NATIONAL POETRY MONTH

RESOURCE TOOLKIT FOR AMERICAN SPACES

This Resource Toolkit contains lesson plans, videos, exhibits, and articles to be used at American Spaces to recognize the achievements of American poets and their role in U.S. history.

INTRODUCTION

What *is* poetry?

Despite it being a vital part of cultures around the world, poetry is difficult to define. Here are some resources that can start the conversation.

TED-Ed: What makes a poem … a poem? - Melissa Kovacs

- Video duration: 5 minutes
- English Level: Lower-Intermediate

A Poet's Glossary

- An article from *Poets.org* that attempts to define poetry through the words of famous poets throughout history.
- English Level: Advanced

POETRY THROUGHOUT AMERICAN HISTORY

The United States has a rich and influential history of poetry. Around the 19th century, a distinctly American voice began to emerge, which included notable poets like Ralph Waldo Emerson, Emily Dickinson, Edgar Allan Poe, and Louisa May Alcott. Many of these American writers challenged the status quo and introduced new schools of thought or forms of writing. The 20th century launched the modern poetry movement, with poets like Ezra Pound and T.S. Eliot reinventing traditional poetic form. Other influential poets like Langston Hughes and Claude McKay became key figures in the Harlem Renaissance, which is considered the rebirth of African-American arts and modern cultural expression.

American Spaces

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT *of* STATE

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POET SPOTLIGHT

AMANDA GORMAN

Amanda Gorman is an American poet and activist. She was awarded National Youth Poet Laureate in 2017 and recently became the youngest inaugural poet in U.S. history. In addition to being an award-winning writer, she is also a *cum laude* graduate of Harvard University.

Amanda Gorman: Using your voice is a political choice - **Discussion guide**

Listen to three of Amanda Gorman's poems:

- **"Earthrise"**
  - A poem on climate change and global hope.
- **"The Miracle of Morning"**
  - A poem in response to the hardships of the pandemic.
- **Amanda Gorman's Biden Inauguration Poem**
  - A poem on the future of American progress.

MORE RESOURCES

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WHO ARE SOME OTHER NOTABLE POETS?

Walt Whitman (1819 - 1892)

- Whitman is among the most influential poets in American history and is often called the father of free verse.
- Learn more about his life from this brief Biography video: Walt Whitman Revolutionized American Poetry

Robert Frost (1874 - 1963)

- Frost is a four-time Pulitzer prize winner. His poetry is often recognizable for its heartfelt portrayal of New England life and landscape.
- Learn more about Frost's life and impact: Robert Frost | American Poet | Mini Biography

VIDEOS ON POETRY

- ***Maya Angelou: And Still I Rise***
  - A documentary on the life of Maya Angelou, whose renowned writing and activism reflected significant moments in the history of the United States of America.
  - Flim duration: 2 hours
- **Papa is a Poet: A Story About Robert Frost**
  - A reading of Natalie S. Bober's picture book on Robert Frost.
  - Video duration: 15 minutes

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How has poetry played a role in your life?
2. Have you ever written poetry? What was your inspiration?
3. Which poets do you know? Do you have a favorite poet?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Check out current exhibits at the American Poetry Museum
- Listen to the "Poem-a-Day" podcast produced by the Academy of American Poets.
- ShareAmerica - Poetry slam gives young people the confidence to express themselves
- ShareAmerica - Meet Joy Harjo, the new U.S. poet laureate
- ShareAmerica - A poet gives voice to all languages

Post will need to procure these films. The Office of American Spaces is not endorsing these movies as they may not be appropriate for all audiences. Coordinators should screen the films ahead of showing them. Here's a **link with more information on showing movies at the American Spaces:*