

National Poetry Day announces new 40-book trade promotion as ‘poetry is booming’

BBC, Visit England and thousands of schools, libraries and bookshops get ready to celebrate poetry on 28th September

News for release: 25 August 2017: Poetry is booming! Last year marked the best sales on record for poetry books in both volume and value, and demand continues to grow. Poetry is now challenging prose on the bestseller lists, boosted by the popularity of both live and recorded performances and strong followings on Instagram and Twitter. In May, Manchester’s resilience under attack found voice in a much-shared spoken-word poem, in June, thousands cheered Kate Tempest at Glastonbury, while US poet’s Claudia Rankine’s upcoming appearance at Tate Modern in October sold out weeks ago: poetry, whether provocation or consolation, has never felt so present.

Today, National Poetry Day, Britain’s national campaign for poetry, announces its first ever dedicated book trade promotion highlighting 40 inspiring poetry books in four wide-ranging categories: anthologies, children’s poetry, current collections and poetry for book groups. The campaign’s aim - to enable all to enjoy, discover and share poetry - is supported by 19 publishers, from Penguin Random House, Bloomsbury and Macmillan to tiny independents like Pinned in the Margins and Burning Eye.

Among the 10 anthologies are *The Poetry Pharmacy: Tried-and-True Prescriptions for the Mind, Heart and Soul* (Penguin Press), in which William Sieghart, CBE, offers his choice of poems that touch places pills rarely reach. The book is recommended by Stephen Fry as “balm for the soul, fire for the belly, an arm around the lonely shoulder.” A new anthology of contemporary **Yorkshire Poetry** (Valley Press) features a Barnsley haiku and a Bradford ghazal, alongside Ian McMillan’s irresistible praise poem for Yorkshire pudding: “light brown moon in a gravy sky”.

The children’s category includes Carnegie Medal winner Sarah Crossan’s *Moonrise* (Bloomsbury Children’s), a best-selling young-adult novel-in-verse set in Death Row, alongside award-winner Joseph Coelho’s collection *Overheard in a Tower Block* (Otter-Barry Books) and ‘poetry powerhouse’ Allie Esiri’s follow-up to last year’s acclaimed *A Poem for Every Night of the Year* anthology, *A Poem for Every Day of the Year* (Macmillan Children’s).

The current collections category include *Plum* (Picador) by Ted Hughes Award-winning Hollie McNish, next to new titles from Simon Armitage, Derek Walcott and comic satirist Elvis McGonagall, whose subjects range from zero-hours contracts to the Queen’s love of gangsta rap. Canadian poet Rupi Kaur, whose Instagram posts have drawn hundreds of thousands of young women to poetry, is represented by her best-seller *Milk and Honey* (Andrews McMeel with Simon & Schuster). And the English language’s capacity to baffle and delight incomers is celebrated in *Velkom to Inklandt: poems from my Grandmother’s Inklisch* (Short Books), by Sophie Herxheimer, the Brixton artist behind National Poetry Day’s eye-catching artwork.

The poetry for bookgroups list includes *Then Come Back: The Lost Poems of Pablo Neruda* (Bloodaxe) from the Nobel Prize winning Chilean poet; Kate Tempest’s *Let them*

Eat Chaos (Picador) and *The Forward Book of Poetry 2018* which features the best of the year's poetry, chosen by **Andrew Marr** and the judges of the Forward Prizes for Poetry.

Display packs including sets of collectable bookmarks featuring the 40 recommended poetry books are now available to bookshops and libraries around the UK, via the **Booksellers Association** and wholesalers **Bertrams** and **Gardners** who are also supporting the campaign.

Susannah Herbert, Executive Director of **National Poetry Day** says: "There are tens of thousands ways into poetry - all different - and in recommending 40 contrasting books to bookshops and libraries we offer a wide range of starting points. Poetry can take the form of a self-help book, a young-adult novel, a chant, a play, a joke, a call to arms, high literature or just beguiling nonsense: it's the chameleon of artforms. People who still think poetry is off-putting just haven't met the right poem yet."

Meryl Halls of the **Booksellers Association** says: "We know how important poetry is to bookshops across the country. National Poetry Day is a fantastic way to start the conversation about poetry in our everyday lives, and we want to make sure poetry lovers know that the best place to find old favourites and new inspiration is in their local bookshop. We are so pleased that NPD has created some wonderful point of sale materials to bring more readers to the wonders of the genre."

Suzanne Baboneau, Managing Director, Adult Trade Division, **Simon & Schuster UK**, says: "We are extremely proud that Rupi Kaur's *Milk and Honey* was by far the biggest seller of poetry in the UK last year and continues to be an extraordinary word-of-mouth bestseller. Following hot on the heels of our bestselling anthologies, *Poems to Make Grown Men Cry* and *Poems That Make Grown Women Cry*, it is clear that there is a broad and enthusiastic audience for poetry in the UK. I wholeheartedly welcome National Poetry Day's new initiative in helping us to reach more readers and to celebrate this wonderful art form."

Rebecca McNally, publishing director **Bloomsbury children's** says "We are delighted to be part of this joyful, inspiring industry-wide celebration of the wonders of poetry for readers of all ages. We're very proud to see the wonderful Sarah Crossan, and hilarious pairing of Michael Rosen and David Tazzyman on this list. Sarah's books ignite passionate responses from teenage readers, as well as winning prizes. Michael is one of the UK's best loved children's poets and continually inspires children to write and perform their own poetry. By joining forces on this promotion we can demonstrate that poetry is for everyone and bring these brilliant books to the widest possible readership."

Nessa Urquhart, **Waterstones** Poetry Buyer, says: "It is exciting to see poetry in rude health; spoken, published and - increasingly - shared online to new and existing audiences in reaction to our personal and shared experiences. It is thrilling to watch the recent re-energisation of our poetry sections, particularly given that poetry is an unrivalled medium for tackling our most emotional responses to the turbulent world on our doorstep. This year's theme of Freedom couldn't be more apt."

The **BBC** is celebrating National Poetry Day across all its channels this year, as are **Visit England** and **Art UK** and thousands of schools, libraries, pubs, bus routes, museums and railway stations: the celebrations, on Thursday 28th September 2017, will be impossible to ignore.

National Poetry Day will see the launch of a major new four-day poetry festival (**Contains Strong Language**) in Hull 2017 UK City of Culture, a partnership with the **BBC**, **Hull UK City of Culture**, **Humber Mouth**, **National Poetry Day** and other poetry organisations. The festival - the biggest of its kind - stars a line-up of 17 innovative poets, the **Hull 17**, and will feature more than 50 events across 8 venues, including performances by the **BBC Philharmonic Orchestra**, **John Cooper Clarke**, **Kate Tempest** and a mammoth washing line of poetry created from 2017 new poems about city landmarks written by Hull residents.

There will be hundreds of events across the UK and Ireland including many responding to the invitation to 'share a poem' on social media.

For a second year running **National Poetry Day** has partnered with **BBC Local Radio**. Taking their cue from National Poetry Day's 2017 theme - Freedom - BBC Local Radio stations across England have called on listeners to 'Free the word' by nominating a distinctive local word that deserves to be better known nationally. The choices includes "cheeselog" (a Berkshire term for woodlouse) and Devon's "dimpsy", for twilight: these are among a dozen words that 12 local poets are now using as the creative spark for 12 new local poems to be broadcast on National Poetry Day, 28th September. Poet Isaiah Hull will weave all 12 words into a bravura **poem-of-poems**, commissioned and broadcast as part of the **Contains Strong Language** festival.

Visit England is focussing its '**Literary Heroes**' campaign on poets and poetry this September, commissioning poets Andrew McMillan and Remi Graves to rework much-loved classics for the 21st century. Andrew will transplant Wordsworth's Daffodils to urban Manchester and Remi will use Blake's *London* to explore Kings Cross. Films of their new poems will be released on National Poetry Day.

Art UK, the online home for every work of public art in the UK, is offering £500 for a filmed poem about any picture in public ownership: the results will be shared on National Poetry Day.

Glasgow will mark the day with pop-up poetry events across the city; in Yorkshire, the number 59 bus route from **Wakefield** to Barnsley will be taken over by poets and musicians, while **Bradford**, **Unesco City of Film**, will feature poems on its Big Screen. **St Pancras Station**, the **Old Vic Theatre**, Soho's **L'Escargot** restaurant and **Cassandra Goad's** jewellery shop on Sloane Street are just four of many London venues putting poetry before the public in surprising and delightful ways.

For further information, visit <http://nationalpoetryday.co.uk>

Follow on social media using #NationalPoetryDay

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Notes to editors

National Poetry Day book trade promotion

Display packs - these are available FREE to UK booksellers through the Booksellers Association. To order materials simply [fill in this form](#) (link to survey monkey form).

10 poetry collections for book groups

Then Come Back: The Lost Poems of Pablo Neruda	Pablo Neruda, <i>Bloodaxe</i>
Inside the Wave	Helen Dunmore, <i>Bloodaxe</i>
Citizen: An American Lyric	Claudia Rankine, <i>Penguin Press</i>
Swims	E-J Burnett, <i>Penned in the Margins</i>
Let Them Eat Chaos	Kate Tempest, <i>Picador</i>
British Museum	Daljit Nagra, <i>Faber & Faber</i>
The Forward Book of Poetry 2018	<i>Various, Faber & Faber</i>
Say Something Back	Denise Riley, <i>Picador</i>
The Art of Falling	Kim Moore, <i>Seren Books</i>
The Immigration Handbook	Caroline Smith, <i>Seren Books</i>

10 children's poetry collections

Jelly Boots, Smelly Boots	Rosen/Tazzyman, <i>Bloomsbury children's Candlestick Press</i>
Five Nonsense Poems	
It's Not My Fault	Stevens/Withrow, <i>Bloomsbury children's</i>
The World's Greatest Space Cadet	James Carter, <i>Bloomsbury children's</i>
Little Lemur Laughing	Joshua Seigal, <i>Bloomsbury children's</i>
Overheard in a Tower Block	Joseph Coelho, <i>Otter-Barry Books</i>
A Poem for Every Day of the Year	Ed. Allie Esiri, <i>Macmillan</i>
Reaching the Stars	Brownlee/Dean/Morgan, <i>Macmillan</i>
The Noisy Classroom	Ieva Flamingo, <i>The Emma Press</i>
Moonrise	Sarah Crossan, <i>Bloomsbury</i>

10 Anthologies

Ten Poems of Kindness	Ed. Jackie Kay, <i>Candlestick Press</i>
Ten: Poets of the New Generation	Ed. Karen McCarthy Woolf, <i>Bloomsbury</i>
In Person: World Poets	Ed. Robertson-Pearce, <i>Astley, Bloodaxe</i>
The Zoo of the New: Poems to Read Now	Ed. Nick Laird, Don Paterson, <i>Penguin Press</i>
Modern Poets 1	Berry/Carson/Collins, <i>Penguin Press</i>
The Valley Press Anthology of Yorkshire Poetry	Ed. Salter, <i>Hardwick, Valley Press</i>
100 Prized Poems: 25 years of the Forward Books	<i>Various, Faber & Faber</i>
The Poetry Pharmacy	Ed. William Sieghart, <i>Penguin Press</i>
The Everyday Poet	Ed. Deborah Alma, <i>Michael O'Mara books</i>
The Map and the Clock	Ed. Duffy, <i>Clarke Faber & Faber</i>

10 current collections

Kingdom of Gravity	Nick Makoha, <i>Peepal Tree Press</i>
milk and honey	Rupi Kaur, <i>Andrews McMeel</i>
Mama Amazonica	Pascale Petit, <i>Bloodaxe</i> ,
Viva Loch Lomond!	Elvis McGonagall, <i>Burning Eye Books</i>
The Unaccompanied	Simon Armitage, <i>Faber & Faber</i>
Morning, Paramin	Derek Walcott/Peter Doig, <i>Faber & Faber</i>
Plum	Hollie McNish, <i>Picador</i>
Velkom to Inklandt	Sophie Herxheimer, <i>Short Books</i>
Kumukanda	Kayo Chingonyi, <i>Chatto & Windus</i>
On Balance	Sinead Morrissey, <i>Carcenet</i>

About National Poetry Day

National Poetry Day is a mass participation campaign that inspires all to enjoy, discover and share poems. The celebrations fall this year on 28th September and everyone is invited to join in, whether by organizing or attending an event or simply posting a line of poetry on social media with #NationalPoetryDay. The theme, this year, is freedom.

National Poetry Day is co-ordinated by Forward Arts Foundation and enjoys the support of the BBC, Arts Council England, the Royal Mail and leading literary and cultural organisations, alongside booksellers, publishers, libraries and schools. Last year the campaign's reach exceeded 520 million: it was the #1 global trend topic on Twitter.

www.nationalpoetryday.co.uk