

Poem in Your Pocket Day

April 27, 2023

Every April, on Poem in Your Pocket Day, people celebrate by selecting a poem, carry-ing 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!

**academy of
american poets**

Poets.ca
THE LEAGUE OF CANADIAN POETS

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 our 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 our 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 our 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.
- 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 our 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, TikTok, 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 American Poets

O Small Sad Ecstasy of Love by Anne Carson

i love you to the moon & by Chen Chen

In the Company of Women by January Gill O'Neil

[The whale already] by Kimiko Hahn

This Morning I Pray for My Enemies by Joy Harjo

Scaffolding by Seamus Heaney

Here and There by Juan Felipe Herrera

I Sat in the Sun by Jane Hirshfield

8. by bell hooks

Do not trust the eraser by Rosamond S. King

Iris Song by Rickey Laurentiis

The Raincoat by Ada Limón

Before I Was a Gazan by Naomi Shihab Nye

Down to My Elbows (ending on a line by Shakespeare) by José Olivarez

In the High Country by David St. John

Blue Impala by Laura Tohe

national **poetry month**

Poem in Your Pocket Day

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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Poem in Your Pocket Day

i love you to the moon

Chen Chen

not back, let's not come back, let's go by the speed of
queer zest & stay up
there & get ourselves a little
moon cottage (so pretty), then start a moon garden

with lots of moon veggies (so healthy), i mean
i was already moonlighting
as an online moonologist
most weekends, so this is the immensely

logical next step, are you
packing your bags yet, don't forget your
sailor moon jean jacket, let's wear
our sailor moon jean jackets while twirling in that lighter,

queerer moon gravity, let's love each other
(so good) on the moon, let's love
the moon
on the moon

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Poem in Your Pocket Day

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.

national poetry month

Poem in Your Pocket Day

[The whale already]

Kimiko Hahn

a golden shovel

The whale already taken got away: the moon alone

—Yosa Buson, translated by Hiroaki Sato

What is endangered, the
rest of us ignore. The whale,
loved by children and cartoonists, already
dwindles. Bycatch has taken
them. The tiny creatures they consume haven't got
a chance to outlast the warming. A way
to safeguard whales is to deny ourselves the
discs and car exhaust. The moon
sees us at all cost alone.

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Poem in Your Pocket Day

This Morning I Pray for My Enemies

Joy Harjo

And whom do I call my enemy?
An enemy must be worthy of engagement.
I turn in the direction of the sun and keep walking.
It's the heart that asks the question, not my furious mind.
The heart is the smaller cousin of the sun.
It sees and knows everything.
It hears the gnashing even as it hears the blessing.
The door to the mind should only open from the heart.
An enemy who gets in, risks the danger of becoming a friend.

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Poem in Your Pocket Day

Scaffolding

Seamus Heaney

Masons, when they start upon a building,
Are careful to test out the scaffolding;

Make sure that planks won't slip at busy points,
Secure all ladders, tighten bolted joints.

And yet all this comes down when the job's done
Showing off walls of sure and solid stone.

So if, my dear, there sometimes seem to be
Old bridges breaking between you and me

Never fear. We may let the scaffolds fall
Confident that we have built our wall.

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Poem in Your Pocket Day

Here and There

Juan Felipe Herrera

I sit and meditate—my dog licks her paws
on the red-brown sofa
so many things somehow
it all is reduced to numbers letters figures
without faces or names only jagged lines
across the miles half-shadows
going into shadow-shadow then destruction the infinite light

here and there cannot be overcome
it is the first drop of ink

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I Sat in the Sun

Jane Hirshfield

I moved my chair into sun
I sat in the sun
the way hunger is moved when called fasting.

—2012

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Poem in Your Pocket Day

8.

bell hooks

snow-covered earth
such silence
still divine presence
echoes immortal migrants
all life sustained
darkness comes
suffering touches us
again and again
there is pain
there in the midst of
such harsh barrenness
a cardinal framed in the glass
red light
calling away despair
eternal promise
everything changes and ends

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Poem in Your Pocket Day

Do not trust the eraser

Rosamond S. King

for Gabrielle Civil & Madhu H. Kaza

Do not trust the eraser. Prefer
crossed out, scribbled over monuments
to something once thought correct
. Instead: colors, transparencies
track changes, versions, iterations
. How else might you return
after discards, attempts
and mis takes, to your
original genius
?

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Poem in Your Pocket Day

Iris Song

Rickey Laurentiis

You go outside and the trees don't know
You're black. The lilacs will chatter and break
Themselves real bloom, real boon,
No matter your gender. You matter.
Who in you is most material, so
You matter. Your afro gone touch the sky.
Come up from the ground looking extra fly,
Come up from the ground looking extra, fly, I
will touch the sky. I—open my mouth, And
my whole life falls out.

national poetry month

Poem in Your Pocket Day

The Raincoat

Ada Limón

When the doctor suggested surgery
and a brace for all my youngest years,
my parents scrambled to take me
to massage therapy, deep tissue work,
osteopathy, and soon my crooked spine
unspooled a bit, I could breathe again,
and move more in a body unclouded
by pain. My mom would tell me to sing
songs to her the whole forty-five minute
drive to Middle Two Rock Road and forty-
five minutes back from physical therapy.
She'd say, even my voice sounded unfettered
by my spine afterward. So I sang and sang,
because I thought she liked it. I never
asked her what she gave up to drive me,
or how her day was before this chore. Today,
at her age, I was driving myself home from yet
another spine appointment, singing along
to some maudlin but solid song on the radio,
and I saw a mom take her raincoat off
and give it to her young daughter when
a storm took over the afternoon. My god,
I thought, my whole life I've been under her
raincoat thinking it was somehow a marvel
that I never got wet.

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Before I was a Gazan

Naomi Shihab Nye

I was a boy
and my homework was missing,
paper with numbers on it,
stacked and lined,
I was looking for my piece of paper,
proud of this plus that, then multiplied,
not remembering if I had left it
on the table after showing to my uncle
or the shelf after combing my hair
but it was still somewhere
and I was going to find it and turn it in,
make my teacher happy,
make her say my name to the whole class,
before everything got subtracted
in a minute
even my uncle
even my teacher
even the best math student and his baby sister
who couldn't talk yet.
And now I would do anything
for a problem I could solve.

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Poem in Your Pocket Day

Down to My Elbows (ending on a line by Shakespeare)

José Olivarez

hands in a sink
down to my elbows
clogged with gray water
wet rice soggy cornflakes
in the other room
you read Twitter & text
me your favorite jokes

so this is love
i ask the fistful of nasty gunk
in my hand like
it's a Shakespearean skull
& the skull says
there is nothing either good or bad
but loving makes it so

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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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Blue Impala

Laura Tohe

That time I stole a blue Impala in Flagstaff

the first year they made those automatic windows, you know?

I was sixteen and I was cruising down the highway

Hot on the trail to Albuquerque

I was hungry

and I was howling, man.

It was like stealing the best horse in the herd.

national **poetry month**

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.

Chen Chen received a PhD from Texas Tech University. He is the author of *When I Grow Up I Want to Be a List of Further Possibilities* (BOA Editions, 2017), which won the A. Poulin, Jr. Poetry Prize and was long-listed for the National Book Award. The recipient of a 2022 United States Artists fellowship and 2019 Creative Writing Fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts, he is the Jacob Ziskind Visiting Poet-in-Residence at Brandeis University and lives in Waltham, Massachusetts.

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.

Kimiko Hahn is the author of numerous collections of poetry, including *Foreign Bodies* (W. W. Norton, 2020) and *The Unbearable Heart* (1995), which received an American Book Award. She received an undergraduate degree in English and east Asian studies, and a master's degree in Japanese literature. She frequently draws on, and even reinvents, classic forms and techniques used by women writers in Japan and China, including the *zuihitsu*, or pillow book, and *nu shu*, a nearly extinct script Chinese women used to correspond with one another. Hahn is the recipient of fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts and the New York Foundation for the Arts, among others. She is a Distinguished Professor in the English department at Queens College/CUNY and lives in New York.

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.

Seamus Heaney was born on April 13, 1939 in Castledawson, County Derry, Northern Ireland. In 1965, he married Marie Devlin, and the following year he published *Death of a Naturalist* (Oxford University Press, 1966). Heaney produced numerous collections of poetry, including *Opened Ground* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1999), which was named a *New York Times* Notable Book of the Year, and more. He also wrote several volumes of criticism, and of translation, including *Beowulf* (Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2000), which won the Whitbread Book of the Year Award. Heaney was awarded the Lifetime Recognition Award from the Griffin Trust For Excellence in Poetry. In 1995, he received the Nobel Prize in Literature. Seamus Heaney passed away in Dublin on August 30, 2013. He was seventy-four.

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.

bell hooks (a.k.a Gloria Jean Watkins) was born on September 25, 1952, in Hopkinsville, Kentucky. She took her name in honor of her grandmother Bell Blair Hooks. A cultural critic, feminist theorist, and scholar on race and gender, hooks authored more than thirty books, including the poetry collections *Appalachian Elegy: Poetry and Place* (University Press of Kentucky, 2012); *When Angels Speak of Love* (Atria Books, 2011); and *And There We Wept* (Golemics, 1978). hooks taught at Berea College in Kentucky, which is home to the bell hooks Institute. She died in Berea, Kentucky, on December 15, 2021.

Rosamond S. King is an African American, queer, female poet and the author of *All the Rage* (Nightboat, 2021) and *Rock | Salt | Stone* (Nightboat Books, 2017), winner of the 2018 Lambda Literary Award for Best Lesbian Poetry. The recipient of awards, fellowships, and residencies from Lambda Literary, Alice Yard, and the Fulbright Program, she is an associate professor in the English department at Brooklyn College and lives in Brooklyn, New York on Canarsee and Nyack Lenape territory, near an African burial ground.

Rickey Laurentiis is the author of *Boy with Thorn* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2015), which won the Cave Canem Poetry Prize and the Levis Reading Prize. They are the recipient of fellowships from the Center for African American Poetry and Poetics, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the Poetry Foundation, among others. A 2018 Whiting Award winner, they live in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

Ada Limón is the U.S. Poet Laureate and 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.

José Olivarez is a poet, educator, and performer from Chicago. He is the author of *Promises of Gold* (Henry Holt and Company, 2023); *Citizen Illegal* (Haymarket Books, 2018), winner of the 2018 Chicago Review of Books Poetry Prize, and coeditor with Felicia Rose Chavez and Willie Perdomo of *BreakBeat Poets Vol 4: LatiNEXT* (Haymarket Books, 2020). He is the recipient of fellowships from Poets House, the Bronx Council on the Arts, the Poetry Foundation, CantoMundo, and other organizations. Winner of the first annual Author & Artist in Justice Award from the Phillips Brooks House Association, he is the cohost of the podcast *The Poetry Gods* and lives in New York City.

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 *Tseyí / 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.

Poems to Share by 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.

Poem in Your Pocket Day

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 TINYYCRYSTALS
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.

Poem in Your Pocket Day

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

[I come weary,] *by Matsuo Basho, translated by William George Aston*

To Make a Prairie *by Emily Dickinson*

Moonrise *by H.D.*

Life *by Paul Laurence Dunbar*

Tanka (1) *by Sadakichi Hartmann*

Dance *by Alfred Kreymborg*

The New Colossus *by Emma Lazarus*

Spring in New Hampshire *by Claude McKay*

One Perfect Rose *by Dorothy Parker*

Assured *by Alexander Posey*

The Spring Has Many Silences *by Laura Riding Jackson*

Fog *by Carl Sandburg*

An April Day *by Joseph Seamon Cotter Jr.*

Faults *by Sara Teasdale*

The Eagle *by Alfred Lord Tennyson*

Storm Ending *by Jean Toomer*

national **poetry** month

Poem in Your Pocket Day

[I come weary,]

Matsuo Basho, translated by William George Aston

I come weary,
In search of an inn—
Ah! These wisteria flowers!

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

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

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!

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

Dance

Alfred Kreymborg

Moon dance,
you were not to blame.

Nor you,
lovely white moth.

But I saw you together.

national **poetry month**

Poem in Your Pocket Day

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!”

national **poetry month**

Poem in Your Pocket Day

Spring in New Hampshire

Claude McKay

Too green the springing April grass,
Too blue the silver-speckled sky,
For me to linger here, alas,
While happy winds go laughing by,
Wasting the golden hours indoors,
Washing windows and scrubbing floors.

Too wonderful the April night,
Too faintly sweet the first May flowers,
The stars too gloriously bright,
For me to spend the evening hours,
When fields are fresh and streams are leaping,
Wearied, exhausted, dully sleeping.

national **poetry month**

Poem in Your Pocket Day

One Perfect Rose

Dorothy Parker

A single flow'r he sent me, since we met.
All tenderly his messenger he chose;
Deep-hearted, pure, with scented dew still wet—
One perfect rose.

I knew the language of the floweret;
“My fragile leaves,” it said, “his heart enclose.”
Love long has taken for his amulet
One perfect rose.

Why is it no one ever sent me yet
One perfect limousine, do you suppose?
Ah no, it's always just my luck to get
One perfect rose.

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

The Spring Has Many Silences

Laura Riding Jackson

The spring has many sounds:
Roller skates grind the pavement to noisy dust.
Birds chop the still air into small melodies.
The wind forgets to be the weather for a time
And whispers old advice for summer.
The sea stretches itself
And gently creaks and cracks its bones....

The spring has many silences:
Buds are mysteriously unbound
With a discreet significance,
And buds say nothing.

There are things that even the wind will not betray.
Earth puts her finger to her lips
And muffles there her quiet, quick activity....

Do not wonder at me
That I am hushed
This April night beside you.

The spring has many silences.

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

An April Day

Joseph Seamon Cotter Jr.

On such a day as this I think,
 On such as day as this,
When earth and sky and nature's whole
 Are clad in April's bliss;
And balmy zephyrs gently waft
 Upon your cheek a kiss;
Sufficient is it just to live
 On such a day as this.

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.

national **poetry month**

Poem in Your Pocket Day

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.

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.*

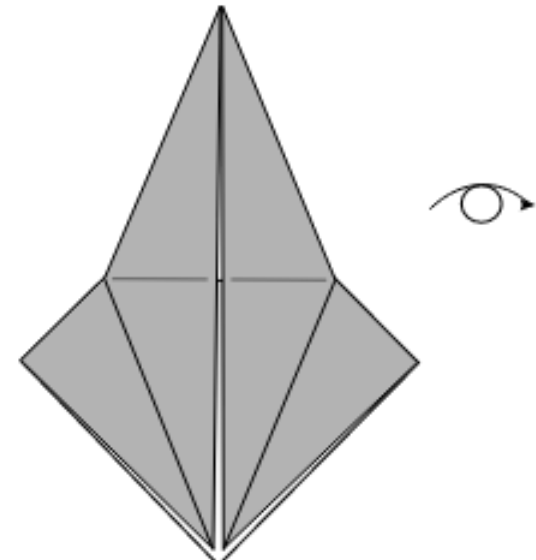
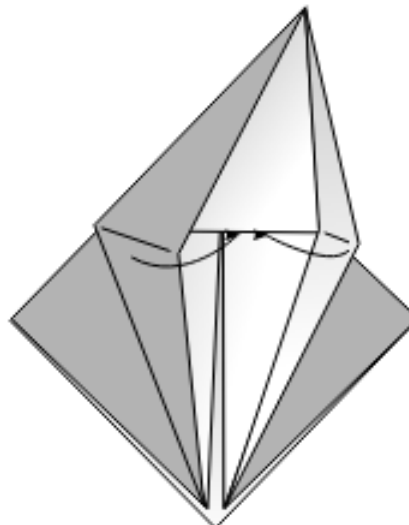
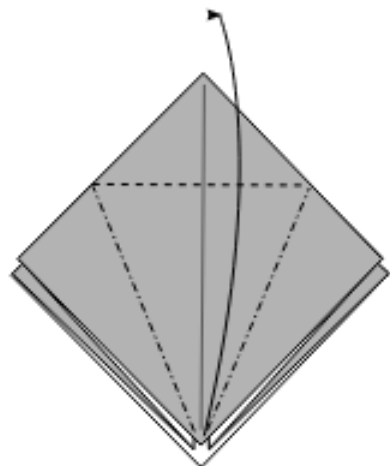
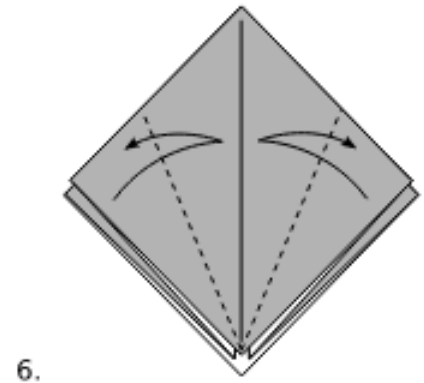
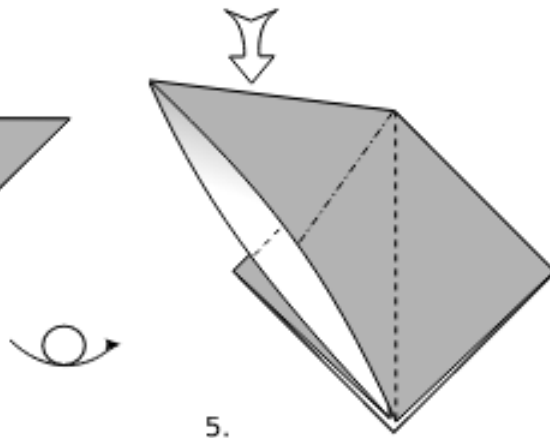
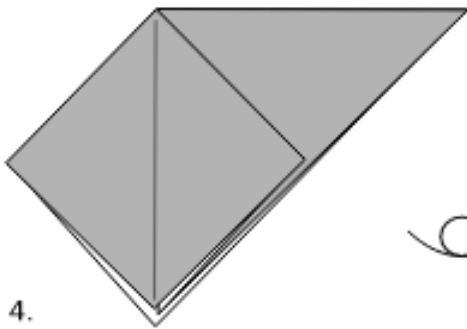
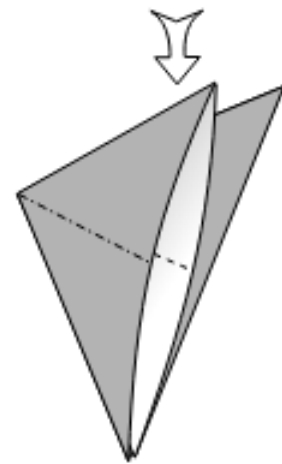
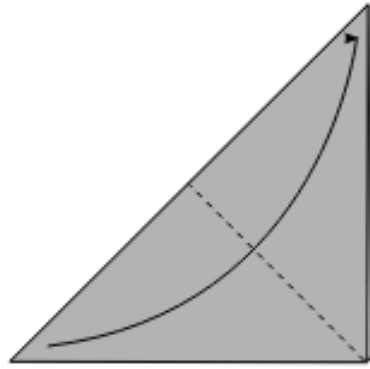
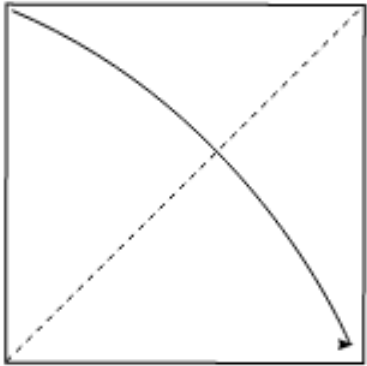
Haiku was traditionally written in the present tense and focused on associations between images. There was a pause at the end of the first or second line, and a “season word,” or kigo, specified the time of year.

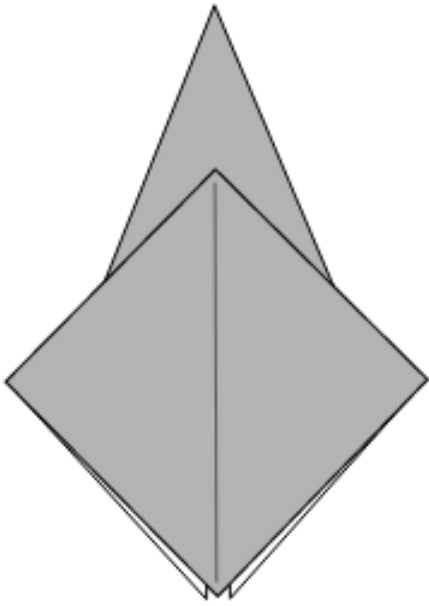
As the form has evolved, many of these rules—including the 5/7/5 practice—have been routinely broken. However, the philosophy of haiku has been preserved: the focus on a brief moment in time; a use of provocative, colorful images; an ability to be read in one breath; and a sense of sudden enlightenment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

To read more examples of poems written in the haiku form, visit www.poets.org/haiku.

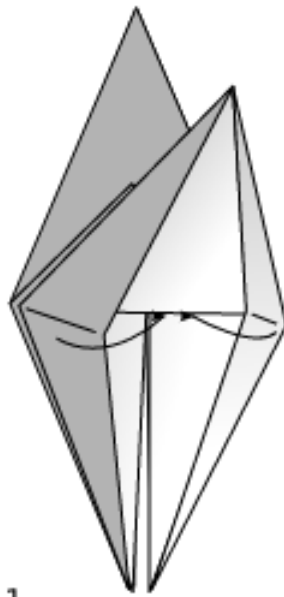
To read about other poetic forms, such as the acrostic, the cinquain, and the sonnet, visit www.poets.org.

How to Create a Folded Swan

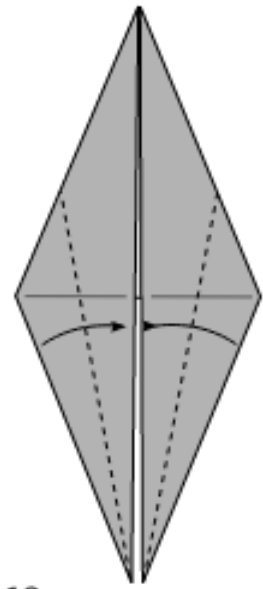




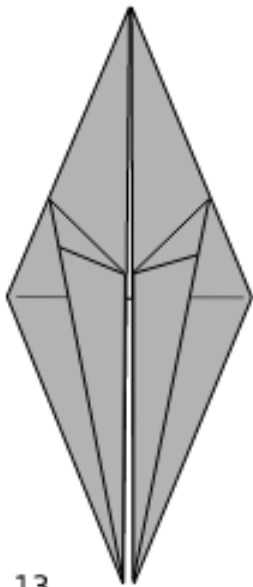
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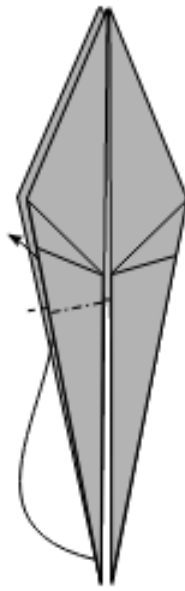
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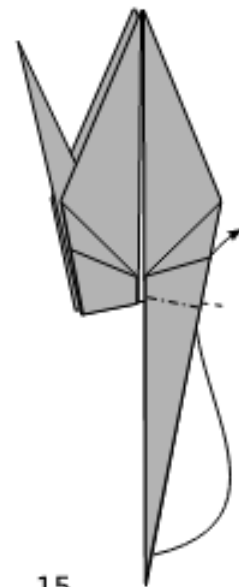
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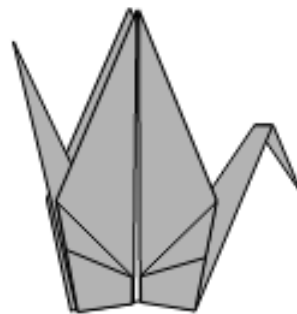
14.



15.



16.



17.



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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.

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.

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.

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.