

# Audio Recordings of Poetry and Literature



April 21, 2021



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# Audio Recordings of Poetry and Lit

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- ☐ **Where you're joining us from**
- ☐ **What you teach**
- ☐ **Your favorite poet to teach—why?**



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# Today's Agenda

- Introductions
- Demo of Audio Recordings
- Discussion / Q&A
- Wrap Up

COLLECTION

## Archive of Recorded Poetry and Literature

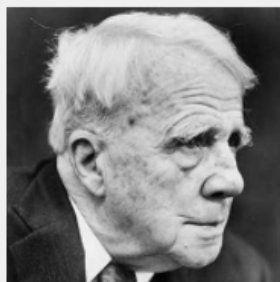
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### Featured Content



Audre Lorde reading her poems with comment in the Recording ...



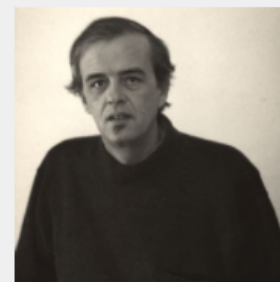
Robert Frost interview with Randall Jarrell



Academy of American Poets thirty-fifth anniversary program



Kurt Vonnegut lectures in the Coolidge Auditorium, Feb. 1, 1971



Denise Levertov and James Tate reading and discussing their ...




### About this Collection

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## About this Collection

Listen to audio-recorded readings of former Consultants in Poetry Elizabeth Bishop, Gwendolyn Brooks and Robert Frost; Nobel Laureates Mario Vargas Llosa and Czeslaw Milosz, and renowned writers such as Ray Bradbury, Margaret Atwood, and Kurt Vonnegut read from their work at the Library of Congress.

The Archive of Recorded Poetry and Literature at the Library of Congress dates back to 1943, when Allen Tate was Consultant in





#### BIOGRAPHY

### Elizabeth Bishop

U.S. Consultant in Poetry, 1949-1950

Elizabeth Bishop (1911-1979) was born in Worcester, Massachusetts. She was the author of nine poetry collections. She also published several books of prose, and edited and translated multiple volumes. Bishop served as a Chancellor of the Academy of American Poets from 1966-1979.



#### BIOGRAPHY

### Robert Hayden

U.S. Consultant in Poetry, 1976-1978

Robert Hayden (1913-1980) was born in Detroit, Michigan. He published nine collections of poetry. Hayden was appointed Consultant in Poetry to the Library of Congress in 1976, the first African American to hold the position. He taught at Fisk University and the University of Michigan.



#### BIOGRAPHY

### Allen Ginsberg

Allen Ginsberg was born in Newark, New Jersey in 1926. He is the author of more than 40 poetry collections, including *Howl and Other Poems* (1956); *Planet News* (1968); and *The Fall of America: Poems of These States* (1973), which won the National Book Award.



#### BIOGRAPHY

### Margaret Atwood

Margaret Atwood credit Jean Malek Margaret Atwood was born in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada in 1939. She is the author of fourteen novels, including *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985), *The Robber Bride* (1993), and *Blind Assassin* (2000), which received the Booker Prize. She has also written eight short story collections and more than twenty books of poetry. [...]



#### BIOGRAPHY

### Sandra Cisneros

Sandra Cisneros credit Ray Santisteban Sandra Cisneros was born in Chicago, Illinois in 1954. In addition to several books of poetry and children's books, Cisneros has published four books of fiction, including *The House on Mango Street* (1994), which was awarded the American Book Award by the Before Columbus Foundation; *Woman Hollering Creek and Other* [...]



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#### Archives

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## Listen to 50 Newly Streaming Recordings—Just in Time for National Poetry Month

April 15, 2021 by Anne Holmes



National Poetry Month is here (arguably the most wonderful time of the year, but we're biased), and we're excited to share what we have in store.

The centerpiece of our annual April festivities is the release of 50 newly digitized recordings to the [Archive of Recorded Poetry and Literature](#)—and we're delighted to say that this year is no different! If you're unfamiliar with the archive, here's a little history: The Archive of Recorded Poetry and Literature dates back to 1943 and contains nearly 2,000 audio recordings of poets and writers participating in literary events at the Library of Congress, along with sessions recorded in the Recording Laboratory in the Library's Jefferson Building.

Until 2015, when we started to digitize the collection, most of these recordings were only accessible to those who visited the Library of Congress and requested the magnetic reels in person. Including this month's release, there are now 365 recordings from the archive streaming online—easily accessible to anyone in the world with an internet connection. That's one recording for each day of the year!

Among this year's additions are readings and conversations featuring consultants in poetry [Robert Hayden](#), [Anthony Hecht](#), and [William Jay Smith](#). For the first time streaming from the archive, you can also listen to recordings from [Carolyn Kizer](#), [May Miller](#), [Michael McClure](#), [Shreela Ray](#), [John Okai](#), [Sapphire](#), [Paul Theroux](#), [Quincy Troupe](#), and dozens more.

Here's the full list of 2021 additions, now available for your listening pleasure:

# Gwendolyn Brooks

## U.S. Consultant in Poetry, 1985-1986

Gwendolyn Brooks was born in Topeka, Kansas, in 1917. She was the author of more than 20 poetry collections, including *A Street in Bronzeville* (1945); *Annie Allen* (1949), which won the Pulitzer Prize; and *The Bean Eaters* (1960). She also published several books of prose, including the novella *Maud Martha* (1953). Brooks received fellowships from the Academy of American Poets and the Guggenheim Foundation, and was the recipient of the American Academy of Arts and Letters Award, the Frost Medal, the Shelley Memorial Award from the Poetry Society of America, and the National Medal of Arts. She served as the Poet Laureate of Illinois from 1968-2000 and Consultant in Poetry to the Library of Congress from 1985-1986. In 1988, she was inducted into the National Women's Hall of Fame. Brooks taught creative writing at Columbia College Chicago, Northeastern Illinois University, Chicago State University, Elmhurst College, Columbia University, Clay College of New York, and the University of Wisconsin-Madison. She died in 2000.

### Audio Recordings with Gwendolyn Brooks

- [Gwendolyn Brooks reading her poems with comment](#) in the Recording Laboratory, January 19, 1961
- [Readings in Afro-American poetry](#): Gwendolyn Brooks, Michael S. Harper, and Robert Hayden reading their own poems and those of other Afro-American poets in the Coolidge Auditorium, Feb. 23, 1976
- As part of Poetry in English at the Library of Congress, [Gwendolyn Brooks reading from her poetry](#) on September 30, 1985.
- The day of the [Gwendolyn: a lecture](#) in the Coolidge Auditorium, May 5, 1986
- [Howard Nemerov memorial reading](#): Gwendolyn Brooks, Maxine Kumin, Alexander Nemerov, Reed Whittemore, in the Mumford Room, Oct. 29, 1991

### Selected Works at the Library of Congress

- [Brooks, Gwendolyn](#)



Gwendolyn Brooks, U.S. Consultant in Poetry, 1985-1986.



# Gwendolyn Brooks reading her poems with comment in the Recording Laboratory, Jan. 19, 1961

Gwendolyn Brooks reading her poems with comment in the Recording Laboratory, Jan. 19, 1961



00:00



42:47



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## About this Item

### Title

Gwendolyn Brooks reading her poems with comment in the Recording Laboratory, Jan. 19, 1961

### Contributor Names

Brooks, Gwendolyn, 1917-2000.

Archive of Recorded Poetry and Literature (Library of Congress)

### Created / Published

1961.

### Contents

From A street in Bronzeville: Kitchenette building (min. 00:38); The mother (min. 01:29); A song in the front yard (min. 03:08); The preacher: ruminates behind the sermon (min. 04:05); Of De Witt Williams on his way to Lincoln Cemetery (min. 05:00); Negro hero (05:57); Still do I keep my look, my identity (09:57); The progress (min. 10:59) -- From Annie Allen: The parents: people like our marriage (Maxie and Andrew) (min. 11:58); Sunday chicken (min. 12:30); The children of the poor [pts. 2 and 4] (min. 13:17); The ballad of the light-eyed little girl (min. 17:14); A light and diplomatic bird (min. 18:24); The rites for cousin Vit (min. 19:25)-- From The bean eaters: My little 'bout-town gal (min. 20:39); Strong men, riding horses (min. 21:12); The bean eaters (min. 22:12); We real cool (min. 22:49); Old Mary (min. 23:11); The lovers of the poor (min. 23:31); A sunset of the city (min. 28:53); A man of the middle class (min. 30:23); Mrs. Small (min. 32:45); The Chicago defender sends a man to Little Rock (min. 35:05); Kid Bruin (min. 38:21); The ghost at the Quincy Club (min. 38:49) -- From Bronzeville boys and girls: Narcissa (min. 39:42); Keziah (min. 40:22); Charles (min. 40:43); Rudolph is tired of the city (min. 40:59); Luther and Breck (min. 41:30); Lyle (42:04).

### Part of

[Archive of Recorded Poetry and Literature \(693\)](#)

[Library of Congress Online Catalog \(1,149,418\)](#)

### Format

[Audio Recording](#)

### Contributors

[Archive of Recorded Poetry and Literature \(Library of Congress\)](#)

[Brooks, Gwendolyn](#)

### Dates

1961

### Languages

[English](#)



# Gwendolyn Brooks reading from her poetry

Gwendolyn Brooks reading from her poetry

00:00 01:17:54

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## About this Item

### Title

Gwendolyn Brooks reading from her poetry

### Summary

The twenty-ninth person appointed Consultant in Poetry at the Library of Congress, Pulitzer Prize-winning author Gwendolyn Brooks reads selections from her poetry. Dr. John Broderick introduces the poet.

### Contributor Names

Brooks, Gwendolyn, 1917-2000.

Broderick, John C.

Gertrude Clarke Whittall Poetry and Literature Fund.

Archive of Recorded Poetry and Literature (Library of Congress)

### Created / Published

1985.

### Contents

When You Have Forgotten Sunday: The Love Story (min. 14:48); To Those of My Sisters Who Kept Their Naturals (min. 18:05); We Real Cool (min. 21:09); The Lovers of the Poor (min. 23:50); Bronzeville Woman in a Red Hat: Hires Out to Mrs. Miles (min. 32:55); Riot (min. 35:41); Tornado at Talladega (min. 41:47); The Chicago Picasso (min. 44:05); The Life of Lincoln West (min. 46:25); Young Afrikans (min. 55:33); sonnet from The Children of the Poor (min. 57:16); The Mother (min. 01:00:57); Building (min. 01:05:55); Ballad of Pearl May Lee (min. 01:09:17); Computer (min. 01:15:35)

### Part of

[Archive of Recorded Poetry and Literature \(693\)](#)

[Library of Congress Online Catalog \(1,149,418\)](#)

### Format

[Audio Recording](#)

### Contributors

[Archive of Recorded Poetry and Literature \(Library of Congress\)](#)

[Broderick, John C.](#)

[Brooks, Gwendolyn](#)

[Gertrude Clarke Whittall Poetry and Literature Fund](#)

### Dates

[1985](#)

### Languages

[English](#)

# We Real Cool

—Gwendolyn Brooks

The Pool Players.  
Seven at the Golden Shovel.

We real cool. We  
Left school. We

Lurk late. We  
Strike straight. We

Sing sin. We  
Thin gin. We

Jazz June. We  
Die soon.

## PROGRAM

## Poetry & Literature

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## Poetry of America

Poetry of America contains field recordings by a wide range of award-winning contemporary poets. Each poet reads a singular American poem of his or her choosing, and also speaks to how the poem connects to, deepens, or re-imagines our sense of American identity.

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Title

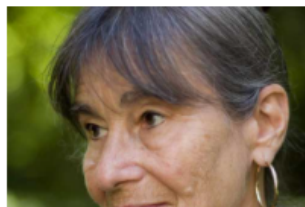
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## POEM

### Afaa Michael Weaver reads and discusses Paul Laurence Dunbar's "Little Brown Baby"

"... in this particular poem, I find the treasure of the love of the father for the child, and I think of African American men and their evolution as men in the context of the racial history of this country."



## POEM

### Alicia Ostriker reads and discusses Emma Lazarus' "The New Colossus"

"It is an amazing poem. It claims that we represent, not war and conquest, but freedom, enlightenment, and compassion."

## Guidelines

If they ask you what you are,  
say Arab. If they flinch, don't react,  
just remember your great-aunt's eyes.

If they ask you where you come from,  
say Toledo. Detroit. Mission Viejo.  
Fall Springs. Topeka. If they seem confused,

help them locate these places on a map,  
then inquire casually, Where are you from?  
Have you been here long? Do you like this country?

If they ask you what you eat,  
don't dissemble. If garlic is your secret friend,  
admit it. Likewise, crab cakes.

If they say you're not American,  
don't pull out your personal,  
wallet-sized flag. Instead, recall

the Bill of Rights. Mention the Constitution.  
Wear democracy like a favorite garment:  
comfortable, intimate.

If they wave newspapers in your face and shout,  
stay calm. Remember everything they never learned.  
Offer to take them to the library.

If they ask you if you're white, say it depends.  
Say no. Say maybe. If appropriate, inquire,  
Have you always been white, or is it recent?

If you take to the streets in protest,  
link hands with whomever is beside you.  
Keep your eyes on the colonizer's maps,

geography's twisted strands, the many colors  
of struggle. No matter how far you've come, remember:  
the starting line is always closer than you think.

If they ask how long you plan to stay, say forever.  
Console them if they seem upset. Say, don't worry,  
you'll get used to it. Say, we live here. How about you?

—Lisa Suhair Majaj



## Commentary

This is Naomi Shihab Nye and I'm reading a poem by Lisa Suhair Majaj called "Guidelines."

"Keep your eyes on the colonizer's maps"—"Guidelines" by Lisa Suhair Majaj, an Arab-American poet who currently lives in Cyprus with her husband and two children, is one of my favorite poems about identity. This poem is included in Lisa's book *Geographies of Light* published by Del Sol Press, Washington DC in 2009. Her title has bearing here too. Lisa's poem sheds a clear, compelling light on the sometimes thorny terrain of immigration, identity and belonging, and it does this in an imaginative, comfortable tone which includes us all in the conversation. "Guidelines" functions through a series of simple, potent questions and comments: advice to the listener as it were, arranged in three-line stanzas. It's friendly. It doesn't get irritated even when pressed. It reminds me of the power of language to ease situations of potential conflict. Instead of backfiring with fury, the poem gently engages and expands. Its playfulness and nuanced possibility ending with that most gracious turnaround—"How about you?"—suggests the peculiar curiosity of this issue. Who does belong? Does everyone belong? Do we have to do something special to belong? Do people who look like you belong a little bit more?

I like the openhearted tone of "Guidelines." Nobody could say they don't understand this poem. Yet it's clever and surprising, as well as revealing and wise. Walking in Claremont, California the other day, I saw a handwritten sign on a wall: NO HUMAN IS ILLEGAL. Because I live in a Texas city with a high majority of Latino residents and an ongoing conversation about citizenship and human rights, this sign caught me up. I had never seen the truth stated so simply before. It made me think of what Lisa's poem "Guidelines" is saying. I think about the people who first lived on all our lands here in the United States and the indignities they have had to face being so often neglected in the presumptions of belonging. I think of my Palestinian refugee father and his lives in both countries—Palestine and the United States—always wanting to belong, always seeking connection.

Lisa Suhair Majaj and I happen to share exactly the same heritage, Palestinian fathers and Midwestern German-American mothers, but this is not the reason I like her poem. Her poem speaks for all of us: for bullied middle schoolers and outsider teens, for anyone who ever feels marginalized, for oddballs and wallflowers and hermits and eccentrics and, well, maybe that person who lives right next door to you. How are they doing?

**Thank you!**

**Questions? Post them in the chat box!**



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- ❑ Sign up for next month's webinar, Teaching Poetry: A Conversation with Alberto Ríos

<https://ncte.org/events/opportunity-library-congress/>



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