



Poetry for a Change A Poetry Toolkit

Created by **National Poetry Day**

National Poetry Day 2018 will take place on 4th October and the theme is **CHANGE**.

With events, celebrations and special activities taking place the length and breadth of the UK, it's a chance for everyone to read, share and enjoy poetry.

There's lots on the **National Poetry Day** website to help you mark the day – poems on the theme of change, posters and images to download, news and blogs and education resources, plus an events map on which you can upload your own poetry events.

But there are good reasons for celebrating poetry in your bookshop every day of the year:

- Poetry is booming: sales of poetry books are up by 42% since 2013 *
- Over a million poetry books were sold in 2017, at a value of £11.1million*
- 3.1 % of the adult population of England wrote poetry in the year 2015/16 – that's more than 1.4 million adults directly engaged with the genre**
- Almost half (46.1%) of children and young people turn to poetry in their free time***

And

- Poetry encourages people to find the words that matter: in requiring and giving attention, it brings communities together as listeners, readers and writers.

This toolkit includes suggestions on ways to include poetry into your bookshop's annual programme of activities, and explains why it's worth embracing [#poetryforachange](https://twitter.com/poetryforachange).

For further information, and with specific requests, eg. to connect with local poets available to visit your bookshop, email poetryday@forwardartsfoundation.org



*Nielsen Bookscan **Taking Part Survey *** NLT research

KEY DATES ON THE POETRY CALENDAR 2018/2019

- 18 September 2018** announcement of the winners of the 2018 **Forward Prizes for Poetry**
- 2 October 2018** winner of the **Foyle Young Poets of the Year Award** announced
- 4 October 2018** **National Poetry Day** [#poetryforachange](#)
- 4 October 2018** winners of the **Betjeman Prize for Poetry** announced
- 18 November 2018** **SLAMBassadors**
- End of November 2018** shortlist announcement **Costa Poetry Award**
- 14 January 2019** **TS Eliot Prize** winner announced
- End of January 2019** winner of the **Costa Poetry Award** announced
- 14 February** **Valentine's Day**
- 21 March 2019** **World Poetry Day**
- March 2019** **National Poetry Competition**
- March 2019** shortlist and winners of the **Ted Hughes Award for New Work in Poetry** announced
- April 2019** announcement of the new **Poet Laureate**
- May 2019** announcement of the shortlist for the 2019 **Forward Prizes for Poetry**
- May 2019** Announcement of the shortlist for the **CLIPPA** (CLPE Children's Poetry Award)
- July 2019** Announcement of the winner of the **CLIPPA** and performance

LIVE LITERATURE EVENTS

Hearing poets read their work can be a special experience, triggering fresh enthusiasm for poetry, and showing listeners - who may themselves write or read poetry privately – that they are part of a community that values poets. Here are practical tips for arranging a visit:

Where to book:

- Direct with poets via their websites
- **The Poetry Society** www.poetrysociety.org.uk
- **Apples and Snakes** <https://applesandsnakes.org/>
- **Authors Aloud** www.authorsaloud.co.uk
- **Renaissance One** www.renaissanceone.co.uk
- **Contact an Author** www.contactanauthor.co.uk
- **Speaking of Books** www.speakingofbooks.co.uk

The **National Poetry Day** team can also supply a list of poets local to you.
Contact poetryday@forwardartsfoundation.org

Here's some advice from Andrew Parkes, Programme Manager at **The Poetry School**, on setting up a poetry reading:

- It's possible to have too much of a good thing. As a rule, a reading should not last more than 90 minutes in all and you probably want around 5 - 10 minutes from each poet.
- Be sure to give your audience an interval too, so they can top up drinks, nip to the loo and re-focus for subsequent sections.
- Expect poets to overrun and punters to be late. Tell your poets they have only got 5 minutes if you want them to do 8. Advertise the start time as (at least) 15 minutes before you actually want to begin.
- Get someone with an engaging manner to introduce the event and readers, to give your audience an idea of the structure of the night and context about the poets.
- Keep these intros short – people are there to hear the poets, not a long list of their accolades – and break it down to introduce the readers in each section, rather than all in one go.
- Lastly, make sure you have help on the night: it's impossible for one person to compere, run the door and a PA at the same time. Recruit everyone you can.

Jill Abrams, who curates the **Stablemates** reading series, has these top tips:

- Say in the first correspondence with poets whether there is a fee/expenses and how much.
- If using a PA, get someone to set it up properly then adjust the mic stand and the levels for the different poets.
- Supply drinking water for performers
- Make sure the first person to speak introduces him/herself
- Ensure the poets know how long their slot is and keep time for them – some will forget to note when they started (we've all done it). Work out how to stop them if it becomes necessary.

Nathalie Teitler is director of **The Complete Works** and has been an arts activist for over 20 years, founding the world's first poetry-dance company, **Dancing Words**, in 2015. Here are her top tips for successful poetry readings:

- Pick a diverse range of poets-go for a wide range of ages, ethnicities etc. It will be more exciting for your audience that way and for the poets reading.
- Poetry can be a bit daunting so keep introductions informal and accessible so that the audience can relate to the poets. Try to find out something about the poets so you can really give the audience a sense of their work.
- Offer the poets a proper rate of pay and be open about what the rate is straight away. If you can't pay them then make that clear straight away so they can make an informed choice.
- Pick poets and poetry you really enjoy. Your enthusiasm will be infectious.

POETRY FOR BOOK GROUPS

"Reading and writing poetry can offer a welcome break from the chaos of our busy lives, and discussing poetry has brought the group's members closer together, sharing personal experiences that arise through the poems we read." **Sussex Sticks Poetry Book Group**, via **Reading Groups for Everyone**

You might like to set up a Poetry Book Group, or to incorporate the occasional poetry book in your existing group. With a poetry book, your group can focus closely on a page or two, even if not everyone has had time to finish the whole collection or anthology.

Pass on a Poem groups meet across the UK to share poems that they enjoy; they would love to hear from bookshops and you can find them [here](#)

National Poetry Day has selected a set of new poetry books ideal for book groups, and created Readers' Notes to accompany them. Find these on the **National Poetry Day** website.

The **Scottish Poetry Library's Nothing But The Poem** reading group format was developed to help run rewarding, friendly discussion sessions about poetry. Here are ways they suggest to structure the session, and questions to get discussions started:

First impressions

- Ask if someone would like to read a poem aloud
- Thank them, and ask your opening question (see next sections).
- Ask if somebody else could read the poem again, so everyone can listen with your question in mind.

Some helpful opening questions

Make these specific enough for everybody to be able to focus, but with plenty of possible answers. **'What sounds / words caught your attention?'** All sorts of things will come out of this. **'What did that feel like to read?'** Strong rhythms, tongue-twisting phrases, emerging patterns? **'Who/what/where/when...?'** Some poems may simply be confusing to start with – acknowledge that, and spend a little time untangling a specific puzzle Or make it more about a particular poem: **'What kinds of journey are there in this poem?'** **'What's your first reaction to**

this – do you feel it might be a poem about X, or more about Y? where the poem has more than one immediately obvious subject. Emphasise that this is just a first impression, and come back to this question towards the end to see who has changed their mind.

(Avoid big, broad questions like **'did you like this?'**, **'what's this about?'** or **'how does this make you feel?'** as early questions. At this stage, they are hard to answer effectively, and may bring conversation to a stop, or make people take up defensive positions which they cannot yet explain; save such questions for the end, when people have had a chance to explore what they think and why)

Have some further questions up your sleeve...

'Where does this poem start, and where does it finish?' (Places, moods or concepts) **'Where – for you – does this poem change direction?'** Help people explore the sounds and shape/look of the poem. **'Are there further important ideas in the poem – as you read it more, what else does it make you ask?'** Consider some closing questions. Ask about final lines. Ask about the relevance of the poem's title. Consider repeating a question from early in the discussion: do people feel differently now? **'Is this a poem you would give to somebody else, and why?'** **'Which of these poems do you find yourself most drawn to / like least?'** (if you've discussed more than one poem) **'What – for you – is/are the most important question(s) to ask about this poem?'**

See also the **National Poetry Day Poetry Karaoke** events pack, for more suggestions for live poetry events without live poets. Remember: people love to share poems they enjoy. If you give them the opportunity they will come back for more.

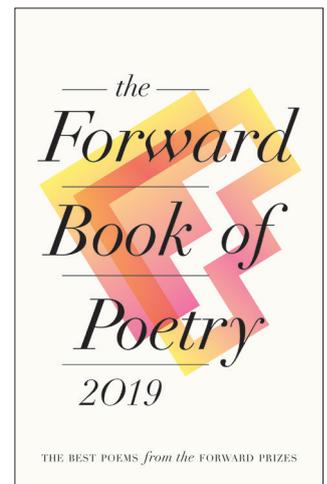
KEEPING UP WITH THE BEST NEW POETRY

Visit the **National Poetry Day** website to find lists of recommended new collections of poetry – for adults and young readers.

The **Forward Book of Poetry** brings together the best poetry published in the British Isles over the last year, including the winners of the 2018 Forward Prizes, showcasing the range and ambition of today's fresh voices alongside new work by familiar names. It's a perfect introduction to contemporary poetry.

Finally, here's a list of 12 top poetry accounts on Twitter and Instagram. Follow them to keep up to date with what's happening in the poetry world:

[@PoetryDayUK](#)
[@ForwardPrizes](#)
[@PoetrySociety](#)
[@ByLeavesWeLive](#)
[@applesandsnakes](#)
[@PoetryArchive](#)
[@PoetryBookSoc](#)
[@poetryschool](#)
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