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List of 25 favourite poetry books voted for by booksellers announced for 25th Anniversary of National Poetry Day

To celebrate National Poetry Day's 25th anniversary in 2019, the Booksellers Association and Forward Arts Foundation have joined together to announce **Poetry Booksellers Love**, a list of 25 favourite poetry books from the last 25 years as nominated and voted for by booksellers in the UK and Ireland.

The five poetry books with the most booksellers' votes are: Alice Oswald's *Dart*, a book-length poem that dramatises a West Country river through the words of those who live and work by it, *The Lost Words* by Robert Macfarlane and Jackie Morris, Maya Angelou's *The Complete Poetry* and two anthologies, *Staying Alive* edited by Neil Astley and *The Rattle Bag*, edited by Seamus Heaney and Ted Hughes.

The list, to be announced at the annual BA Conference on Monday 9th September in Birmingham, includes anthologies and single-author collections, poetry for children, for adults and for those in-between. Several, notably *The Lost Words*, Robert Macfarlane's collaboration with artist Jackie Morris, and Chris Riddell's anthology *Poems to Live Your Life By*, have particularly beautiful illustrations.

Recent work by young British poets include Andrew McMillan's *Physical*, Jonathan Edwards' *My Family and Other Superheroes*, Liz Berry's *Black Country* and Hollie McNish's *Plum*, alongside familiar best-sellers by seasoned poetry veterans: John Agard, Wendy Cope and the reigning UK and Scottish Laureates, Simon Armitage and Jackie Kay. International stars include Claudia Rankine, Sharon Olds, Anne Carson alongside Rupi Kaur and Hera Lindsay Bird. Children are well served, with *Poems to Perform* edited by Julia Donaldson alongside family favourites, Pam Ayres' *The Last Hedgehog* and *A Poem for Every Night of the Year* edited by Allie Esiri.

Emma Bradshaw, Head of Campaigns, Booksellers Association, comments: -

"I am endlessly impressed by the knowledge and passion of our members, so it comes as no surprise to see that the list of poetry titles they have created is so wonderfully diverse. There really is something for everyone here. I'm sure readers will be flocking to their local bookshops this National Poetry Day."

Susannah Herbert, Executive Director Forward Arts Foundation says: "The nation's bookshops are clearly staffed by poetry enthusiasts who see all the ways in which poetry is increasingly connecting with book-lovers. In choosing a list that features Alice Oswald, the new Oxford Professor for Poetry, alongside Pam Ayres, a list that honours beautiful design alongside erudition, humour alongside calls to revolution, the participating booksellers have made their shops central to National Poetry Day's anniversary celebrations."

BA members from across the UK and Ireland were asked to nominate and vote for their favourite poetry books in print, whether anthologies, single collections or verse novels.

The announcement of the **Poetry Booksellers Love** list paves the way for the 25th National Poetry Day on the first Thursday of October: a date that has recently overtaken Valentine's Day to become the biggest event in the poetry bookselling calendar. The market for poetry books has increased by 12% between 2017 and 2018, and is up by almost 50% since 2014. Sales of children's poetry books in particular took "a huge leap" in 2018, accounting for almost £2 million worth of sales, up from £1.3 million in just one year. (Nielsen BookScan).

This year's UK's biggest mass participation poetry celebration falls on October 3rd: the theme is 'truth'. National Poetry Day, which is co-ordinated annually by the charity Forward Arts Foundation and supported by Arts Council England, generates an explosion of activity in schools, libraries and care-homes nationwide, plus thousands of events in cafes, garden centres and village halls, all celebrating poetry's power to bring people together.

www.nationalpoetryday.co.uk

#nationalpoetryday

Bookshops across the country will be encouraged to display some of the books on the list for National Poetry Day and to hold events with local poets and readings on and around October 3rd.

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Notes for editors:

1. Poetry Booksellers Love 2019:
 1. *Dart* by Alice Oswald (Faber, 2010)
 2. *The Rattle Bag* edited by Seamus Heaney and Ted Hughes (Faber, 2005)
 3. *Staying Alive: Real Poems for Unreal Times* edited by Neil Astley (Bloodaxe, 2002)
 4. *The Complete Poetry* by Maya Angelou (Little Brown, 2015)
 5. *The Lost Words: A Spell Book* by Jackie Morris and Robert Macfarlane (Hamish Hamilton, 2017)
 6. *A Poem for Every Night of the Year* edited by Allie Esiri (Macmillan Children's Books, 2016)
 7. *Ariel* by Sylvia Plath (first published 1965, new restored edition Faber 2007)
 8. *Plum* by Hollie McNish (Picador, 2017)
 9. *Hold Your Own* by Kate Tempest (Picador, 2014)
 10. *Bantam* by Jackie Kay (Picador, 2017)
 11. *Poems to Live Your Life By* chosen and illustrated by Chris Riddell (Macmillan Children's Books, 2018)
 12. *The Last Hedgehog* by Pam Ayres, illustrated by Alice Tait (Picador, 2018)
 13. *Poems to Perform* edited by Julia Donaldson, illustrated by Clare Melinsky (Macmillan Children's Books, 2013)
 14. *Between Mountain and Sea: Poems from Assynt* by Norman MacCaig, edited by Roderick Watson (Birlinn, 2018)
 15. *Stag's Leap* by Sharon Olds (Cape, 2012)
 16. *Milk and Honey* by Rupi Kaur (Andrews McMeel, 2015)
 17. *Hera* Lindsay Bird by Hera Lindsay Bird (Penguin, 2017)
 18. *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* by Simon Armitage (Faber, 2009)
 19. *Two Cures for Love* by Wendy Cope (Faber, 2009)

20. *Autobiography of Red* by Anne Carson (Cape, 1999)
 21. *Black Country* by Liz Berry (Chatto, 2014)
 22. *Citizen: An American Lyric* by Claudia Rankine (Penguin, 2015)
 23. *Physical* by Andrew McMillan (Cape, 2015)
 24. *My Family and Other Superheroes* by Jonathan Edwards (Seren, 2014)
 25. *Travel Light Travel Dark* by John Agard (Bloodaxe, 2013)
2. National Poetry Day is an annual celebration that inspires people throughout the UK to enjoy, discover and share poems. Everyone is invited to join in, whether by organising events, displays, competitions or by simply posting favourite lines of poetry on social media using #nationalpoetryday. The theme of National Poetry Day 2019 is 'truth'.

National Poetry Day was founded in 1994 and enjoys the support of the BBC, Arts Council England and leading literary and cultural organisations. The 2019 25th anniversary Truth campaign is supported by UK book trade wholesaler Gardners and leading education supplier Browns Books for Students. For more information visit: <https://nationalpoetryday.co.uk>

3. The **Booksellers Association** is a membership organisation for all booksellers in the UK & Ireland, representing over 95% of bookshops. The Booksellers Association exists to support, advise and work with its members to create excellent products for booksellers. The BA monitors all the structures that underpin the modern-day book trade and life as a bookseller. They also keep a close eye on developments in technology and government. They run a number of consumer campaigns under the umbrella title of Books Are My Bag .

www.booksellers.org.uk

4. Forward Arts Foundation is a registered charity in England and Wales (charity number 1037939), promoting public knowledge, understanding and enjoyment of poetry in the UK and Ireland. It is committed to widening poetry's audience, honouring achievement and supporting talent: programmes include National Poetry Day, the Forward Prizes for Poetry and the Forward Book of Poetry, an annual anthology of the year's best poems. For more information, visit: <http://www.forwardartsfoundation.org/>

