

# National Poetry Month Celebrations Go Online

Open mics, workshops and other gatherings have gone digital because of the coronavirus. Here are some of the goings-on, and archives to check out.

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April is National Poetry Month. Even though writers and audiences can't gather in person because of the coronavirus, verse is happening on Facebook or Zoom, in people's notebooks and in our earbuds. Some highlights are a sound artist who is making an audio collage of haikus about the pandemic, weekly book release readings from Copper Canyon Press, and the option to book a live video call with a poet through the Poetry Society of New York.

Poetry was the first way I fell in love with words. Before journalism was even on my radar, I found comfort in the complexity of other people's line breaks, and all the mysteries that such small amounts of text could contain.

Now, in a moment of international uncertainty, when we can't plan for the future, or even visualize exactly how the world might change in the aftermath of the pandemic, groups are gathering across the country and around the world to celebrate stanzas and all the things that poetry can do in a time of crisis. Here's how you — a poetry lover or someone brand-new to the art form — can tune in and take part.

## Open Mics

**Nuyorican Poets Cafe** offers online open mics via Zoom on Monday nights.

**Women Writers in Bloom Poetry Salon**, a literary salon based in New York City and modeled after salons of the Harlem Renaissance (and founded by the poet and author JP Howard), is hosting an open mic over Zoom on April 18.

**Self-ish**, an open mic for women, trans and nonbinary folks that started in Paris, is being held on Zoom.

**Wednesday Night Poetry**, an open mic in Arkansas that has been running since 1989, is hosting a virtual open mic on Facebook weekly throughout the pandemic. Poets can submit a video (three minutes or less) to be included.

## Readings



Monica Sok in a screenshot from a poetry reading via Copper Canyon Press.

**Copper Canyon Press**, a nonprofit, independent poetry publisher based in Port Townsend, Wash., is live-streaming book readings every week in April, including work by Leila Chatti, Philip Metres and Heather McHugh.

**Bookshop Santa Cruz**, an independent store, has morphed its Tuesday night readings to Zoom calls, which include Patrice Vecchione, the author of “My Shouting, Shattered, Whispering Voice: A Guide to Writing Poetry and Speaking Your Truth,” on April 7, and Ellen Bass, the author of “Indigo,” on April 21.

**Poetry Is Bread** is a series of readings on Facebook, including Oliver de la Paz and Dawn Potter. The videos are organized by Tina Cane, poet laureate of Rhode Island.

A virtual reading party, including poems by Monica Prince, Jody Chan and J’Lyn Chapman, will be hosted by the experimental poetry and prose publisher **PANK** on Zoom on April 9.

**Green Mountains Review** and **The Vermont School** have put together social distance readings, each Wednesday and Sunday, meant to replace events canceled by the coronavirus. The pop-up series is organized by Didi Jackson and Major Jackson (who are wife and husband), Kerrin McCadden and Elizabeth Powell, and appears on the Green Mountains Review website.

## Classes, Workshops and Prompts

Rachel McKibbens, who has been posting prompts on Twitter to help people jump-start their writing. Piper Austin

**Bowery Poetry** is running Wednesday Writing Sessions on Instagram Live. Each week, a different artist offers a prompt for writers to respond to. The April 8 session will be hosted by the poet and performer Mayda Del Valle.

**The Poetry Society of New York** started Poet Stream, a service where people can book a live video call with a poet and receive a one-on-one poetry reading.

**Rachel McKibbens**, a two-time poetry fellow for the New York Foundation and the organizer of Poetry & Pie Night in Rochester, N.Y., has posted a list of prompts on Twitter to help people jump-start their own writing.

**Heather Lang-Cassera**, the poet laureate of Clark County, Nev., is posting daily prompts on her Twitter account, which writers can use however they like to start writing a poem.

**Rock Your Rights**, the youth portal of a human rights education-focused nonprofit, is posting prompts each weekday, which anyone under the age of 21 can respond to with poems.

**The Word Barn**, a barn that hosts art, literature and music events in Exeter, N.H., is hosting weekly writing workshops on Thursday evenings on Zoom.

**The Downtown Writers Center** in Syracuse, N.Y., is migrating its spring schedule of creative writing workshops and classes, including poetry, online.

**Poetry and Chill OKC**, which runs open mic events and workshops in Oklahoma City, is hosting poetry workshops on Sundays on Instagram Live.

**National Poetry Month: Dirty Thirty** is a private Facebook group in which nearly 400 members challenge one another to write a poem a day. Anyone is welcome to join. The moderators post readings and prompts each morning.

**The Bridge Progressive Arts Initiative** in Charlottesville, Va., is hosting #QuarantineHaikus, a series of crowdsourced, uplifting haikus to help people get through the coronavirus. Some poems will be aired on WTJU, a radio station licensed to the University of Virginia.

**The Iowa Writers Workshop** has past massive open online courses available free online. Topics include Power of the Pen: Identities and Social Issues in Poetry and Plays, Whitman's Civil War: Writing and Imaging Loss, Death, and Disaster and How Writers Write Poetry.

## Archives

The 92nd Street Y's on-demand readings include one by the United States poet laureate, Joy Harjo. Valerie Macon/Agence France-Presse — Getty Images

**The Woodberry Poetry Room**, a special collections reading room and audiovisual archive at Harvard, has more than 600 recordings of poetry readings from the 1930s to the present. Its YouTube channel includes more than 100 videos of readings since 2012.

**92nd Street Y** in Manhattan is hosting Poetry Center Online, an on-demand series of readings, including a recording of Robert Frost from 1952, and Aracelis Girmay and the United States poet laureate, Joy Harjo, from last year.

**Ecotone Magazine**, a publication of place-based writing produced by faculty members and students in the M.F.A. program at the University of North Carolina Wilmington, has temporarily removed the pay wall for the four most recent issues.

**Apollo Theater** and **The Climate Museum** hosted Climate Speaks, a spoken-word youth poetry performance, last year. You can listen to those poems on Grist.

**Poetry Unbound** is a podcast hosted by On Being Studios in which the poet Pádraig Ó Tuama guides listeners through a single poem.

## Festivals

The **Loft Literary Center** in Minneapolis is holding its festival Wordplay online this year, from April 7 to May 9.

**Sierra Poetry Festival** in California will be happening on April 18.

Attend the **Sarah Lawrence College Poetry Festival** on Zoom, the weekend of April 24-26.

## Collaborative Poems

**Alan Nakagawa**, a sound artist, is accepting haikus about the coronavirus pandemic for a sound collage he will release at the Orange County Museum of Art on April 23.

**Emotive Fruition** pairs poets with Broadway, film and television actors who perform poems live. The Poem at Home series uses this method on Fridays throughout April via Zoom.

## And There Is More

The City Lights bookstore in San Francisco is featuring a daily post on Tumblr, asking authors how they're doing, and what they're reading. Jason Henry for The New York Times

**The Washington Post** and **Library of Congress** are putting out a weekly video in which poet laureates reflect on the subject of home. The series will include Ms. Harjo on April 10, Robert Pinsky on April 17, Natasha Trethewey on April 24 and Juan Felipe Herrera on May 1.

**The Visible Poetry Project** is releasing one short, poem-inspired film for each day in April.

**The Academy of American Poets** is using the hashtag #ShelterInPoems to invite readers to share poems that help them find courage, solace or energy — and a few words about why.

**City Lights** in San Francisco is featuring a daily #SignalingThruTheFlames post on Tumblr, asking authors how they're doing, what they're reading and to offer advice or encouragement for the community.

**The Dream Delivery Service** is delivering poems this month in Hattiesburg, Miss.