

# *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!

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american**

**poets**

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# *A Guide to Celebrating Poetry in Schools, Communities & Businesses*

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](http://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*

## *O Small Sad Ecstasy of Love*

**Anne Carson**

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.

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## *For Keeps*

Joy Harjo

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

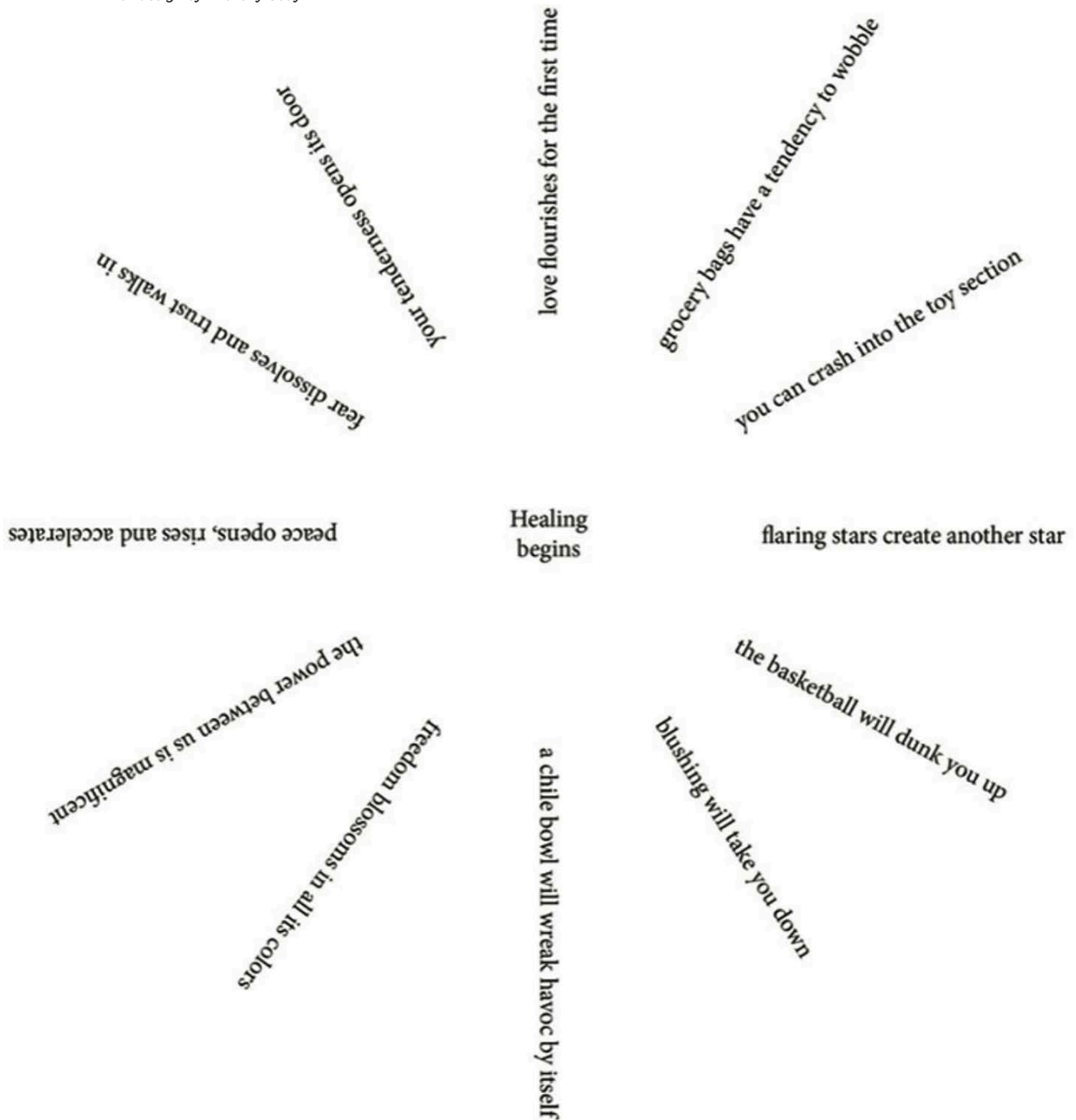
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## *Social Distancing*

Juan Felipe Herrera

*with design by Anthony Cody*





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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

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## *Eating Together*

**Li-Young Lee**

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.

# *Instructions on Not Giving Up*

Ada Limón

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 sqwunch 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 sqwunching 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.

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## *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.

## *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



# *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

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**Níłtsą Bi'áád**

Níłtsą bi'áád

Shá'di'ááhdeę'go dah naaldogo' alzhish  
k'ós hazłı  
honeezk'áz  
níłtsą bi'áád bitázhool bijooltsą  
áádóó níłtsą bi'áád biyázhí bídi'na

Naaniiniilkaahgo

níłtsą bi'áád biyázhí hazłı  
ch'ıl látah hózhóón dahtoo'bee 'ałch'ı' háazhah  
áádóó nihik'inizdidláád

## *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.

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## *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.

## 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.

Marilyn Nelson is the author of numerous books of poetry, including *Faster Than Light: New and Selected Poems, 1996–2011* (Louisiana State University Press, 2012). She has also published several collections of verse for children and young adults, including *How I Discovered Poetry* (Dial Press, 2014). Nelson is the recipient of honors and awards from the Guggenheim Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the Poetry Society of America, among others. A former poet laureate of Connecticut and Chancellor of the Academy of American Poets, she lives in Connecticut.

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*

Phyllis Webb: The Spit *by Stephen Bett*

What You Want Doesn't Matter *by Moni Brar*

Sometimes *by Rae Crossman*

Beekeeping *by Kim Fahner*

At Dusk as Desire *by Dagne Forrest*

IF TINY CRYSTALS FORM CLOSE TO THE EARTH'S SURFACE THEY  
FORM DIAMOND DUST *by Catherine Graham*

The Why of It *by Louisa Howerow*

Spider *by Laboni Islam*

Gravities *by Laurie Koensgen*

Elegy for Opportunity *by Natalie Lim*

Pavane for a Dead Letter *by Marion Lougheed*

Emily and I *by Pamela Porter*

Skin *by Eleonore Schönmaier*

The Walk *by Margo Wheaton*



## *Phyllis Webb: The Spit*

**Stephen Bett**

*And spit  
give me water for spit.  
Then give me  
a face.*

— *Phyllis Webb, “Solitary Confinement”*

And spit  
broken glass  
for shards  
to speak

give me water for spit.  
Gloss this mal du  
doute ... never  
was spat out

Then give me  
ash in time  
to witness  
its burn

a face.  
To spite  
itself  
still

# *What You Want Doesn't Matter*

**Moni Brar**

When you ask me  
where are you from?  
do you want me to say  
I'm from  
a crushed clove  
the husk of a coconut  
coriander dust  
the swell of the water buffalo's belly  
the ocean's lust for the moon?

When you ask me again  
I won't answer  
instead, I'll say  
I have  
a peacock in my pocket  
tucked among old stories  
nesting in lint  
feeding on crumbs and little lies  
I gently push down its throat.

# *Sometimes*

**Rae Crossman**

Rushing into our early morning bedroom  
with her  
under-the-pillow discovery.

My daughter's  
toothless grin.

Sometimes poetry is like that:  
all tooth fairy  
no incisors.

Sometimes  
it's wolf canines  
and snap of bone.

## *Beekeeping*

**Kim Fahner**

At the centre of the hive, a bright sun  
with planets that orbit it, this bee that  
gathers others to her, this little winged thing,  
the one that hums, shakes,  
throbs, and dances.

Lean in, hinge from your hips,  
let your heart lead:  
in Latin, heart is cor  
and agere is to lead.

They dance diagonal  
with one another, end up  
writing letters home in cursive,  
write 'cross my heart and hope to die,'  
whispering ardent promises, but then  
forget to lick and seal the envelope.

Lean in, beekeeper.

They say, if you close your eyes  
and breathe in deeply—if you lead  
with your heart—you will take in  
the scent of lemongrass.  
This is the essence of the queen,  
the one that hums, shakes,  
throbs, and dances.

Lean in, beekeeper. Hinge from your hips.  
Lead with your heart.

Courage, my love.

Courage.

## *At Dusk*

**Dagne Forrest**

At dusk the woods shift closer,  
shadows melt across  
my shoulders.

Here, the nose puckering scent  
of rotten apples  
sharp, ascends.

Unseen roosting birds decry  
my presence. Flustered,  
tensing sky-

ward—dark wings undone,  
one by one.

# *IF TINY CRYSTALS FORM CLOSE TO THE EARTH'S SURFACE THEY FORM DIAMOND DUST*

**Catherine Graham**

My antler heart grows hooves.  
I follow the lead from the pack.  
Find shelter in a drunken forest—

what species isn't at risk.  
Insulating properties of snow  
keep me warm—

trapped air between each flake.  
With body heat and earth-transfer heat  
my home becomes a snowbank.

It's not the hare's scream  
that haunts,  
it's the antecedent silence.

## *The Why of It*

Louisa Howerow

You know before you start you won't succeed  
in creating the ideal pain français, not the crackly kind  
you'd buy from a village boulangerie, not even if

you follow Julia Child's instructions and advice,  
accompanied by drawings. Twenty pages worth.  
You don't have the right flour with its precise

gluten strength. You don't have a baker's oven  
with a fire-brick floor. You still haven't mastered  
how to form the dough into the shape you want,

but you will go at it again and again, because  
you want your muscles doing, keeping busy,  
taking you away for seven hours, plus

three for cooling down. You like the elastic feel  
of the dough, its smoothness. The kneading,  
the scraping, the lifting and the slapping down.

Repeat, repeat. Yes! Moving fast, creating  
a rhythm. No matter how the table shakes,  
you work that dough, until you're spent. If

there was a river, you could beat your wash  
on rocks, or a carpet to bang out on a fence,  
but you don't have river or a carpet or fence.

All you have are muscles making good,  
doing something they're learning to do,  
believing they can keep death at bay.

# *Spider*

Laboni Islam

Praise your fluency  
in silk — spinning

what is hidden within

the way you float a line out on the wind  
& let it latch.

Praise your small & diligent body

the way it pulls & fastens  
till a single spoke  
sings  
of a whole geometry.

Praise your eight-legged patience.

Can you teach me to be still?

To welcome what disturbs the web  
& what to do with it?



# *Gravities*

Laurie Koensgen

When we were fast planets  
orbiting the schoolyard

the fringes of our scarves  
encircled us like moons

and sometimes we collided.

Lava erupted in angry scabs  
on our scorched knees.

Our mouths were gaping seas  
learning what tides mean.

# *Elegy for Opportunity*

Natalie Lim

after Matthew Rohrer's "There is Absolutely Nothing Lonelier"

my sister cried when she heard.  
on a planet far away,  
all reddish rock and dust storm,  
Opportunity lies still –  
this robot who just turned fifteen,  
who never knew what a birthday was,  
who will never understand  
that there are people on earth  
grieving her cold metal frame.  
there is something so cruel,  
so human, about mourning  
a being we programmed  
and exiled to space  
with no means of returning.

we knew she would die one day,  
alone in a sea of rust,  
but we are tender even  
in our cruelty, so we  
grieve. we write poems in her name.  
our last message to her was a song,  
did you know that?  
a song.  
there is nothing lonelier  
than the little Mars rover,  
no longer chirping back to base  
about earth and rocks and maybe-life,  
nothing lonelier than us,  
creating things we know  
we will sing to sleep one day, nothing lonelier  
than thinking of that robot,  
sitting still and silent now,  
being worn slowly away  
by the winds of a planet  
we promised she could call home

# *Pavane for a Dead Letter*

Marion Lougheed

every thought is a wartime letter  
struck through with black  
words and news that can't be shared

in the depths a torpedo  
hits its mark

a cargo of letters  
waltzes  
slowly  
to the ocean floor

## *Emily and I*

**Pamela Porter**

Together in her drafty attic  
we write our letters to the world.  
Her lamp sputters, the light poor.

In the frame of her window the sun's last spreads over  
Amherst's houses.

She let me in when I bragged I was nobody  
and now sends me downstairs  
to scrounge more paper –  
envelopes, she insists – envelopes.

I creep down the creaky stairs.  
Try to silence the swinging kitchen door.

Everyone's out but her pipe-smoking father  
who won't spend a penny on paper.  
He doesn't see my hand lift the wooden box  
where he tosses the trash.

I sift out all the envelopes.  
Take them up to Emily  
and our fevered unfolding begins.

How she cringes when I make the tiniest tear.  
This part takes time – the careful unhinging,  
the smoothing.

She hands me a pen, an ink pot.  
We go to work.

What I'll remember most  
is her shadow on the wall –  
her hand, and the pen large, swift,

and her hair -- not pulled tight,  
but down, free -- almost, I would say,  
wild.

# *Skin*

**Eleonore Schönmaier**

a man's frosted exhalation  
in the pitch interior

of a car's trunk  
is white against black

like chalk on the board  
easily erased, but

not easily forgotten  
the sound of tires on snow

heard from inside  
the trunk of a cop car

# *The Walk*

**Margo Wheaton**

(For my father)

After the worst of it, after the days of the black nets  
that entangled you, that wrapped  
themselves around your will as you lay

in the starched anonymity  
of the new bed in the seniors home,

I see you at the end of the hall,  
just reaching it—the white vinyl—  
plastic window that gazed directly into the woods,

filling with wild green light.

You were bent and curved like a fish's  
mouth, down-turned, ferning into  
yourself as you gripped the sides of the hated walker,

hanging like an empty shirt.

I know you won't succeed in this, but there's  
something in the measured gait,  
the shuck forward, as if you could

escape the swelling sky of circumstance  
if you just kept walking.

Like a man who's overdosed  
and mustn't sleep, you swim your  
ruined body forward, each glittering

step a sand-shoal  
holding back the sea.

# 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](http://www.poets.org).*

# **national** **poetry month**

Poem in Your Pocket Day

## *Moonrise*

H.D.

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.*



# **national** **poetry month**

Poem in Your Pocket Day

## *To Make a Prairie*

Emily Dickinson

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.

# **national** **poetry month**

Poem in Your Pocket Day

## *Life*

**Paul Laurence Dunbar**

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!

# *Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening*

**Robert Frost**

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.

# **national** **poetry month**

Poem in Your Pocket Day

## *Tanka (I)*

**Sadakichi Hartmann**

Winter? Spring? Who knows?  
White buds from the plumbtrees wing  
And mingle with the snows.  
No blue skies these flowers bring,  
Yet their fragrance augurs Spring.

# **national** **poetry month**

Poem in Your Pocket Day

## *When I Rise Up*

**Georgia Douglas Johnson**

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!”

# *The Tropics of New York*

**Claude McKay**

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.

# **national** **poetry month**

Poem in Your Pocket Day

## *Wild Swans*

**Edna St. Vincent Millay**

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!



# **national** **poetry month**

Poem in Your Pocket Day

## *Assured*

Alexander Posey

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.

# **national** **poetry month**

Poem in Your Pocket Day

## *Fog*

**Carl Sandburg**

The fog comes  
on little cat feet.

It sits looking  
over harbor and city  
on silent haunches  
and then moves on.

# **national** **poetry month**

Poem in Your Pocket Day

## *Faults*

**Sara Teasdale**

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.

# **national** **poetry month**

Poem in Your Pocket Day

## *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.

# *Song of the Open Road, 1*

Walt Whitman

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.)

# Appendix

## 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:

*An old pond!  
A frog jumps in—  
the sound of water.*

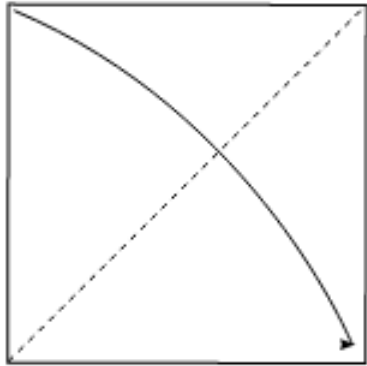
Haiku was traditionally written in the present tense and focused on associations between images. There was a pause at the end of the first or second line, and a “season word,” or kigo, specified the time of year.

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.

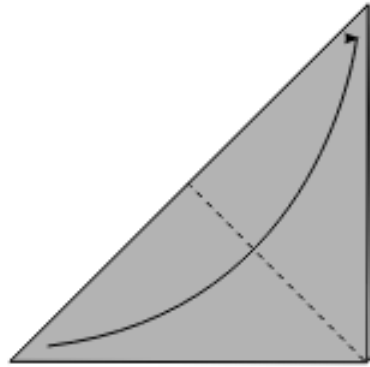
To read more examples of poems written in the haiku form, visit [www.poets.org/haiku](http://www.poets.org/haiku).

To read about other poetic forms, such as the acrostic, the cinquain, and the sonnet, visit [www.poets.org](http://www.poets.org).

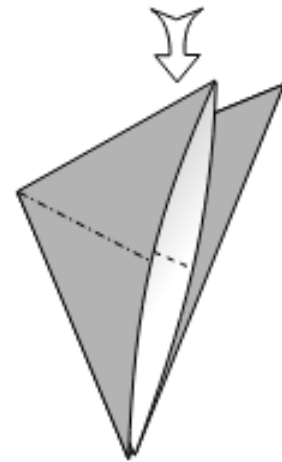
# *How to Create a Folded Swan*



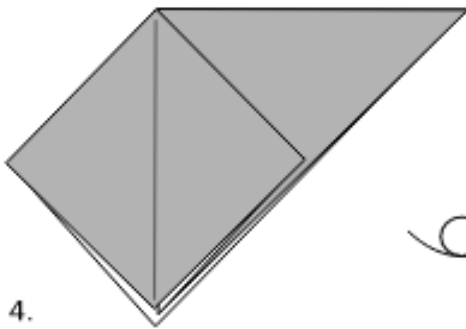
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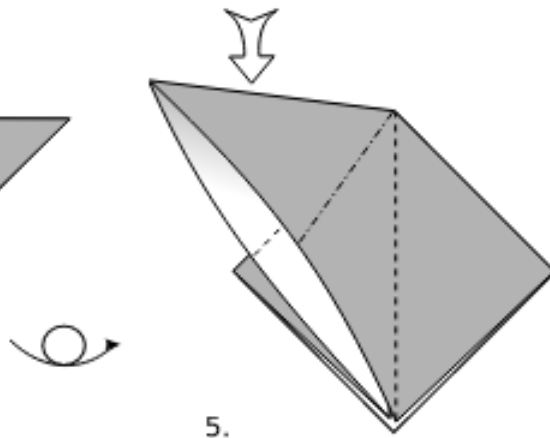
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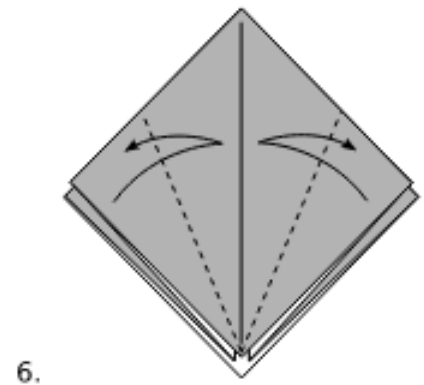
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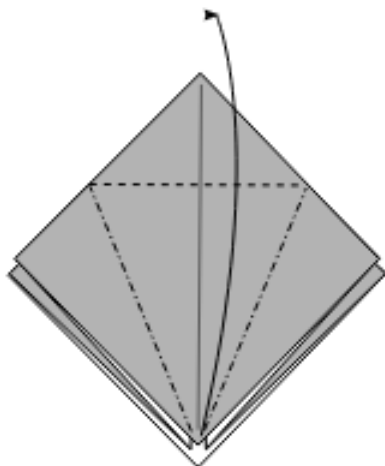
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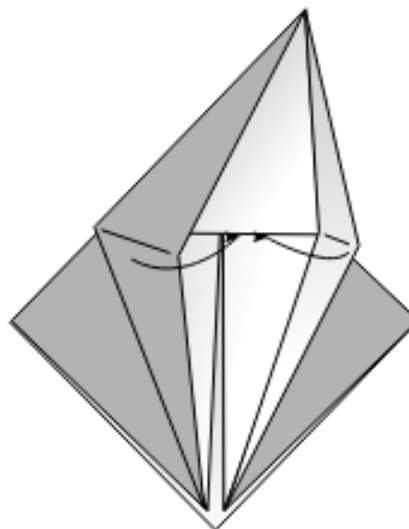
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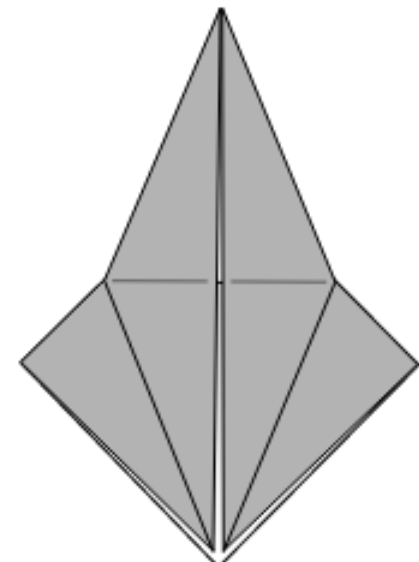
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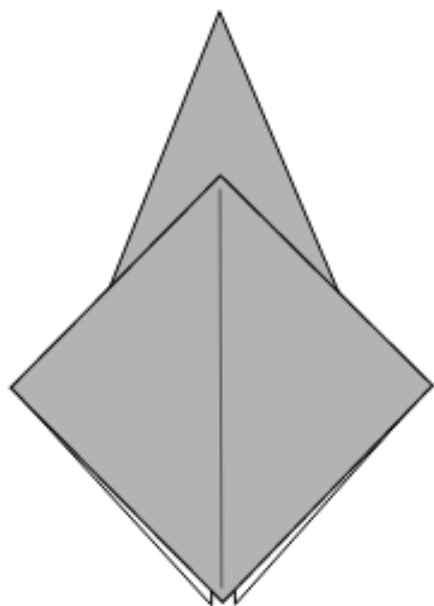


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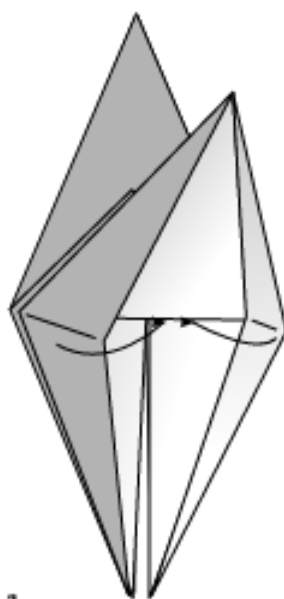


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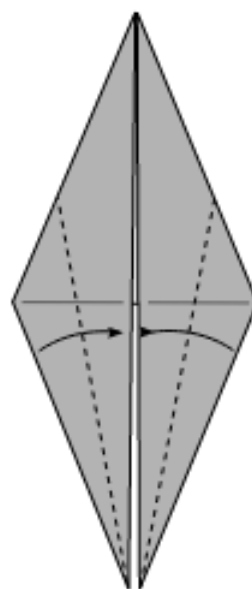




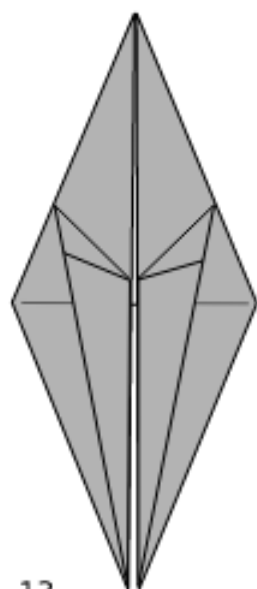
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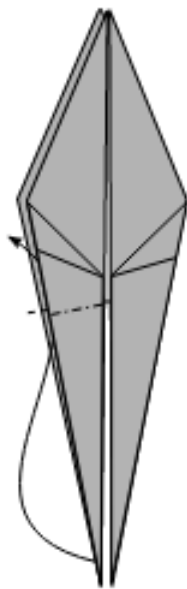
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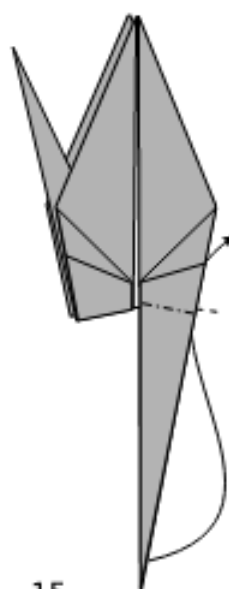
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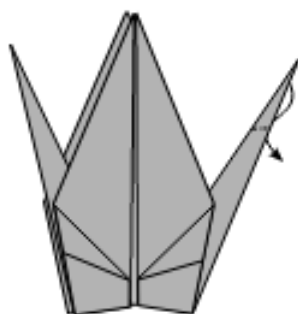
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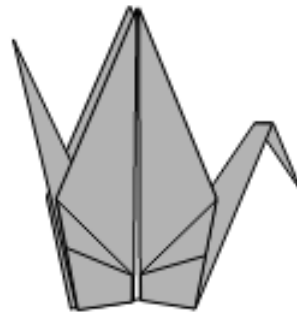
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# Other Resources

## 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/poetsorg/poem-day](http://www.poets.org/poetsorg/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/poetsorg/teach-poem](http://www.poets.org/poetsorg/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/poetsorg/lesson-plans](http://www.poets.org/poetsorg/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](http://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.