

**national**  
**poetry month**  
**30th anniversary**

*Poem  
in Your  
Pocket Day*

*April 30, 2026*

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!

# *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](http://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*

*Tyranny of the Milky Way by Claudia Castro Luna*

*i love you to the moon & by Chen Chen*

*Ars Poetica by Camonghne Felix*

*In the Company of Women by January Gill O'Neil*

*This Morning I Pray for My Enemies by Joy Harjo*

*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*

*When It Comes Down To It by Ada Limón*

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

*Before I Was a Gazan by Naomi Shihab Nye*

*Blue Impala by Laura Tohe*

*Kelp by Jeffrey Yang*

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## *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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## *Tyranny of the Milky Way*

**Claudia Castro Luna**

The way clouds taste as they go from castles to rabbits above your head. You are twelve, your skin damp from the humid tropical day, the grass under your arms and legs benign even if itchy. The way a million stars scatter at night, and you in jersey gown and bare feet seek the same spot from earlier in the day to count far away incandescent rocks and tucked behind your ear your secret wish to spot a single UFO. The way a slice of tres leches cake on your thirteenth birthday surrenders in unison on your tongue its sweet milks. The way at twelve you tasted marvel and by fourteen you'd tasted war.

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## *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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## *Ars Poetica*

**Camonghne Felix**

Because I know  
Now: how it feels  
To sip that small space  
Between becoming  
And being found.

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## *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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## *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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## *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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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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## *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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## *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.

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## *When It Comes Down To It*

Ada Limón

Trip the door to stick,  
we with the bag mouths

yawping in the blank  
space where our joy

once lived, little blooming  
weed, purple dead nettle

where have you gone  
good flourishing? Red

feather I found bent  
on the wildflower berm

soaked but not soaked  
simply shadowed still

unweighted, insistent  
it belongs to flight.

From *The Hurting Kind* by Ada Limón (Minneapolis: Milkweed Editions, 2022). Copyright 2022 by Ada Limón.  
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## *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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## *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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## *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.

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## *Kelp*

**Jeffrey Yang**

How easy it is to lose oneself  
in a kelp forest. Between  
canopy leaves, sunlight filters thru  
the water surface; nutrients  
bring life where there'd other-  
wise be barren sea; a vast eco-  
system breathes. Each  
being being  
being's link.

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## 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.

Claudia Castro Luna was born in El Salvador. She is the author of four books of poetry: *Cipota Under The Moon* (Tia Chucha Press, 2022), *One River, A Thousand Voices* (Chin Music Press, 2020), and *Killing Mariás* (Two Sylvias Press, 2017). Castro Luna has been the recipient of numerous awards and fellowships. In 2019, she was named an Academy of American Poets Laureate Fellow. From 2018–21, Castro Luna served as the poet laureate of Washington State. She currently teaches at the Matteo Ricci Institute at Seattle University.

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.

Camonghne Felix is the author *Dyscalculia* (Penguin Random House, 2023) and *Build Yourself a Boat* (Haymarket Books, 2019), which was long-listed for the 2019 National Book Award in Poetry. The 2013 winner of the Cora Craig Award for Young Women, Felix has received fellowships from Cave Canem, Callaloo, and Poets House.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

Jeffrey Yang is the author of *Line and Light* (Graywolf Press, 2022); *Hey, Marfa* (Graywolf Press, 2018); *Vanishing-Line* (Graywolf Press, 2011); and others. Additionally, Yang has translated the works of Bei Dao, Ahmatjan Osman, Liu Xiaobo, and Su Shi. Yang has also served as the editor of *Birds, Beasts, and Seas: Nature Poems from New Directions* (New Directions, 2011). He is an editor at New Directions Publishing, where he has worked since 2000, and *The New York Review of Books*. He lives in Beacon, New York.

# *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.

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## *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.

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# *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*

*Gift* by *Hilda Conkling*

*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*

*Untitled [Do you still remember: falling stars]* by *Rainer Maria Rilke, translated by*

*Edward Snow*

*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*

*For biographies of these poets, visit [www.poets.org](http://www.poets.org).*

# 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

## *Gift*

**Hilda Conkling**

This is mint and here are three pinks  
I have brought you, Mother.  
They are wet with rain  
And shining with it.  
The pinks smell like more of them  
In a blue vase:  
The mint smells like summer  
In many gardens.  
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

## *Untitled [Do you still remember: falling stars]*

**Rainer Maria Rilke**

*Translated by Edward Snow*

Do you still remember: falling stars,  
how they leapt slantwise through the sky  
like horses over suddenly held-out hurdles  
of our wishes—did we have so many?—  
for stars, innumerable, leapt everywhere;  
almost every gaze upward became  
wedded to the swift hazard of their play,  
and our heart felt like a single thing  
beneath that vast disintegration of their brilliance—and  
was whole, as if it would survive them!

# **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 a 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.*

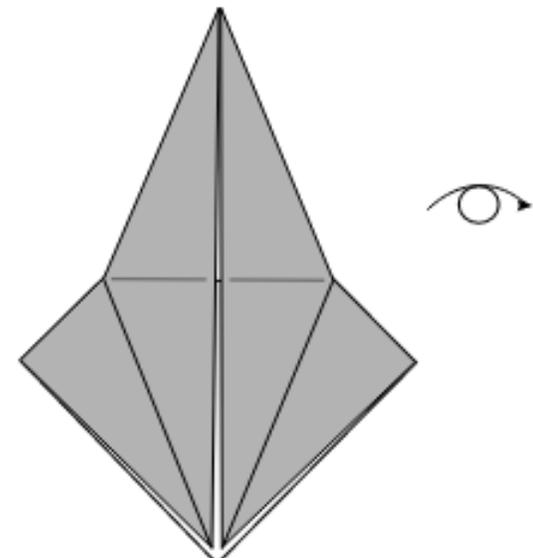
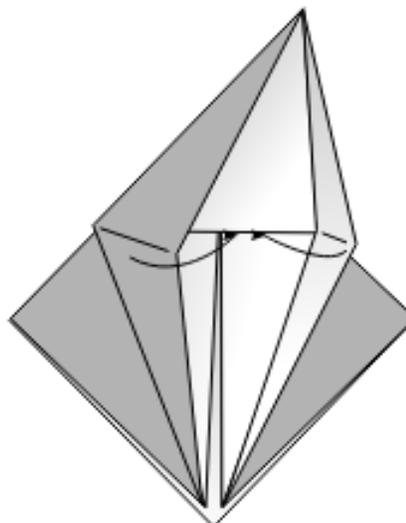
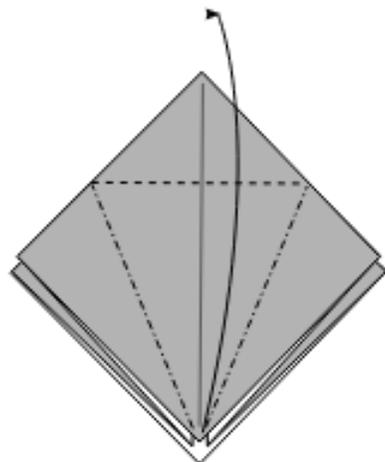
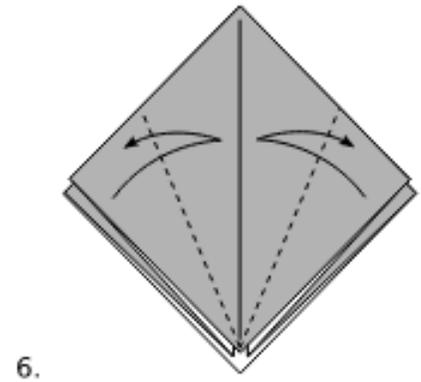
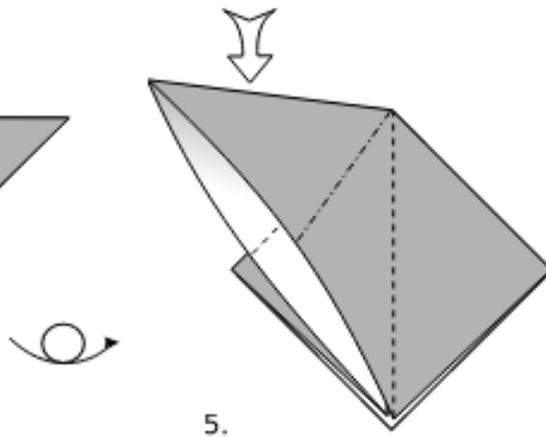
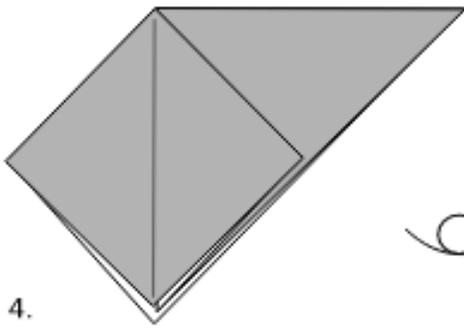
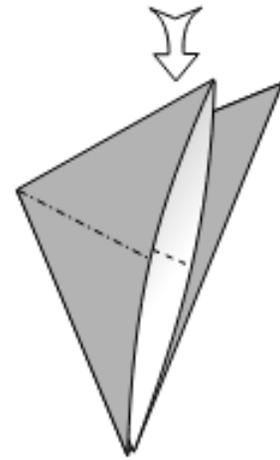
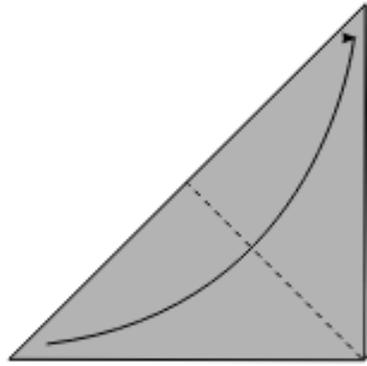
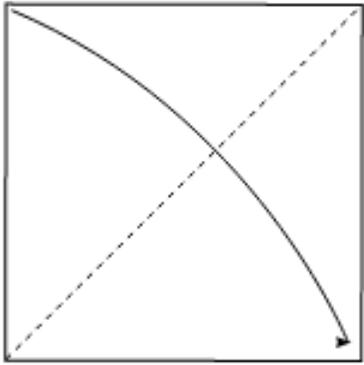
Haiku was traditionally written in the present tense and focused on associations between images. There was a pause at the end of the first or second line, and a “season word,” or kigo, specified the time of year.

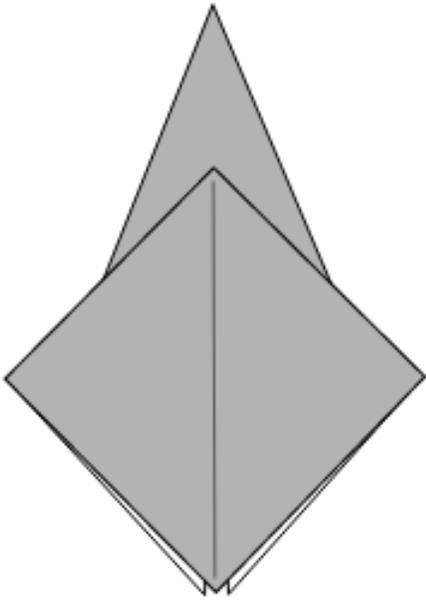
As the form has evolved, many of these rules—including the 5/7/5 practice—have been routinely broken. However, the philosophy of haiku has been preserved: the focus on a brief moment in time; a use of provocative, colorful images; an ability to be read in one breath; and a sense of sudden enlightenment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

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

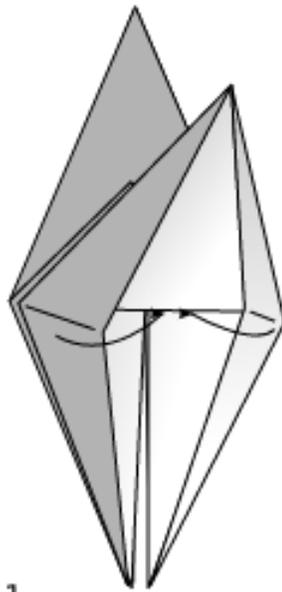
To read about other poetic forms, such as the acrostic, the cinquain, and the sonnet, visit [www.poets.org](http://www.poets.org).

# How to Create a Folded Swan

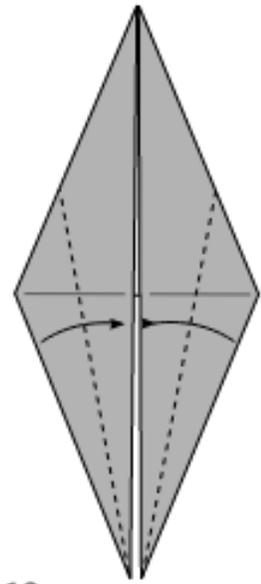




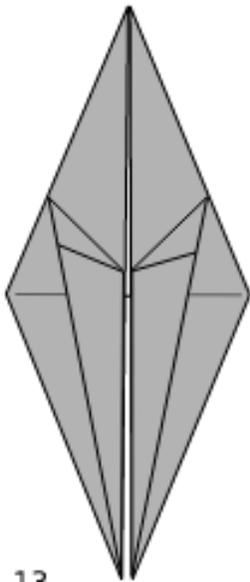
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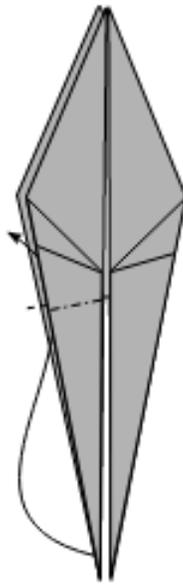
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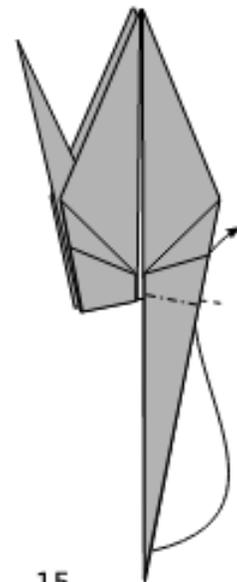
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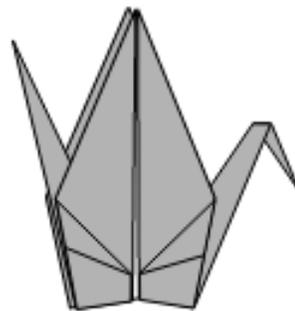
14.



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](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.