



Glazner performs poetry with Evedine Lovell. Photo credit: Michael Hagedorn

# Poetry for Life

## Lesson Plans

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### BACKGROUND

In 2021, in response to COVID-19, poets Gary Glazner, Fabu Carter and Tinker Schunan created and co-hosted the Poetry for Life (PFL), Call-in Show.

We addressed the problem of many elders not having strong computer skills by creating a weekly show they accessed by using their phones. By dialing the number they entered a conference call. The shows sounded like a radio talk show. We hosted 51 Poetry for Life shows over the year.

With Fabu Carter, past Poet Laureate of Madison, Wisconsin, we outreach to the African American Community and developed a curriculum focused on African American poets, especially those associated with the Harlem Renaissance.

We developed a Native American curriculum and those shows were hosted by Tinker Schuman, who is a Lac du Flambeau, beader, pipe-carrier, tribal elder, whose Ojibwe name is Eagle Woman.

More Information at: <http://www.alzpoetry.com/poetry-for-life-call-in-show>

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We thank them for their support and guidance.



# LESSON PLANS

## Poetry for Life

Time	Activities	Goals
(5 minutes)	<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Check-In</u></b></p> <p><b>Discussion</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ask each group member how they are doing?</li> <li>▪ Share anything they want to share.</li> <li>▪ You may when appropriate, rephrase and repeat back what the person has said to validate them.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Connection</li> <li>▪ Communication</li> </ul> <p>Encourage group members to speak.</p>
( 7 Minutes.)	<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Performance of Poems</u></b></p> <p>Call and Response– {teaching method}</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Say a line of the poem and have the group repeat or echo back the words in unison. Please see attached poems.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Collaboration</li> </ul> <p>Encourage group member to match your vocal tone.</p>
(10 minutes)	<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Discussion of Poems</u></b></p> <p>Lead group in talking about the poems. – {teaching method}</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Creation of Group Poem</u></b></p> <p>Shift from discussion to asking open-ended questions around a theme. {teaching method}</p> <p>Write down the group's answers to from the lines of the new poem.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Connection</li> <li>▪ Communication</li> <li>▪ Creation</li> </ul> <p>Make sure you ask each person to contribute to the poem.</p> <p>Praise the work. Tell them what a great poem they are creating.</p>
( 6 minutes)	<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Perform Newly Created Poem</u></b></p> <p>Call and Response – {teaching method}</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Use call and response to perform the poem.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Collaboration</li> <li>▪ Creation</li> </ul> <p>Have fun! Be playful!</p>
( 2 minutes)	<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Check-Out</u></b></p> <p>Thank the group for helping to create and perform the poems. – {teaching method}</p> <p>Ask each person how they are doing. Ask them to place come back.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Connection</li> <li>▪ Communication</li> </ul>

- This lesson plan is just a guideline, please feel free to adapt as needed. Please see the attached poems, sample questions, discussion points and group poems created as references. Our goal with the lesson plans was to create a sample African and Native American curriculum.

## Poetry for Life Lesson 1

### Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow, Shakespeare and On Aging, Maya Angelou

#### Speech: "Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow"

By William Shakespeare (*from Macbeth, spoken by Macbeth*)

Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow,  
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day,  
To the last syllable of recorded time;  
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools  
The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!  
Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player,  
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,  
And then is heard no more. It is a tale  
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,  
Signifying nothing.

#### On Aging Maya Angelou

When you see me sitting quietly,  
Like a sack left on the shelf,  
Don't think I need your chattering.  
I'm listening to myself.  
Hold! Stop! Don't pity me!  
Hold! Stop your sympathy!  
Understanding if you got it,  
Otherwise I'll do without it!  
When my bones are stiff and aching,  
And my feet won't climb the stair,  
I will only ask one favor:  
Don't bring me no rocking chair.  
When you see me walking, stumbling,  
Don't study and get it wrong.  
'Cause tired don't mean lazy  
And every goodbye ain't gone.  
I'm the same person I was back then,  
A little less hair, a little less chin,  
A lot less lungs and much less wind.  
But ain't I lucky I can still breathe in.

Discussion Points: We use aging, as inspiration What does the aging teach us?  
Ask follow-up questions in relationship to the participant's answers.

## On Aging (Poem created by the group in this lesson)

When I hear the word aging,  
I think gray hair and wisdom.  
(Sing) I say, wisdom! And gray hair  
And I can't do no jumping jacks!  
Except for the modified kind.  
Where I just move my index fingers.  
Like windshield wipers.  
All my bones!  
Are popping and cracking!  
I say, popping and cracking!  
Doing those jumping jacks.  
All of my bones!  
Are popping and cracking!  
Pop-dada-pop, pop! Pop! Pop!  
Aging teaches us to sit down and be quiet  
And let the holy spirit, tell you what to do.  
Let the holy spirit touch you, fill you,  
Because my bones are popping and cracking!  
The holy spirit says, "shhhhhh... sit down...  
Be quiet...  
We're going to cook up a holy stew  
Made of love and all the things you knew  
Got no hair, I just don't care,  
I got worldly knowledge.  
Live long and be wise  
Aging teaches us. Aging gives us worldly knowledge.  
At the school of hard knocks and the college of life  
We learn, we say live long and be wise and this group today  
Has expressed the beauty of aging  
And we say "tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow..."  
But I am lucky, I can still breathe in, amen!  
If I didn't think it was worth a try, I would roll up in a little ball and die.  
Because that's life!  
Bye! Bye!

## **Poetry for Life, Lesson 2**

Griot and Praise Poems.

### **Gwendolyn Brooks statement on Langston Hughes perform as poem and For Sister Gwen Brooks by Sonia Sanchez**

In 1986, African American poet Gwendolyn Brooks wrote of her life-long friend Langston Hughes:

WHAT was Langston Hughes?

An overwheeler.

Long ago I felt it was proper  
to say he had 'a long reach  
strong speech  
remedial fears  
muscular tears.'

I gave him titles: Helmsman, hatchet, headlight.  
See one restless in the exotic time! and ever,  
till the air is cured of its fever.

### **For Sister Gwen Brooks Sonia Sanchez**

you tell the stars  
don't be jealous of her light  
you tell the ocean,  
you call out to Olukun,  
to bring her always to  
safe harbor,  
for she is a holy one  
this woman twirling  
her emerald lariat  
you tell the night  
to move gently  
into morning so she's  
not startled,  
you tell the morning  
to ease her into a water  
fall of dreams  
for she is a holy one  
restringing her words  
from city to city  
so that we live and  
breathe and smile and  
breathe and love and

breathe her...  
this Gwensister called life.

### **Discussion Points**

A *griot* is a West African historian, storyteller, praise singer, poet or musician. The *griot* is often seen as a leader due to his or her position as an advisor to royal personages. As a result of the former of these two functions, he or she is sometimes called a bard. *Griots* originated in the 13th century in the Mande empire of Mali. For centuries, they have told and retold the history of the empire, keeping their stories and traditions alive.

Create poem by asking the group members to praise or say something they appreciate about the other members. Here is the poem the group created.

### **Praise Poem**

Life  
Oh, lord- thank you for another day.  
Morning comes.  
The life around us.  
The beauty of life.  
Full long life.  
To Mama J we say,  
Your gift is welcoming people.  
You are hospitable and kind.  
To Cathy we say  
Your voice is like a song.  
Beautiful and melodious.  
Fabu is like a bubbling spring  
Of Knowledge.  
We drink deep from her word.  
Cathy is like a bird.  
Singing and feeding,  
Her chirping babies  
In the nest.  
Mama J is a leader  
And a brave soul.  
Present and willing  
To try everything you  
Throw at her.  
Fabu is the mother spirit.  
Diane has a beautiful, strong voice.  
She is fun and loves music.  
We love her laughter.  
We offer praise and blessings to each other.

### Poetry for Life Lesson 3

“Daffodils,” Wordsworth and “Bouquet,” Lucille Clifton

#### Daffodils

William Wordsworth\* (edited)

I wandered lonely as a cloud  
That floats on high over valleys and hills,

When all at once I saw a crowd,  
A host, of golden daffodils;

Beside the lake, beneath the trees,  
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

And then my heart with pleasure fills,  
And dances with the daffodils.

#### BOUQUET

Lucille Clifton

i have gathered my losses  
into a spray of pain;  
my parents, my brother,  
my husband, my innocence  
all clustered together  
durable as daisies.  
now i add you,  
little love, little  
flower,  
who walked unannounced  
into my life  
and almost bloomed there.

#### Discussion Points

- Talk about Romance poet and how they saw the world through nature. How they loved words and language, especially to express their inner thoughts and emotions. How they saw the world through a “romantic,” lens, both in love poems and nature poems.
- Talk about how contemporary poetry and poets like Clifton, also love words and language, they often bring a more realistic than romantic view of the world.
- In her poem “Bouquet,” she acknowledges the loss that is a part of life.
- Talk about how life and the world have room for both romance and realism, how we might have needs for both at various times and how being able to hold these twin thoughts in our minds is a powerful tool to help us live our best lives.

## Poetry for Life Lesson 4

“April Rain Song,” Langston Hughes and “The Hill We Climb,” Amanda Gorman\*

### April Rain Song

#### Langston Hughes

Let the rain kiss you!  
Let the rain fall upon your head with silver liquid drops.  
Let the rain sing you a lullaby.  
The rain makes still pools on the sidewalk.  
The rain makes running pools in the gutter.  
The rain plays a little sleep song on our roof at night.  
And I love the rain!

### “The Hill We Climb,” Call and Response Section

We will rebuild, reconcile and recover.  
And every known nook of our nation and  
every corner called our country,  
our people diverse and beautiful will emerge,  
battered and beautiful.  
When day comes we step out of the shade,  
afire and unafraid,  
the new dawn blooms as we free it.  
For there is always light,  
if only we're brave enough to see it.  
If only we're brave enough to be it.

### Gorman Discussion Points

Throughout Gorman references to earlier writing, speeches, poems and songs.

- For example, when Gorman writes, “a time where a skinny Black girl descended from slaves and raised by a single mother can dream of becoming president,” she calls back to Obama’s keynote address at the 2004 Democratic National Convention.
- When Gorman writes, “Everyone shall sit under their own vine, and fig tree, and no one shall make them afraid,” she calls out to both the Bible and to a verse that Washington liked, and that the Hamilton character sings in the musical.
- She invokes Maya Angelou, “Still I Rise.” She shifts the “I” to “We,” in a simple yet brilliant rhetorical flourish that then includes us all.
- Elizabeth Alexander powerfully notes that the line, “‘If we merge mercy with might, and might with right,’ is straight from the black sermonic tradition, that permeates so much of African American public speaking.”



- Last, I want to bring attention to the strength of performed, recited, spoken or oral poetry, to be in the moment in its totality, here I mean, her sun-colored coat, the pride she shows in her face as the poem builds and she settles into the words, that millions listen, through television and social media, that behind her are the political elite, the Capitol Building and in front of her the future, she calls us into. All those elements Gorman fuses with the poem. She brings forth the art of poetry.

### **"The Hill We Climb," Amanda Gorman\* (Excerpted)**

When day comes we ask ourselves,  
where can we find light in this never-ending shade?  
The loss we carry,  
a sea we must wade.

We've braved the belly of the beast,  
We've learned that quiet isn't always peace,

...

We the successors of a country and a time  
where a skinny Black girl  
descended from slaves and raised by a single mother  
can dream of becoming president  
only to find herself reciting for one.

...

And so we lift our gazes not to what stands between us,  
but what stands before us.  
We close the divide because we know, to put our future first,  
we must first put our differences aside.

We lay down our arms  
so we can reach out our arms  
to one another.

...

Scripture tells us to envision  
that everyone shall sit under their own vine and fig tree  
and no one shall make them afraid.

If we're to live up to our own time,  
then victory won't lie in the blade.

But in all the bridges we've made,  
that is the promise to glade,  
the hill we climb.

If only we dare.

...

For while we have our eyes on the future,  
history has its eyes on us.

...

We will not be turned around  
or interrupted by intimidation,  
because we know our inaction and inertia  
will be the inheritance of the next generation.  
Our blunders become their burdens.  
But one thing is certain,  
If we merge mercy with might,  
and might with right,  
then love becomes our legacy,  
and change our children's birthright.  
So let us leave behind a country  
better than the one we were left with.  
Every breath from my bronze-pounded chest,  
we will raise this wounded world into a wondrous one.  
We will rise from the gold-limbed hills of the west.  
We will rise from the windswept northeast,  
where our forefathers first realized revolution.  
We will rise from the lake-rimmed cities of the midwestern states.  
We will rise from the sunbaked south.  
We will rebuild, reconcile and recover.  
And every known nook of our nation and  
every corner called our country,  
our people diverse and beautiful will emerge,  
battered and beautiful.  
When day comes we step out of the shade,  
aflame and unafraid,  
the new dawn blooms as we free it.  
For there is always light,  
if only we're brave enough to see it.  
If only we're brave enough to be it.

## Poetry for Life, Lesson 5

### [I Saw Myself] By Lew Welch and This Body II by Renée Watson

#### [I Saw Myself] By Lew Welch

I saw myself  
a ring of bone  
in the clear stream  
of all of it

and vowed,  
always to be open to it  
that all of it  
might flow through

and then heard  
“ring of bone” where  
ring is what a

bell does

#### This Body II by Renée Watson

My body is  
perfect and  
imperfect and  
Black and  
girl and  
big and  
thick hair and  
short legs and  
scraped knee and  
healed scar and  
heart beating and  
hands that hold and  
voice that bellows and  
feet that dance and  
arms that embrace and  
my momma’s eyes and  
my daddy’s smile and  
my grandma’s hope and

my body is masterpiece and  
my body is mine.

Discussion Points: Inspired by the positivity of the poems, ask each person to describe their body. Below is the poem the group created:

### **Body**

My body encases my soul.  
I love my body.  
It is different from a body of water  
It is the human form,  
The soul of the body.  
We are given this human body,  
This life, soul and spirit.  
It keeps us connected  
Until it is our time  
To go onto the spirit world.  
We are living a good life.  
Let my soul lead my spirit  
To be better and better.

**Poetry for Life Lesson 6**  
**Eagle Poem by Joy Harjo**

To pray you open your whole self  
To sky, to earth, to sun, to moon  
To one whole voice that is you.  
And know there is more  
That you can't see, can't hear;  
Can't know except in moments  
Steadily growing, and in languages  
That aren't always sound but other  
Circles of motion.  
Like eagle that Sunday morning  
Over Salt River. Circled in blue sky  
In wind, swept our hearts clean  
With sacred wings.  
We see you, see ourselves and know  
That we must take the utmost care  
And kindness in all things.  
Breathe in, knowing we are made of  
All this, and breathe, knowing  
We are truly blessed because we  
Were born, and die soon within a  
True circle of motion,  
Like eagle rounding out the morning  
Inside us.  
We pray that it will be done  
In beauty.  
In beauty.

We create a poem by discussing the poem and asking questions around the themes of eagles and flying.

**Eagle**

When I think of an eagle,  
I think- free.  
Strong soaring free.  
You see them from far away.  
Being a bird that is more than others.  
A messenger.  
Seeing an eagle is a blessing.  
Fluttering wings up and down.  
Eagles teach us independence.

They are resourceful and determined.  
Eagles teach us how to look at things from up high.  
A gift of an eagle feather in a ceremony is an honor.

## Poetry for Life, Lesson 7

### Prayer for Words, N. Scott Momaday

#### Prayer for Words by N. Scott Momaday

*(My voice restore for me.) -Navajo*

Here is the wind bending the reeds westward,  
The patchwork of morning on gray moraine:

Had I words I could tell of origin,  
Of God's hands bloody with birth at first light,  
Of my thin squeals in the heat of his breath,  
Of the taste of being, the bitterness,  
And scents of camas root and chokecherries.

And, God, if my mute heart expresses me,  
I am the rolling thunder and the bursts  
Of torrents upon rock, the whispering  
Of old leaves, the silence of deep canyons.  
I am the rattle of mortality.

I could tell of the splintered sun. I could  
Articulate the night sky, had I words.

We create a poem by discussing the poem and asking questions around the theme of what we are thankful for. Here is the group poem:

#### **Blessing**

I am thankful for ancestral women.  
For honor and dignity.  
Thankful for the breath  
The creator gave me  
On this day.  
I am thankful for the beautiful moon  
Shinning at night  
For my life, family and friends.  
Thankful that I have always  
Been loved in my life.  
I am thankful for this day.  
Thankful for the creator god  
Giving us blessing.

## Poetry for Life, Lesson 8

### Sonnet 18, Shakespeare and Poem for My Love, June Jordan

#### Sonnet 18: Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?

By William Shakespeare

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?  
Thou art more lovely and more temperate:  
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,  
And summer's lease hath all too short a date;  
Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,  
And often is his gold complexion dimm'd;  
And every fair from fair sometime declines,  
By chance or nature's changing course untrimm'd;  
But thy eternal summer shall not fade,  
Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st;  
Nor shall death brag thou wander'st in his shade,  
When in eternal lines to time thou grow'st:  
    So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,  
    So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.

#### Poem for My Love

By June Jordan

How do we come to be here next to each other  
in the night  
Where are the stars that show us to our love  
inevitable  
Outside the leaves flame usual in darkness  
and the rain  
falls cool and blessed on the holy flesh  
the black men waiting on the corner for  
a womanly mirage  
I am amazed by peace  
It is this possibility of you  
asleep  
and breathing in the quiet air

Create Poem We use love, as inspiration. What does the love teach us? Ask follow-up questions in relationship to the participant's answers.



## Love

Bells, bells, bells,  
The ringing and swinging of the bells, bells, bells.\*  
Love teaches us  
To not be so concerned with ourselves.  
To think twice, before we speak.  
To show kindness.  
Love teaches us kindness, softness,  
The embrace of family.  
It was so hard this last year,  
To not be able to hug each other.  
To feel that kindness, that softness.  
When we think of only ourselves,  
We make a very small package.  
But when we think of others  
And show kindness and softness,  
We make a great gift indeed.  
When I hug my sons,  
They say, "Oh Mom!  
Don't you hug my neck so tight!"  
I say, "I gotta hug your neck tight.  
I'm getting enough for tomorrow  
And the day after."  
Love teaches us, tenderness,  
Heart and soul.  
Open up our hearts.  
Un-consuming about every little thing.  
Love teaches us softness.  
(Sing) Love teaches us softness, softness, softness, laughter...  
We say to love,  
The bells of church  
Are calling our hearts.  
That's your mother calling you,  
Through the church bells.  
Those darling buds of May  
On this beautiful May day.  
Singing out,  
(Sing) Bells, bells, bells...  
We say to love, thank you, for all that you teach us.

\*Quote from "Bells," by Edgar Allan Poe

## List of Poems Used During the PFL Shows

"Aedh Wishes for the Cloths of Heaven" W.B. Yeats

"Bleezer's Ice Cream" -Jack Prelutsky and Knoxville Tennessee by Nikki Giovanni

"Daffodils," Wordsworth and "Bouquet," Lucille Clifton

"maggie and milly and molly and may" EE Cummings and Sea Calm, Langston Hughes

[I Saw Myself] By Lew Welch and This Body II by Renée Watson

5 Haiku of Issa and Richard Wright.

A River Runs Through It by Norman Maclean and The Negro Speaks of Rivers By Langston Hughes

Aedh Wishes for the Cloths of Heaven by W. B. Yeats and Lift Ev'ry Voice and Sing By James Weldon Johnson

Afternoon on a Hill, Edna Saint Vincent Millay and Lines to a Nasturtium by Anne Spencer

Ars Poetica by Aracelis Girmay and Ars Poetica #100: I Believe By Elizabeth Alexander

Autumn by Emily Dickinson and Merry Autumn by Paul Laurence Dunbar

Dance Me to the End of Love by Leonard Cohen and I Want to Write by Margaret Walker.

Down-home boy, Waring Cuney and Say Grace, Rita Dove

Dunbar, Anne Spencer, On the Grasshopper and Cricket, Keats

Eagle Poem by Joy Harjo and original poem by Tinker

Eagle Poem by Joy Harjo and Tinker read an original poem

First Fig, Edna St. Vincent Millay and homage to my hips, Lucille Clifton

For Sister Gwen Brooks by Sonia Sanchez and WHAT was Langston Hughes? Gwendolyn Brooks

Haiku by Buson, Three Haiku by Joel Dias Porter (DJ Renegade)

Harlem, Dreams and Poem #3 Dream Dust and Dream Boogie: Variation by Langston Hughes

Hills Brothers Coffee by Luci Tapahonso and original poem by Tinker

How Do I Love Thee? (Sonnet 43) by Elizabeth Barrett Browning and Love Song for Alex, 1979 by Margaret Walker.

How To Eat a Poem by Eve Merriam and We Real Cool By Gwendolyn Brooks

Ickle Me, Pickle Me, Tickle Me Too, Shel Silverstein, Earth, I thank you and He Said by Anne Spencer

If-ing by Langston Hughes and I Am Looking At Music – Nina's Poem, by Sonia Sanchez

Kwanzaa by Alfonso Siverls and original poem by Fabu.

Marshlands By Emily Pauline Johnson and original poem by Tinker.

My Father's Song by Simon Ortiz and an original poem by Tinker

No Images and Guitar Music by Waring Cuney

Original poem by Glazner "Maps and Wings," and Dustbowl by Langston Hughes and section from John Steinbeck from Grapes of Wrath describing the dust bowl.

Perfect Pitch By Peter Pereira and Poem for Ella Fitzgerald by Sonia Sanchez

Perhaps the World Ends Here By Joy Harjo and original poem by Tinker.

Prayer for Words, N. Scott Momaday and Original Poem by Tinker

Rain by Hone Tuwhare and Woman Work By Maya Angelou

Song: "Full fathom five thy father lies" By William Shakespeare and September's Song, a Poem in Seven Days - Lucille Clifton

Sonnet 18, Shakespeare Poem for My Love, June Jordan

Speech: "All the world's a stage" By William Shakespeare and

Stanzas from The Fledgling Bard and the Poetry Society by George Reginald Margetson

Sweetgrass Is Around Her by Salli M. Kawennotakie Benedict and original poem by Tinker.

The Backlash Blues, Langston Hughes

The Citys Love by Claude McKay and The New Colossus by Emma Lazarus

The Eagle by Alfred, Lord Tennyson, Caged Bird by Maya Angelou

The Echoing Green, Blake, In Time of Silver Rain, Langston Hughes

The Lake Isle of Innisfree By William Butler Yeats and Blessing the Boats by Lucielle Clifton

The Lake Isle of Innisfree by William Butler Yeats and Southern Love by Fabu Carter

The Owl and the Pussy-Cat By Edward Lear (Excerpt) and Fly Me to the Moon Composer and Lyricist, Bart Howard and Testimonial By Rita Dove

The Song of Wandering Aengus by W. B. Yeats (last stanza) and Beauty That is Never Old By James Weldon Johnson

The Tropics in New York By Claude McKay and inter Morning Poem By Ogden Nash

Those Winter Sundays By Robert Hayden and Father's Song By Gregory Orr

Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow, Shakespeare and On Aging, Maya Angelou

Two Evening Moons By Federico García Lorca and Full Moon By Robert Hayden

*“To me and I think to many people, poetry brings out the best in us. For people like us with Alzheimer’s, we get nervous, and poetry helps calm us. You ask us to do things.”*  
-Martha, from 80th Street  
Residence in New York

### Poetry Session Tips

- Have everyone in a circle.
- Greet people, shake their hands tell them you will be performing and creating poems with them.
- While you may be seated during the session you may also move closer to people and kneel so you are not always standing over them when talking
- You may also choose to stand and recite a poem to give it emphasis.
- Ask permission before asking a question. “May I ask you a question please?”
- Thank people for their creativity and performance.

### Overview:

The APP engages the participants in the recitation of classic poems and creation of new poems. The session leader uses a call and response technique; reciting a line from a well known poem and coaches the group to echo the line. Coupling this performance technique with an open ended question enables a group poem to be composed based on the participants’ responses. The hour long sessions divide into 30-minutes of performing poems and 30-minutes of creating a new poem. Each session ends with the performance of the new work.

**Elements of performing poetry:** projection, articulation, pacing of the recitation, dynamics, and bringing out the emotional content of the poem.

# Alzheimer’s Poetry Project

Gary Glazner, Project Director  
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## Building a Poetry Program

### Call and Response:

Recite a line of high energy poetry. Have the group echo you. This is an aerobic activity that helps to build and hold attention.

### Discussion Starter:

Use poems as a flash point for discussions. Build questions based on the subject matter of the poem. Reinforce the answers by reciting the poem using the call and response technique.

### Props- Use items people can smell, feel, hold, taste:

Build a program around the props  
Tree poems: Bring in leaves and branches  
Flowers poems: Bring in flowers  
Sports poems: Nerf ball to play catch

### Create a Group Poem:

Use the simple prompt of asking an open ended question. Choose a classic poem as the model and then base the prompt on the subject matter of the poem. For example “Daffodils,” by Wordsworth. Ask what spring smells like, tastes like, sounds like, looks like and feels like. The groups’ answers become the lines of the poem.

## Poetry Tips

Do you have to use new poems for each workshop? There is great benefit gained from repeating poems from workshop to workshop. We see the participants build up performance skills and show evidence of life-long learning.

Alternate between different styles of performance and types of poems. Try a high energy, rhythmic poem, followed by a funny poem, and then a love poem.

*“I was truly amazed at how the APP was able to get our entire group of 20 residents active, giving ideas, engaging in conversation, and repeating back the poems for a full hour. That is one feat that can prove challenging, however, the enthusiasm, energy, and ease that is brought by the poet, and transferred to the group is phenomenal!”*

-Angela Paoletti, MT, Attic Angel Place