



## **NATIONAL POETRY DAY @ 25 YEARS 2019: IN POETRY, TRUTH**

National Poetry Day marks its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year with a mass participation campaign highlighting poetry's power to forge community - whether intimate or on the grand scale - by celebrating words that touch on truth.

The campaign - which culminates on Thursday October 3rd with thousands of poetry events across the UK - is themed around 'truth'. It will showcase poetry's value in capturing those nuanced human truths that polls, statistics and big data ignore.

2018 was an exceptional year of national engagement in which National Poetry Day inspired more than 1.5 million live encounters with poetry and over 500,000 children and young people participated in NPD activities. Forward Arts Foundation - the charity responsible - will ensure that the 25th anniversary of the national campaign for poetry offers opportunities to join in at every level.

National Poetry Day will supply downloadable certificates for children who read, write or perform poems in their schools. There will be competitions for all ages, posters, booklists and bookmarks for participating retailers and libraries, and a treasure trove of poems chosen for their resonance and truth by a range of high-profile poetry-lovers - from Mark Gatiss to Michael Morpurgo. A companion National Poetry Day Anthology - in print form - will be curated by broadcaster Cerys Matthews.

Poetry is enjoying a huge boom, both in sales and audience numbers. In 2017 alone, 2 million people - 3.8 % of the population of England - told the Taking Part Survey that they had written a poem in the past 12 months. That is 500,000 more people than participated in the game of cricket over the same period. (1.5m or 2.8%: source, Active Lives Survey)

In figures collated for Forward Arts Foundation, Nielsen BookScan recently announced that poetry sales have increased by almost 50% in five years, reaching an all-time high of £12.3 million in 2018. Analysis of the poetry book buying audience showed that two thirds of poetry book buyers are under the age of 34.

Forward Arts Foundation's Andrea Reece, manager of National Poetry Day, says: "It is thrilling to watch poetry moving centre stage, though not surprising. When things are confusing or uncertain, we turn to poetry as a way to comfort, to express doubt, to give form to ambiguity. Poetry is a form of language that brings people together: when you encounter a poem that touches you, it's like making a new friend. National Poetry Day is unique in reaching so many, connecting poetry fans of all ages and tastes, and reminding all of the poems that continue to shape their lives, whether anthems and lyrics or lines shared on social media. The sector is full of brilliant people, poets, publishers and organisations who ensure poems are enjoyed, discovered and shared all year round. They're the ones who deserve the credit when poetry takes off. We are looking forward to another year of collaboration, connections and celebration."

This year's highlights include:

**-The Inpress & National Poetry Day Summit at London Book Fair.**

Poets Corner is hosting sessions on poetry across three days including a talk by Kirsty Melville of Andrews McMeel, whose discovery of Rupi Kaur has transformed poetry publishing worldwide.

The London Book Fair has appointed a Poet of the Fair, **Raymond Antrobus**, who will be in conversation with **Isobel Colchester** of **Poet in the City** on 13<sup>th</sup> March at 4pm.

The invitation-only Poetry Summit on the morning of 13<sup>th</sup> March will include presentations on the poetry market, 2019 by **Sandra Whelan, Nielsen Bookscan** and **Oliver Mantell** of the **Audience Agency**, chaired by **Sarah Crown** of **Arts Council England**. Speakers include **Michael Jacobs**, Chairman of the **Academy of American Poets** and **YouTube** presentation on poetry and YouTube with special contributions from YouTuber poet **Savannah Brown**

**-A new #BBCLocalPoets campaign** will be launched.

The BBC will invite 6 million listeners to local radio to identify truths about their region that deserve to be better known nationally, whether by challenging popular clichés about local food and accents or taking on deep-rooted stereotypes. Their suggestions will inspire 12 poets, each representing a BBC Local Radio station in the BBC's 12 regions to map the complexity of the places they call home.

The **#BBCLocalPoets** initiative will celebrate the deep connections people have with their local area and is inspired by Mancunian Tony Walsh's poem "*This is the Place*", which woke up millions to the power of poetry when he read it in the aftermath of the Manchester Arena bombing.

**-A new National Poetry Day anthology of poems** nominated for their truth by "poetry champions" - from music, sport, film and science - alongside poems chosen by members of the public. *Tell Me The Truth About Life*, an indispensable anthology celebrating poetry's power to capture the truths that matter, is curated by broadcaster Cerys Matthews, published by Michael O'Mara on 12<sup>th</sup> September.

**-Creation of a Poets' Directory** which will enable bookshops and libraries across the UK to identify and link up with contemporary poets active in their areas.

**-Appointment of new NPD Poetry Ambassadors.**

We are delighted that Karl Nova and James Carter will join us as poetry ambassadors (for full list of ambassadors please visit <https://nationalpoetryday.co.uk/ambassador>)

**-Creation of new resources** and print & digital toolkits (including postcards, posters and badges) for:

- teachers to foster young people's enthusiasm for poetry, in and out of school
- librarians to put poetry at the heart of their communities
- new materials for care homes to share poetry with residents.

**-Launch of a new trade campaign**, supported by poetry publishers large and

small, to ensure increased shelf space and a higher profile for poetry in bookshops and growing sales.

**-New sponsorship deal** with wholesaler Gardners and leading educational supplier Browns Books for Students, enabling National Poetry Day materials and information to reach directly into even more schools and bookshops.

**Gardners**

**B B fs** BROWNS BOOKS  
FOR STUDENTS

**-The Places of Poetry** project, led by Exeter University, centres on a distinctive digital map of England and Wales. Through a summer campaign, concluding on National Poetry Day, writers of all ages and backgrounds will be invited to pin new poems of place, heritage and identity to the map. Places of Poetry will celebrate the diversity, heritage and personalities of place.

**-National Poetry Day and Forward Arts Foundation are delighted to announce that The Teach Company** have joined as education media partner for 2019.

Joe Carter, Group Editor of The Teach Company comments:  
"Poetry is prominent on the curriculum from the EYFS to KS4, but not every teacher is confident in how best to explore it in the classroom. Working with National Poetry Day is a rare opportunity for us to connect schools across the country with some of today's most inspirational poetic voices - through video and off the page - and make the experience of encountering new poems as enthralling as it is educational."

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## Notes to editors:

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/>

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.

National Poetry Day was founded in 1994 and enjoys the support of the BBC, Arts Council England, the Royal Mail and leading literary and cultural organisations. The 2019 25<sup>th</sup> 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/>

## The Teach Company

The Teach Company provides advice to schools and targeted marketing through multiple channels, including print and digital. It is the publisher of national education magazines including Teach Secondary, Teach Primary and Teach Early Years and runs teaching websites such as [teachwire.net](http://teachwire.net) and [primaryleaders.com](http://primaryleaders.com), collectively reaching hundreds of thousands of teachers each month.

