

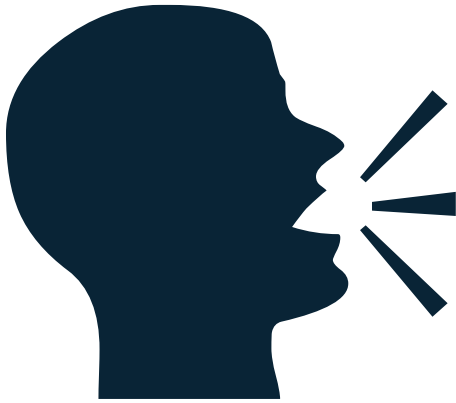


Reading, Language, & Literacy

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Everyone Needs More Poetry in Their Lives (By Laurie Stowell)

“... poetry is not a luxury. It is a vital necessity of our existence. It forms the quality of the light within which we predicate our hopes and dreams toward survival and change, first made into language, then into idea, then into more tangible action. Poetry is the way we help give name to the nameless so it can be thought. The farthest horizons of our hopes and fears are cobbled by our poems, carved from the rock experiences of our daily lives.” — Audre Lorde

Poetry is often overlooked because it does not appear in the California ELA standards, but that does not diminish its value for readers and writers of all ages. Poetry promotes literacy, fosters emotional resilience, and enables kids to put language to their experiences and emotions. Readers believe that poetry is easy because it is shorter than typical fiction and informational writing. So, poetry can invite reluctant readers to the page. Poetry is also accessible for English Learners. They can read or write in their primary language or a mix of their language and English as many published poets do. Light verse and humorous poems are an inviting door to readers. (more on pages 4 and 5!)

Great works are performed not by strength, but by perseverance.

~ Samuel Johnson

What are we reading?

Tiny Beautiful Things
by Cheryl Strayed





Alumni Spotlight

Meagan Bare

[Check out Meagan's awesome project with resources for developing strong readers.](#)

Throughout my life, I knew I wanted to make an impact in children's lives. Both of my sisters struggled with Dyslexia and ADHD, which made school, particularly reading, a challenge. I saw the way teachers treated them, some good and helpful, while others were not. It was the teachers who were not helpful and accommodating who made me want to become a teacher who is able to help all my students learn and read, no matter what learning disability or challenge they have.

After researching, talking with professors and teachers I work with now, I was encouraged to look into a Reading, Language, and Literacy program. I soon found CSUSM's program and was amazed by it and knew it was exactly what I was looking for. All of the classes were so helpful and gave me practical change ideas for my current teaching position as a Second Grade Teacher.



In addition to the master's degree, I completed the courses for RLAA and RLLSC credentials. In these courses, I did case studies on my current students who were struggling with reading. This was the most valuable thing for my work and current role. I was able to use the QRI-7 to assess and identify specific areas where my struggling reader needed more assistance. Through specific interventions the students were able to grow in those areas. By the end of the intense interventions, the students had increased in their reading skills. I was amazed to see how effective these case studies were and to see the joy students found in reading once they had the tools to do it well. I had one student begin the year not being able to identify all his letter sounds and couldn't read more than three words together. Through the tools I was learning through the program and intensive interventions, he was able to enter third grade reading in 90 percentile when he entered. This is one of the incredible benefits of this program, the ability to learn the skills necessary for helping your students learn and become confident in their skills.

I am so thankful that I went through this program and to be able to continue to use so many tools and resources that I learned through the RLL program. I cannot stop recommending this program to my colleagues and anyone who is in the teaching profession as it has grown me in my professional development and provided me with skills that will allow my students to thrive.



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Professional
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Tina Medina

Teaching from the Inside Out: Creating Spaces of Belonging

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**Saturday
April 20, 2024
Time: 10:00 am - 12:00 pm (PT)
Zoom**

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The environments we create for learning are just as important as the content we teach, just like the health of the environments we work in help retain excellent educators.

Join educator and speaker Tina Medina for an interactive experience focused on using restorative practices to create cultures of care and belonging for ourselves, our colleagues and our students.

Registration will close at NOON on Friday, April 19, 2024

The Zoom link will be sent via email by 5 pm on 4/19/24



Everyone Needs Poetry (continued!)

Shel Silverstein books are still high on favorite book lists and Jack Prelutsky, who writes in a similar vein, is also popular with elementary and middle school readers. A recent addition to the fun and silly collections is *My Head has a Bellyache* by Chris Harris. One of the best collections of poetry for readers was anthologized by Jack Prelutsky, *The Random House Book of Poetry*. For middle and high school readers, authors to check out are Lori Carlson, Arlene B. Hirschfelder, Beverly R. Singer, and Rudy Francisco. Paul Janeczko, though no longer with us, has written anthologies that appeal to adolescent readers. One of our favorites is *A Kick in the Head: An Everyday Guide to Poetic Forms* because every page provides a definition of the form, an example, and an illustration for each form.

Most poetry begs to be read aloud. Ask learners to read or perform poetry or even memorize it. Joseph Coelho has written a series of books for students to read aloud as well as tips for writing poetry. Poetry Outloud, a partner of the National Endowment for the Arts, is a national competition in which students choose a published poem and recite it. The contest begins locally and ends in Washington D.C. in April. Search Youtube for examples of Poetry Outloud performances and start a competition in your classroom or school. Then let the RLL faculty know what happens. Even better, send pictures!

The best way to engage teens in poetry is listening to performance poetry. See the Youtube channels of “Brave New Voices”, “Button Poetry”, “Youth Speaks” and [click here](#) for my Youtube Channel where I have curated many appealing slam poems. Contemporary performance poetry is rich and layered language that utilizes literary elements and speaks to students’ experiences.

Another engaging activity is a March Madness poetry bracket that can be done as a lead up to National Poetry Month. The idea is simple: collect excellent engaging poetry in print or video or audio. Start each day or class period by sharing two poems and ask students to vote by a show of hands or paper ballot. The winner moves on in the bracket. Repeat this every day until a final winner is reached.



Poetry can be and often does open the door to writing for writers of all ages. Strong feelings and experiences can be captured in a few words. There are many engaging ways to invite writers to compose poetry. Begin with Kwame Alexander's engaging picture book *How to Write a Poem* or Joseph Fasano's *Magic Words: Simple Poetry Prompts that Unlock the Creativity in Everyone*. Formula poems like diamanté, and acrostic poems can provide a scaffold but can also be restrictive to writers. They can mistakenly lead writers to believe writing poetry is about following formulas when it is actually the opposite.

Poetry is probably the most playful form of writing inviting us to manipulate words, line breaks, play with conventions or lack of them (like e.e. cummings) and create their own versions.

National "Poem in your Pocket Day" takes place every year on a day in National Poetry Month. If you are looking to flex your creativity a little bit, or simply want to have an excuse to enjoy some poetry, then you might want to observe this holiday by yourself, or with friends and family. Share a poem on social media, record yourself reading a poem and post, email a poem to family and friends or print poems and hand them out to strangers and friends.

Poetry should be celebrated every day, not just in April. The more experience readers and writers have with poetry, the more comfortable they will be and enjoy it. I end with my favorite way to engage anyone in poetry. Share a poem at the start of each day a la Billy Collins' (former U.S. Poet Laureate) Poetry 180 project. His advice is not to analyze or discuss. Just share a poem and enjoy!

How to Read a Poem: Beginner's Manual
by Pamela Spiro Wagner

First, forget everything you have learned,
that poetry is difficult,
that it cannot be appreciated by the likes
of you,
with your high school equivalency
diploma
and steel-tipped boots,
or your white collar misunderstandings.
Do not assume meanings hidden from you:
the best poems mean what they say and
say it.
To read poetry requires only courage
enough to leap from the edge
and trust.

Treat a poem like dirt,
humus rich and heavy from the garden.
Later on it will become the fat tomatoes
and golden squash piled high upon your kitchen table.
Poetry demands surrender,
language saying what is true
doing holy things to the ordinary.
Read just one poem a day.
Someday a book of poems may open in your hands
like a daffodil offering its cup
to the sun.
When you can name five poets
without including Bob Dylan,
when you exceed your quota
and don't even notice,
close this manual.
Congratulations.
You can now read poetry.