



**\*\*STRICTLY EMBARGOED: 00.01 THURSDAY, 6 OCTOBER 2016**

## National Poetry Day kicks off, with a call to ‘say it with a poem’

The Prince of Wales, Joanna Lumley and PJ Harvey alongside a host of much-loved poets and spoken-word artists get ready to enjoy, discover and share poetry

**40 BBC Local Radio stations engage 40 poets to celebrate England’s best-loved local landmarks - in verse**

**News for release: 00.01 Thursday 6 October 2016:** National Poetry Day, the world’s greatest celebration of poetry, will see a mass outbreak of verse today, as railway stations, pubs, post offices, schoolchildren, scientists and police forces all rise to the challenge to ‘say it with a poem’.

In keeping with this year’s theme - Messages - everyone is invited to use favourite poems to send the messages that matter most, from *Thank you* and *Sorry* to *I love you* and *Help!*

Kicking off the celebrations, The Prince of Wales, as an admirer of the work of Seamus Heaney, will read one of his poems ‘The Shipping Forecast’ on BBC Radio 4’s Today programme. The recording has been specially created for Seamus Heaney HomePlace, a newly-opened centre in Northern Ireland which showcases the poet’s life and work in an interactive exhibition.

The **Royal Mail** is postmarking millions of items of mail nationwide with **National Poetry Day on 6 October**: an honour reserved only for special occasions and significant events.

In the spirit of W.H. Auden, who said a poet’s hope is ‘*to be, like some valley cheese, local, but prized elsewhere*’, the 40 stations of **BBC Local Radio** are marking National Poetry Day by each broadcasting a poem commissioned from 40 #BBClocalpoets in an unprecedented lyrical mapping of the English landscape. Each poet has adopted the voice of a characteristic local landmark or mascot: these range from a Lincolnshire sausage (Gemma Baker, BBC Radio Lincolnshire) to the potholes of Britain’s least-appreciated road, the A12, (Luke Wright, BBC Radio Suffolk), via Brighton’s West Pier, Newcastle’s Tyne Bridge and London’s iconic Tube Map. Collectively, these poems document the distinctiveness of local England with wit, humour and defiantly non-standard

accents and dialects. The initiative is supported by **Forward Arts Foundation** and **Apples and Snakes**.

**Channel 4's** continuity team will be giving the mic to two teenage poets - 18-year-old Vivien Urban originally from Hungary and 19-year-old Shukria Rezaei originally from Afghanistan - who have been invited to become the voice of Channel 4 for the day. Their poems will replace the introduction on the idents throughout the day.

In London, poets and poetry readings abound. **The Poetry Society** and **Southbank centre** are handing over the reins 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 featuring the **Mercury Prize-winning artist PJ Harvey**, and **Children's Laureate Chris Riddell**. Meanwhile at The Bloomsbury Hotel, **Poet in the City** will be hosting a Poetry Breakfast with prize-winning poet **Sarah Howe**.

**St Pancras International** station is to become Poetry Central for the day, in partnership with the **Betjeman Poetry Prize**, **Poet in the City** and **Maslaha**. Poetry-printed train tickets will be distributed to travellers and poet storytellers will be stationed throughout St Pancras engaging passing commuters and visitors in immersive poetry experiences using new and old Landais (a form of poetry written in Afghanistan). **The Betjeman prize-giving** this afternoon, hosted by poet **Imtiaz Dharker**, will see six young talents recite their work, alongside a reading from **Joanna Lumley**. The evening will bring live poetry pop-ups, interactive events, and performances from poets **Bridget Minamore** and **Sabrina Mahfouz**. **London's underground stations** - notably **Covent Garden** and **Oval** - will be sharing poems with travellers throughout the day.

In Staffordshire, **Sally Crabtree**, the world's first **Poetry Postie**, is using carrier pigeons to fly verse across the skies. In Edinburgh, a highly unusual answerphone is turning anonymous messages into poems: in Bradford, poetry films will feature on the Bradford Big Screen in Centenary Square, while in Antarctica, scientists from the British Antarctic Survey will share a climate change poem by **Nancy Campbell** with the only audience available for miles: penguins.

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 have been given away by the **Scottish Poetry Library** in Edinburgh, while in Glasgow, the **Big Issue** is working with **Glasgow Libraries** to mobilise poets, librarians, street vendors and **Creative Scotland** colleagues to give poetry readings at 30 different locations around the city.

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

“A poem can reach places that prose just can’t” says **Susannah Herbert**, **National Poetry Day** director. “That’s why we’re inviting all with anything important to say today, to say it with a poem. It can be new or old, utterly original or a familiar favourite. It can be deep and dark, funny or memorable. By enjoying, discovering or sharing a poem - words that draw attention to themselves - you change the nature of the national conversation.”

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 14 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\*](#) available from the National Poetry Day website, alongside posters, lesson plans and specially commissioned ‘Say it with a poem’ images from artist Sophie Herxheimer.

## ENDS

For further information, visit <http://nationalpoetryday.co.uk> or join the conversation #NationalPoetryDay on:

Twitter @PoetryDayUK

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/poetrydayuk](http://www.facebook.com/poetrydayuk)

Instagram: nationalpoetryday

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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](http://www.nationalpoetryday.co.uk)

## **PARTNERS**

**Forward Arts Foundation** [www.forwardartsfoundation.org](http://www.forwardartsfoundation.org)

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

**Apples and Snakes** [www.applesandsnakes.org](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://www.poetrysociety.org.uk)

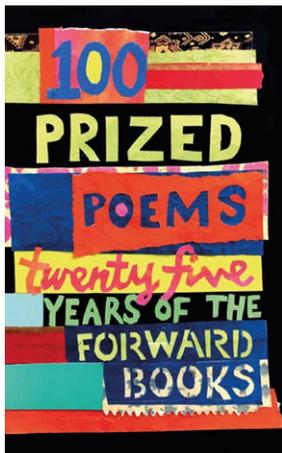
Founded in 1909, the Poetry Society aims to advance the study, use and enjoyment of poetry, and publishes the leading poetry magazine, Poetry Review. The Society also runs the Foyle Young Poets of the Year Award, Young Poets Network, the National Poetry Competition and the Ted Hughes Award for New Work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

## NATIONAL POETRY DAY EDUCATION RESOURCES

National Poetry Day education resources, available online at [www.nationalpoetryday.co.uk](http://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, Literature Wales and the Poetry School.

## 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 were announced on Tuesday 20 September 2016 at London's Southbank Centre.

The Forward Prize for Best Collection £15,000 - Vahni Capildeo

The Felix Dennis Prize for Best First Collection £5,000 - Tiphonie Yanique

The Forward Prize for Best Single Poem £1,000 - Sasha Dugdale

### ***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.



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