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National Poetry Day calls the nation to “say it with a poem”

National Poetry Day, the world’s greatest celebration of poetry, will see a mass outbreak of verse on Thursday 6 October, when railway stations, coffee shops, police forces, schoolchildren and scientists all rise to the challenge to “say it with a poem”.

This year’s theme is “messages”: the day is an opportunity to turn ordinary communications into memorable ones, by using favourite poems to communicate the messages that matter most, from *Thank you* and *Sorry* to *I love you* and *Help!*

In Staffordshire, the world’s first Poetry Postie will use carrier pigeons to fly verse across the skies. In Edinburgh, a highly unusual answer phone is turning anonymous messages into poems, while in Antarctica, scientists from the British Antarctic Survey will read poetry to the only audience available for miles: penguins.

“Anyone who has struggled for the right words in moments that really matter - whether of happiness or grief or loss - knows a poem can reach places that prose just can’t,” says Susannah Herbert, National Poetry Day director. “That’s why we’re urging anyone with anything important to say on October 6, to say it with a poem. It can be new or old, utterly original or a familiar favourite. Just by doing something as simple as sharing a poem, you become part of the celebration.”

Expect impromptu pop-up poetry festivals in thousands of unexpected places, from shops, streets and offices to doctors’ waiting rooms and postal sorting offices. J K Rowling, Paul McCartney, Stephen Hawking, George RR Martin and Ellen DeGeneres are among the hundreds of thousands of poetry-lovers who last year shared poems they loved on National Poetry Day via Twitter. The hashtag #nationalpoetryday had a 522 million reach, trending across the globe on the day.

National Poetry Day is co-ordinated by the Forward Arts Foundation, a charity that celebrates poetry and promotes it as part of everyday life. With MacMillan Children’s Books, it has nominated 15 poets as National Poetry Day Ambassadors, with special responsibility for igniting enthusiasm nationwide by visiting schools, organizing events and competitions and writing new work on

the theme of Messages. Their new poems have been collected as a free downloadable eBook *Messages: A National Poetry Day Book* that will be available from the National Poetry Day website, alongside posters, lesson plans and specially commissioned Say it with a poem images.

The Forward Arts Foundation awards the annual Forward Prizes for Poetry and publishes the Forward Book of Poetry, an indispensable anthology of the year's best poems. This year is the Prizes' 25th anniversary: the single biggest prize has been boosted to £15,000 and the five poets shortlisted for the Felix Dennis Best First Collection prize - Nancy Campbell, Ron Carey, Harry Giles, Ruby Robinson and Tiphonie Yanique - have each been commissioned to write Messages poems which will be posted on the National Poetry Day website.

In London, **The Poetry Society** and Southbank centre are handing over the reins of one of the year's biggest poetry events of the year to young poetry producers who will curate a day of free poetry readings, films, performances and workshops at the Clore ballroom. This is the chance to see some of the biggest names in poetry, alongside those writers and performers regarded as the future of poetry.

Poet in the City will be hosting a Poetry Breakfast at the Bloomsbury Hotel, presenting prize-winning young poet Liz Berry.

In Wales four young poets will be locked up to compose 100 poems in twenty four hours, on subjects chosen by the public. The participants in Literature Wales' **Her 100 Cerdd** will take suggestions via social media and BBC Radio Cymru, posting the results online.

In Scotland, 380,000 poetry postcards will be given away by the **Scottish Poetry Library**, which has also launched its *Mixed Messages* project in which answerphone messages have been turned into poetry.

In Northern Ireland, **Funeral Services Northern Ireland** celebrates National Poetry Day with celebratory recitals from the Ireland National Poetry competition at the Parliament Buildings in Stormont.

The days leading up to National Poetry Day will be charged with events, including the announcement of the winners of the Forward Prizes for Poetry, Britain's most talked about poetry prizes, live on 20th September at the Southbank centre.

ENDS

For further information, visit www.forwardartsfoundation.org or join the conversation at @forwardprizes #forwardprizes.

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NOTES TO EDITORS

National Poetry Day, founded by the Forward Arts Foundation 22 years ago, is a major national and international celebration: last year, its campaign reach exceeded 522 million, with 182,000 actively engaged participants sharing poetry across social media. For details, visit www.nationalpoetryday.co.uk

ANTHOLOGIES PUBLISHED IN THE RUN-UP TO NATIONAL POETRY DAY

***100 Prized Poems: Twenty-five years of the Forward Books* (RRP £9.99)**
 Chosen by William Sieghart



100 Prized Poems brings together the best of the poems published over a quarter century in twenty-five editions of the Forward books of poetry, a series highlighting the works commended annually for the prestigious Forward Prizes. The roll-call of poets included is a Who's Who of poetry excellence and includes both familiar names - Simon Armitage, Jackie Kay, Derek Walcott - and fresh voices - Kate Tempest, Kei Miller and Mona Arshi. This anthology of anthologies is a great way of encountering the richness that new poetry has to offer.

Published by Forward Worldwide with Faber & Faber on Thursday 15 September, 2016.

***Forward Book of Poetry 2017* (RRP £8.99)**



The Forward Book of Poetry 2017 showcases the best contemporary poems published in the British Isles over the year, including the winners of 2016's Forward Prizes for Poetry. This anthology, for seasoned poetry lovers and new readers alike, is the 25th in a series that offers an invaluable annual overview of the current state of poetry. If you buy only one anthology a year, this is it. With a foreword by Malika Booker, who chairs the 2016 Forward Prizes jury.

Published by Forward Worldwide with Faber & Faber on Thursday 15 September, 2016.

PRIZES

Forward Prizes for Poetry

The Forward Prizes for Poetry are the most prestigious awards for poetry in Britain and Ireland. They were first awarded in 1992 to celebrate excellence in new writing. The winners will be announced on Tuesday 20 September 2016 at London's Southbank Centre.

The Forward Prize for Best Collection £15,000
 The Felix Dennis Prize for Best First Collection £5,000
 The Forward Prize for Best Single Poem £1,000

The Foyle Young Poets of the Year Award 2015

The Foyle Young Poets Award is the world's largest award for young poets aged 11-17 years old. It has kick-started the careers of some of the most exciting new poets. One hundred winners (85 Commendations and 15 Overall Winners) receive their awards at a prize giving on National Poetry Day.

Betjeman Poetry Prize

Finalists of the Betjeman Poetry Prize will read at a ceremony in St Pancras International, next to Sir John Betjeman's statue. The winner of the first prize of £1,000 will be chosen by Carol Ann Duffy and Imtiaz Dharker.

PARTNERS

Forward Arts Foundation www.forwardartsfoundation.org

Forward Arts Foundation (FAF) is the independent charitable organisation behind National Poetry Day and the Forward Prize. It is supported by Arts Council England.

Apples and Snakes www.applesandsnakes.org

England's leading organisation for performance poetry and spoken word has a national reputation for producing exciting, engaging and transformative work in performance and participation.

CLPE www.clpe.org.uk

The Centre for Literacy in Primary Education (CLPE) believes that poetry is a fundamental element in the development of children's literacy. It supports teachers with free teaching resources and run a shadowing scheme alongside its children's poetry award, CLiPPA.

First Story www.firststory.org.uk

First Story brings talented, professional writers into secondary schools serving low-income communities to work with teachers and students to foster creativity and communication skills.

Literature Wales www.literaturewales.org

Literature Wales is the National Company for the development of literature in Wales. Its many projects and activities include Wales Book of the Year, an annual Literary Tourism programme, the National Poet of Wales and Young People's Laureate for Wales.

Poet in the City www.poetinthecity.co.uk

A leading UK poetry charity that programmes over 40 live poetry events a year, promotes poetry to new audiences and makes new connections for the art form.

Scottish Poetry Library www.scottishpoetrylibrary.org.uk

The Scottish Poetry Library is a national resource and advocate for the art of poetry, with a special focus on Scottish poetry. It distributes 300,000 poem postcards around Scotland for National Poetry Day each year.

Southbank Centre www.southbankcentre.co.uk

The UK's largest arts centre, occupying a 21-acre site that sits in the midst of London's most vibrant cultural quarter on the South Bank of the Thames. It is the home of live literature in the UK, with a thriving year-round programme of readings, talks and events unrivalled by any other organisation in the capital.

The Poetry School www.poetryschool.com

The UK's largest provider of poetry education, providing inspirational teaching and ways to share poems with other supportive poets

The Poetry Society www.poetrysociety.org.uk

Founded in 1909, the Poetry Society aims to advance the study, use and enjoyment of poetry, and publishes the leading poetry magazine, Poetry Review. The Society also runs the Foyle Young Poets of the Year Award, Young Poets Network, the National Poetry Competition and the Ted Hughes Award for New Work in Poetry.

NATIONAL POETRY DAY EDUCATION RESOURCES AND COMPETITION

National Poetry Day education resources, available online at www.nationalpoetryday.co.uk, includes free downloadable activity packs for libraries, teachers and parents, encouraging children to write, read and share poetry. The exercises relate to the National Poetry Day 2016 theme of messages, and have been prepared by a variety of organisations including Apples and Snakes, First Story, CLPE and Poetry By Heart.

There is a competition to win a National Poetry Day schools kit. To enter, teachers are invited to email a short overview (including photo or video) of their National Poetry Day plans to NPDschools@fmcm.co.uk by Friday 16 September, 2016. For more details visit <http://nationalpoetryday.co.uk/wp/national-poetry-day-schools-competition>



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