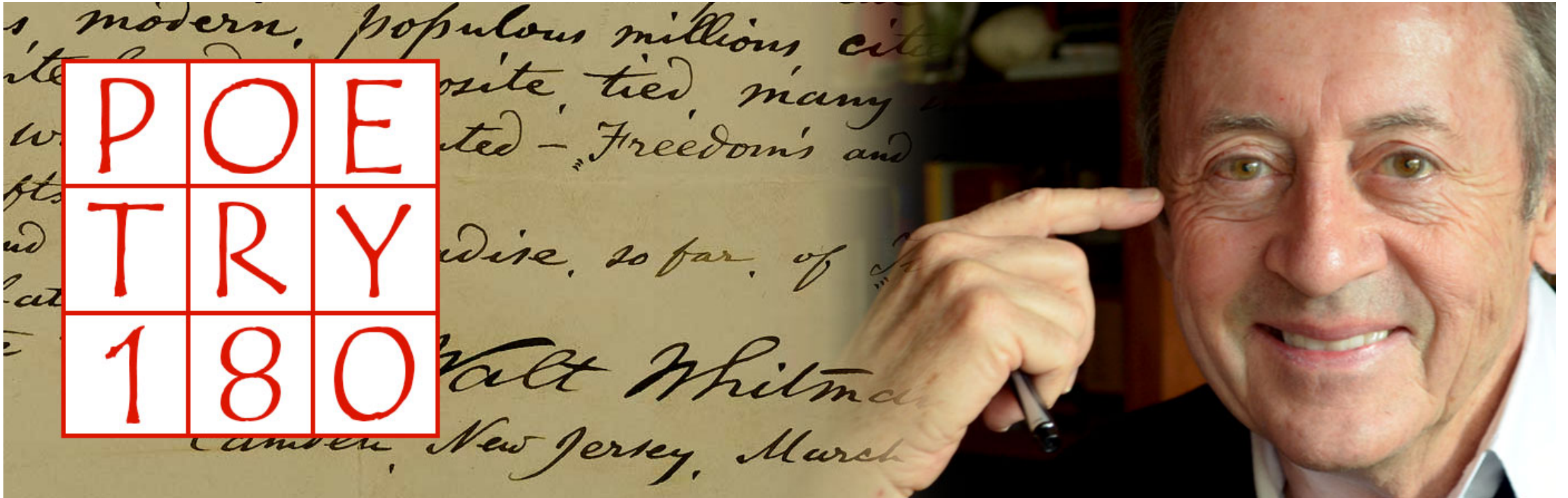


Teaching Poetry: Poetry 180



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Teaching Poetry: Poetry 180

Welcome. We're glad you're here! Use the chat box to introduce yourselves. Let us know:

- ☐ Your first name
- ☐ Where you're joining us from
- ☐ What you teach



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Billy Collins



Alfredo Celedón Luján

Today's Agenda

- Introduction of Project
- Discussion/Readings of Poems
- Q&A
- Wrap Up

Questions?

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The Library of Congress promotes poetry and literature year-round through our online and in-person programs, our honors and prizes, and our ambassadors.

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Poet Laureate



Joy Harjo, 23rd Poet Laureate Consultant in Poetry. Photo credit: Shawn Miller

Current Poet Laureate

Librarian of Congress Carla Hayden appointed Joy Harjo as the 23rd Poet Laureate Consultant in Poetry to the Library of Congress on June 19, 2019. Harjo was reappointed to a second term on April 30, 2020, and a third term on Nov. 19, 2020.

Joy Harjo is the first Native American poet to serve in the position—she is an enrolled member of the Muscogee Creek Nation. She was born in Tulsa, Oklahoma, on May 9, 1951, and is the author of nine books of poetry—including *An American Sunrise* (2019); *Conflict Resolution for Holy Beings* (2015); *The Woman Who Fell From the Sky* (1994), which received the Oklahoma Book Arts Award; and *In Mad Love and War* (1990), which received an American Book Award and the Delmore Schwartz Memorial Award. Harjo has also written a memoir, *Crazy Brave* (W. W. Norton, 2012), which won the 2013 PEN Center USA literary prize for creative nonfiction, as well as a children's book, *The Good Luck Cat* (Harcourt, Brace 2000), and a young adult book, *For a Girl Becoming* (University of Arizona Press, 2009).

- [Librarian of Congress Names Joy Harjo the Nation's 23rd Poet Laureate \(06/19/2019\)](#)
- [U.S. Poet Laureate Joy Harjo Appointed for a Second Term \(04/30/2020\)](#)
- [Joy Harjo Appointed to Third Term as U.S. Poet Laureate; Launches Signature Project, "Living Nations, Living Words" \(11/19/2020\)](#)
- [View Resource Guide on Joy Harjo](#)
- [Watch Q&A with Poet Laureate Joy Harjo](#)

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Poet Laureate Projects

Since the Poet Laureateship was created by an act of Congress in 1985, nearly half of the laureates have taken on a signature project to raise the national appreciation of poetry. Learn about and explore these dynamic projects—with a digital presence—here.



Living Nations, Living Words

Created in 2020 by Poet Laureate Joy Harjo, this project gathers a sampling of work by 47 contemporary Native poets from across the nation to show that Native people and poets have vital and unequivocal roots in the United States. The project features an interactive Story Map and a newly developed audio collection.



American Conversations: Celebrating Poems in Rural Communities

During 2018, Poet Laureate Tracy K. Smith visited rural communities around the country and gave away copies of her anthology, *American Journal: Fifty Poems for Our Time*, to spark conversations about the power of poetry.



The Technicolor Adventures of Catalina Neon

Poet Laureate Juan Felipe Herrera and artist Juana Medina created this bilingual, illustrated poem in 2016-2017 with input from second and third graders and their school librarians from around the country.

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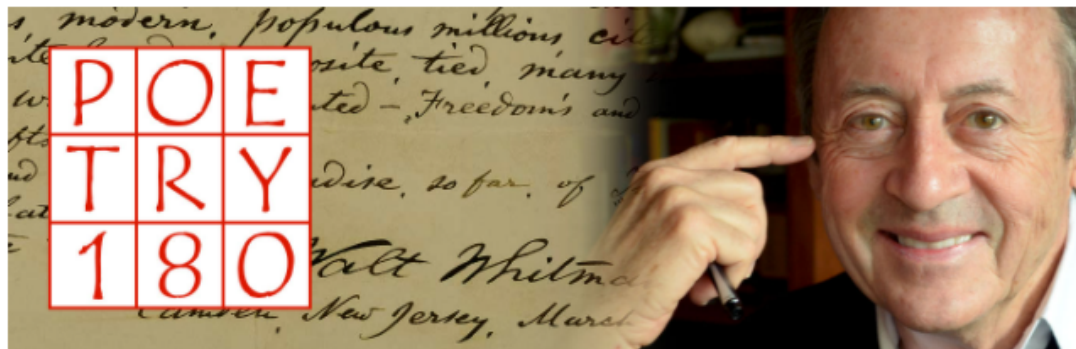
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Poetry 180



Welcome to *Poetry 180*. Poetry can and should be an important part of our daily lives. Poems can inspire and make us think about what it means to be a member of the human race. By just spending a few minutes reading a poem each day, new worlds can be revealed.

Poetry 180 is designed to make it easy for students to hear or read a poem on each of the 180 days of the school year. I have selected the poems you will find here with high school students in mind. They are intended to be listened to, and I suggest that all members of the school community be included as readers. A great time for the readings would be following the end of daily announcements over the public address system.

Listening to poetry can encourage students and other learners to become members of the circle of readers for whom poetry is a vital source of pleasure. I hope *Poetry 180* becomes an important and enriching part of the school day.

Billy Collins

Former Poet Laureate of the United States

[Learn more about Billy Collins »](#)

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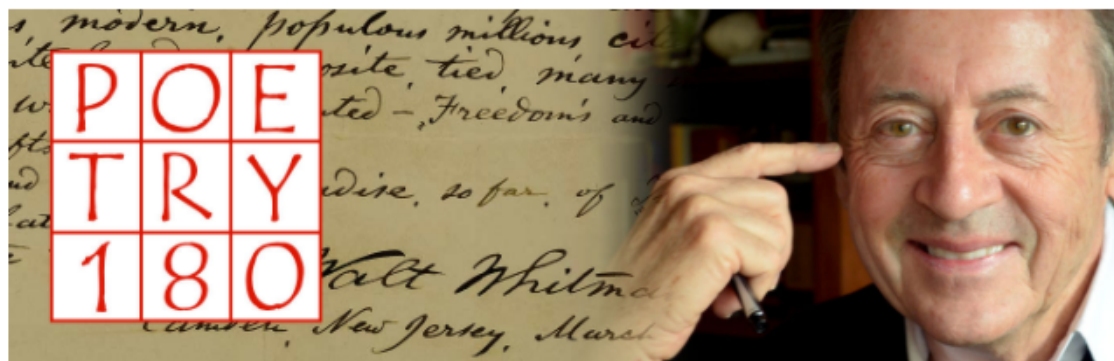
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More About Poetry 180



More About This Program

From Billy Collins, former Poet Laureate of the United States, to the high school teachers of America:

I want to acquaint you with a program for making poetry an active part of the daily experience of American high school students. The program is called *Poetry 180* and offers a poem for every day of the approximately 180-day school year. But there is another reason I chose that name.

A 180-degree turn implies a turning back -- in this case, to poetry. The idea behind *Poetry 180* is simple: to have a poem read each day to the students of American high schools across the country. How the program is applied is completely up to each high school. Following are guidelines for implementing *Poetry 180*. I have tried to keep the program as flexible as possible so that it can be easily adapted to the needs of your school and especially to your particular school calendar.

How does a school take part in *Poetry 180*?

All you need to do is print out one of the poems from this Web site, numbered from 1 through 180, and have it read to the school in a public forum, such as at the end of the day's announcements. You may want to print out a new poem every day or it may be easier to print out several at a time, for a week or even a month.

What do we do with the poems?

Select someone to read a poem to the school each day. Or, better still, give prospective readers the opportunity to look at the next few weeks' worth of poems and let them choose a poem they want to read. The daily poem may be read aloud by any member of the school community: a student, a teacher, an administrator or a staff person. Students with literary inclinations might be the most eager to read, but teachers should aim at creating a broad spectrum of readers to encourage the notion that poetry belongs to everyone. Ideally, the editor of the student literary magazine would read one day and the volleyball coach the next day; a member of the grounds crew might be followed by the principal. The program should be as democratic as possible and not the property of one group. Wide participation might even increase the overall sense of community in the school.

The goal is to give students a chance to listen to a poem each day. The best time for the reading would be at the end of the daily announcements, whether they are delivered over a public address system, at an assembly in an auditorium or by teachers in their individual homerooms. The hope is that poetry will become a part of the daily life of students in addition to being a subject that is part of the school curriculum.

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Poem 013: Did I Miss Anything?

Nothing. When we realized you weren't here
we sat with our hands folded on our desks
in silence, for the full two hours

Everything. I gave an exam worth
40 percent of the grade for this term
and assigned some reading due today
on which I'm about to hand out a quiz
worth 50 percent

Nothing. None of the content of this course
has value or meaning
Take as many days off as you like:
any activities we undertake as a class
I assure you will not matter either to you or me
and are without purpose

Everything. A few minutes after we began last time
a shaft of light suddenly descended and an angel
or other heavenly being appeared
and revealed to us what each woman or man must do
to attain divine wisdom in this life and
the hereafter

This is the last time the class will meet
before we disperse to bring the good news to all people on earth.

Nothing. When you are not present
how could something significant occur?

Everything. Contained in this classroom
is a microcosm of human experience
assembled for you to query and examine and ponder
This is not the only place such an opportunity has been gathered

but it was one place

And you weren't here

—Tom Wayman

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Tom Wayman

Tom Wayman (1945-) is the author of 17 poetry collections, including *High Speed through Shoaling Water* (Harbour Publishing, 2007).

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Poem 126: God Says Yes To Me

I asked God if it was okay to be melodramatic
and she said yes
I asked her if it was okay to be short
and she said it sure is
I asked her if I could wear nail polish
or not wear nail polish
and she said honey
she calls me that sometimes
she said you can do just exactly
what you want to
Thanks God I said
And is it even okay if I don't paragraph
my letters
Sweetcakes God said
who knows where she picked that up
what I'm telling you is
Yes Yes Yes

—Kaylin Haught

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Kaylin Haught

Kaylin Haught (1947-2018) was a poet from Albion, Illinois. Her poems appeared in *Ms. Magazine*, *On the Bus*, and other magazines and journals.

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Poem 050: Otherwise

I got out of bed
on two strong legs.
It might have been
otherwise. I ate
cereal, sweet
milk, ripe, flawless
peach. It might
have been otherwise.
I took the dog uphill
to the birch wood.
All morning I did
the work I love.

At noon I lay down
with my mate. It might
have been otherwise.
We ate dinner together
at a table with silver
candlesticks. It might
have been otherwise.
I slept in a bed
in a room with paintings
on the walls, and
planned another day
just like this day.
But one day, I know,
it will be otherwise.

—Jane Kenyon

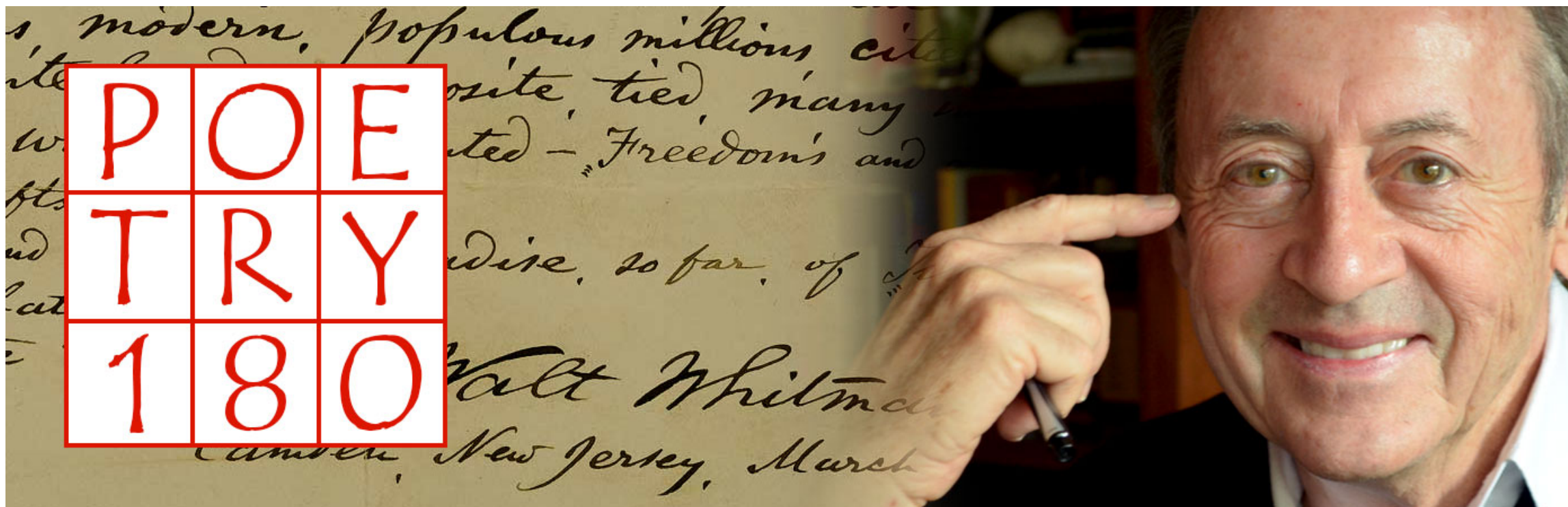
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Jane Kenyon

Jane Kenyon (1947–1995), former Poet Laureate of New Hampshire, was the author of four volumes of poetry. Her collected poems were published by Graywolf Press in 2007.

[More about Jane Kenyon »](#)

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