

April is National Poetry Month

Do you recall the last time you read a poem? When was the last time you heard one recited? Maybe you think poetry is a dying genre, but poetry is alive and well. Beginning in 1996, the Academy of American Poets inaugurated April as National Poetry Month. Some of the stated goals of National Poetry Month are:



- Highlight the extraordinary legacy and ongoing achievement of American poets
- Introduce more Americans to the pleasures of reading poetry
- Bring poets and poetry to the public in immediate and innovative ways
- Make poetry a more important part of the school curriculum
- Increase the attention paid to poetry by national and local media
- Encourage increased publication, distribution, and sales of poetry books
- Increase public and private philanthropic support for poets and poetry

(For more information go to www.poets.org)

You can be a part of National Poetry month by enjoying the poetry collections at your public libraries. You can find serious poetry by people like Wordsworth, Dickinson, or Shakespeare, and fun, favorite poetry by Shel Silverstein, Ogden Nash, and Jack Prelutsky as well as many others. Poetry has been speaking to all people of all ages for centuries.

American poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow had the following to say:

*Therefore I hope, as no unwelcome guest
At your warm fireside, when the lamps are lighted,
To have my place reserved among the rest,
Nor stand as one unsought and uninvited.*

He was a part of a group labeled as the Fireside Poets -- those who were read around the fireside and wrote poems of home, nature, country, and patriotism. Others in the group included John Greenleaf Whittier, James Russell Lowell, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr., and William Cullen Bryant. Why not invite a poet into your home today by bringing home a book of poetry from your library.

Poet and essayist Naomi Shihab Nye once met a farmer in Idaho who told her that he woke his children up each day by reading a poem to them. She began doing this with her son, and still does when he's home from college. This is how I wake my children up each morning also. Give it a try.

April 30th is Poem in Your Pocket Day where all are encouraged to carry a poem with them and exchange them with others. The above website has various poems to print and carry.

If you are interested, the Library District has an outreach program in which The Poetry Lady will come to your classroom and share delightful poetry with your students. For more information, contact SueAn Stradling-Collins at 928-337-7649. (She is available throughout the year, not just in April.)

*So, give poetry another try,
It might cause your soul to fly,
And take you to places on high.*

I promise your library has much better poetry than this. Please find some soon!