015), which was nominated for the Pat Lowther Memorial Award; and *Ex Nihilo* (Frontenac House, 2010), which was a finalist for the Dylan Thomas Prize.

Fiona Tinwei Lam has authored two poetry books, including *Enter the Chrysanthemum* (Caitlin Press, 2009). She also edited *The Bright Well: Canadian Poems on Facing Cancer* (Leaf Press, 2011). She has received The New Quarterly’s Nick Blatchford Prize and was a finalist for the City of Vancouver Book Award. Her work appears in over thirty anthologies, including *The Best of the Best Canadian Poetry: 10th Anniversary Edition* (Tightrope Books, 2017).
Allison LaSorda’s work has appeared in *The Fiddlehead, North American Review, Shenandoah,* and *Hazlitt,* and she was nominated for a 2018 National Magazine Award for Personal Journalism.

D. A. Lockhart is the author of *The Gravel Lot that was Montana* (Mansfield Press, 2018), *This City at the Crossroads* (Black Moss Press, 2017), and *Big Medicine Comes to Erie* (Black Moss Press, 2016). He holds an MFA from Indiana University–Bloomington, where he held a Neal Marshall Fellowship in Creative Writing. He has received grants from the Ontario Arts Council and the Canada Council for the Arts. He is a pukuwankoamimens of the Lenape nation and a member of the Moravian of the Thames First Nation, and he lives in Waawiiyaatanong on the south shore of the Detroit River.

Lorie Miseck is a poet and photographer. She lives in Edmonton, Alberta.


Charlie Petch’s work has been published in *Matrix, Descant, Toronto Quarterly,* and other journals. They are the creative director and founder of “Hot Damn It’s A Queer Slam.”

Harry Posner is the author of six books of poetry and fiction, and he has produced several spoken word CDs. He currently serves as Dufferin County’s first poet laureate.

Greg Santos is the author of *Blackbirds* (Eyewear Publishing, 2018), *Rabbit Punch!* (DC Books, 2014), and *The Emperor’s Sofa* (DC Books, 2010). He holds an MFA in creative writing from The New School in New York City. His writing has appeared in *The Walrus, Geist, Queen’s Quarterly, Cha: An Asian Literary Journal,* and *The Best American Poetry Blog.* He regularly works with at-risk communities and teaches writing and literature at the Thomas More Institute. He is the poetry editor of *carte blanche* and lives in Montreal.

Sarah Yi-Mei Tsiang is the author of ten books, including picture books, poetry, and fiction. She is currently an adjunct professor of creative writing at the University of British Columbia.
Poems to Share from the Public Domain

Moonrise by H.D.
To Make a Prairie by Emily Dickinson
Life by Paul Laurence Dunbar
Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening by Robert Frost
Tanka (I) by Sadakichi Hartmann
When I Rise Up by Georgia Douglas Johnson
The New Colossus by Emma Lazarus
The Tropics of New York by Claude McKay
Wild Swans by Edna St. Vincent Millay
Assured by Alexander Posey
Fog by Carl Sandburg
Faults by Sara Teasdale
The Eagle by Alfred Lord Tennyson
Storm Ending by Jean Toomer
Song of the Open Road, 1 by Walt Whitman

For biographies of these poets, visit www.poets.org.
Will you glimmer on the sea?
Will you fling your spear-head
On the shore?
What note shall we pitch?

We have a song,
On the bank we share our arrows—
The loosed string tells our note:

O flight,
Bring her swiftly to our song.
She is great,
We measure her by the pine-trees.
To make a prairie it takes a clover and one bee, —
One clover, and a bee,
And revery.
The revery alone will do
If bees are few.
A crust of bread and a corner to sleep in,
A minute to smile and an hour to weep in,
A pint of joy to a peck of trouble,
And never a laugh but the moans come double;
And that is life!

A crust and a corner that love makes precious,
With a smile to warm and the tears to refresh us;
And joy seems sweeter when cares come after,
And a moan is the finest of foils for laughter;
And that is life!
Whose woods these are I think I know.
His house is in the village though;
He will not see me stopping here
To watch his woods fill up with snow.

My little horse must think it queer
To stop without a farmhouse near
Between the woods and frozen lake
The darkest evening of the year.

He gives his harness bells a shake
To ask if there is some mistake.
The only other sound’s the sweep
Of easy wind and downy flake.

The woods are lovely, dark, and deep.
But I have promises to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep,
And miles to go before I sleep.
Winter? Spring? Who knows?
White buds from the plumtrees wing
And mingle with the snows.
No blue skies these flowers bring,
Yet their fragrance augurs Spring.
When I rise up above the earth,
And look down on the things that fetter me,
I beat my wings upon the air,
Or tranquil lie,
Surge after surge of potent strength
Like incense comes to me
When I rise up above the earth
And look down upon the things that fetter me.
The New Colossus

Emma Lazarus

Not like the brazen giant of Greek fame,
With conquering limbs astride from land to land;
Here at our sea-washed, sunset gates shall stand
A mighty woman with a torch, whose flame
Is the imprisoned lightning, and her name
Mother of Exiles. From her beacon-hand
Glow world-wide welcome; her mild eyes command
The air-bridged harbor that twin cities frame.
“Keep, ancient lands, your storied pomp!” cries she
With silent lips. “Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!”
Bananas ripe and green, and ginger root
   Cocoa in pods and alligator pears,
And tangerines and mangoes and grape fruit,
   Fit for the highest prize at parish fairs,

Sat in the window, bringing memories
   of fruit-trees laden by low-singing rills,
And dewy dawns, and mystical skies
   In benediction over nun-like hills.

My eyes grow dim, and I could no more gaze;
   A wave of longing through my body swept,
And, hungry for the old, familiar ways
   I turned aside and bowed my head and wept.
I looked in my heart while the wild swans went over.  
And what did I see I had not seen before?  
Only a question less or a question more;  
Nothing to match the flight of wild birds flying.  
Tiresome heart, forever living and dying,  
House without air, I leave you and lock your door.  
Wild swans, come over the town, come over  
The town again, trailing your legs and crying!
Be it dark; be it bright;  
Be it pain; be it rest;  
Be it wrong; be it right—  
It must be for the best.

Some good must somewhere wait,  
And sometime joy and pain  
Must cease to alternate,  
Or else we live in vain.

This poem is in the public domain. For more poems visit poets.org
The fog comes
on little cat feet.

It sits looking
over harbor and city
on silent haunches
and then moves on.
They came to tell your faults to me,
They named them over one by one;
I laughed aloud when they were done,
I knew them all so well before,—
Oh, they were blind, too blind to see
Your faults had made me love you more.
The Eagle

Alfred Lord Tennyson

He clasps the crag with crooked hands;
Close to the sun in lonely lands,
Ringed with the azure world, he stands.

The wrinkled sea beneath him crawls;
He watches from his mountain walls,
And like a thunderbolt he falls.
Storm Ending

Jean Toomer

Thunder blossoms gorgeously above our heads,
Great, hollow, bell-like flowers,
Rumbling in the wind,
Stretching clappers to strike our ears . . .
Full-lipped flowers
Bitten by the sun
Bleeding rain
Dripping rain like golden honey—
And the sweet earth flying from the thunder.
Afoot and light-hearted I take to the open road,
Healthy, free, the world before me,
The long brown path before me leading wherever I choose.

Henceforth I ask not good-fortune, I myself am good-fortune,
Henceforth I whimper no more, postpone no more, need nothing,
Done with indoor complaints, libraries, querulous criticisms,
Strong and content I travel the open road.

The earth, that is sufficient,
I do not want the constellations any nearer,
I know they are very well where they are,
I know they suffice for those who belong to them.

(Still here I carry my old delicious burdens,
I carry them, men and women, I carry them with me wherever I go,
I swear it is impossible for me to get rid of them,
I am fill’d with them, and I will fill them in return.)
Haiku

A traditional Japanese haiku is a three-line poem with seventeen syllables, written in a 5/7/5 syllable count. Often focusing on images from nature, haiku emphasizes simplicity, intensity, and directness of expression.

Haiku began in thirteenth-century Japan as the opening phrase of renga, an oral poem, generally 100 stanzas long, which was also composed syllabically. The much shorter haiku broke away from renga in the sixteenth-century, and was mastered a century later by Matsuo Basho, who wrote this classic haiku:

\begin{quote}
An old pond!
A frog jumps in—
the sound of water.
\end{quote}

Haiku was traditionally written in the present tense and focused on associations between images. There was a pause at the end of the first or second line, and a “season word,” or kigo, specified the time of year.

As the form has evolved, many of these rules—including the 5/7/5 practice—have been routinely broken. However, the philosophy of haiku has been preserved: the focus on a brief moment in time; a use of provocative, colorful images; an ability to be read in one breath; and a sense of sudden enlightenment and illumination.
How to Create a Folded Swan

1. [Diagram of step 1]
2. [Diagram of step 2]
3. [Diagram of step 3]
4. [Diagram of step 4]
5. [Diagram of step 5]
6. [Diagram of step 6]
7. [Diagram of step 7]
8. [Diagram of step 8]
9. [Diagram of step 9]
Other Resources

Poem-a-Day
Poem-a-Day is the original and only daily digital poetry series featuring over 200 new, previously unpublished poems by today’s talented poets each year. On weekdays, poems are accompanied by exclusive commentary by the poets. The series highlights classic poems on weekends. For more information, visit www.poets.org/poem-day.

Teach This Poem
Produced for K-12 educators, Teach This Poem features one poem a week from our online poetry collection, accompanied by interdisciplinary resources and activities designed to help teachers quickly and easily bring poetry into the classroom. The series is curated by our Educator in Residence, Dr. Madeleine Fuchs Holzer, and is available for free via email. For more information, visit www.poets.org/teach-poem.

Poetry Lesson Plans
The Academy of American Poets presents lesson plans, most of which align with Common Core State Standards, and all of which have been reviewed by our Educator in Residence with an eye toward developing skills of perception and imagination. We hope they will inspire the educators in our community to bring even more poems into your classrooms! For more information, visit www.poets.org/lesson-plans.

National Poetry Month
National Poetry Month is the largest literary celebration in the world, with tens of millions of readers, students, K-12 teachers, librarians, booksellers, literary events curators, publishers, bloggers, and, of course, poets marking poetry’s important place in our culture and our lives.

While we celebrate poets and poetry year-round, the Academy of American Poets was inspired by the successful celebrations of Black History Month (February) and Women’s History Month (March), and founded National Poetry Month in April 1996 with an aim to:

- highlight the extraordinary legacy and ongoing achievement of American poets,
- encourage the reading of poems,
- assist teachers in bringing poetry into their classrooms,
- increase the attention paid to poetry by national and local media,
- encourage increased publication and distribution of poetry books, and
- encourage support for poets and poetry.

For more information, visit www.poets.org/npm.
The Academy of American Poets
The Academy of American Poets is the largest membership-based nonprofit organization fostering an appreciation for contemporary poetry and supporting American poets. For over three generations, the organization has connected millions of people to great poetry through programs such as National Poetry Month, the largest literary celebration in the world; Poets.org, one of the leading poetry sites online; American Poets, a biannual magazine; an annual series of poetry readings and special events; and its education programs.

The League of Canadian Poets
The League of Canadian Poets is the professional organization for established and emerging Canadian poets. Founded in 1966 to nurture the advancement of poetry in Canada, and the promotion of the interests of poets, it now comprises over 700 members. The League serves the poetry community and promotes a high level of professional achievement through events, networking, projects, publications, mentoring and awards. It administers programs and funds for governments and private donors and encourages an appreciative readership and audience for poetry through educational partnerships and presentations to diverse groups. As the recognized voice of Canadian poets, it represents their concerns to governments, publishers, and society at large, and maintains connections with similar organizations at home and abroad. The League strives to promote equal opportunities for poets from every literary tradition and cultural and demographic background.