

April is National Poetry Month

By Kathryn Tatnall, Youth Services Librarian

Did you know that April 2021 is the 25th annual celebration of National Poetry Month? I have to confess in all my years working in a library, sixteen this year, I did not. I assumed that we had been celebrating poetry since I first fell in love with it in sixth grade. I spent my children's elementary school years, about twenty of them, reading and putting together anthologies of favorite poems for school. The truth is in 1995 the Academy of American Poets along with a group of publishers, booksellers, librarians, literary organizations, poets and teachers convened to discuss the need to increase awareness and appreciation of poetry in the United States. Encouraged by the success of Black History Month and Women's History Month, the group launched the first celebration in 1996. Today, through the Academy of American Poets at poets.org, you can learn all about the month's celebration, find local events, and discover educational resources for classroom celebrations. You can find specific poets or browse your favorite style of poetry, and sign up to receive a poem a day in your inbox.

Poetry is an art form that predates the written word. It was sung as hymns and chants. It was used to remind us of who we are, where we come from, and how we lived. The earliest poems called "epics" were written about journeys and adversity such as "The Epic of Gilgamesh" and "The Odyssey".

Modern poetry includes so many types of poetry including; free verse, sonnets, lyric, odes, or haiku. There is something for everyone. One of my favorite poets is Emily Dickinson. She is an American poet who was born in Amherst, Massachusetts. After her death her family found forty hand-bound volumes of poetry totaling almost 1800 poems. Her first book was published in 1890, four years after her death. "Hope is a Thing with Feathers" is one of her poems that always brightens my day.

Hope is a thing with feathers
That perches in the soul,
And sings the tune without words,
And never stops at all,

And sweetest in the gale is heard;
And sore must be the storm
That could abash the little bird
That kept so many warm.

I heard it in the chilliest land,
And on the strangest sea;
Yet never in extremity,
It asked a crumb of me.

Poetry for children comes in all different styles and a mix of periods or movements. Classic anthologies for children are filled with Robert Frost, Emily Barrett Browning, and Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Those are the poets who filled my childhood but my kids grew up on Shel Silverstein and Jack Prelutsky. Both poets write about the world from a child's point of view which is usually incredibly funny and sometimes very poignant. *Falling Up* and *A Light in the Attic* are two of my favorite books in the Shel Silverstein collection. Jack Prelutsky's *A Pizza as Big as the Sun* and *It's Raining Pigs and Noodles* are sure to bring a smile to your face.

Celebrate National Poetry month with us by checking out all the wonderful poetry books we have here at the library, with so much to choose from we are sure to have something you will enjoy.