



A message from **THE PRESIDENT**

APRIL IS NATIONAL POETRY MONTH!

Created in 1996 by the Academy of American Poets, National Poetry Month celebrates the role poetry plays in the life of the nation.

Poetry captures what is essential in us, the joys and sorrows of our brief existence on this planet. It puts into words the evanescent, the transitory, the fleeting – and preserves those moments forever. We know what the people of ancient Greece thought and felt because we have the poems of Pindar and Sappho; ancient Persia (now Iran), because of Rumi, Hafez, and Khayyam; Elizabethan England, because of Shakespeare and Donne.

Poetry can also be a powerful force for social change. It offers a potent means of expressing a given poet's circumstances by conveying the lived experience of oppression, injustice, and the desire for freedom and equality. Nikki Giovanni, Julia de Burgos, Gabriela Mistral, and others who have written so eloquently of what they observed and felt, of what (and whom) they loved, of what they saw as right and what they most definitely considered wrong. It's no coincidence that poets from Ovid to Allen Ginsberg and beyond have been banned for their candor and their insistence on the validity of their individual truths.

Poetry can move us. It can inspire us. It can make us laugh. It can change the way we see ourselves – and, therefore, the way we see others. Such understanding and empathy are more important than ever these days; we would do well to cultivate those qualities in ourselves and applaud them when we find them in the world.

As the days lengthen and winter's grasp is broken, I'd like to share one of Rabindranath Tagore's poems from his 1913 collection *Gitanjali: Song Offerings*, number 44:

*This is my delight, thus to wait and watch at the wayside where shadow
chases light and the rain comes in the wake of summer.*

*Messengers, with tidings from unknown skies, greet me and speed along
the road. My heart is glad within, and the breath of the passing breeze
is sweet.*

*From dawn till dusk I sit here before my door, and I know that of a
sudden the happy moment will arrive when I shall see.*

*In the meantime I smile and I sing all alone. In the meanwhile the air is
filling with the perfume of promise.*

May your month – and your life – be filled with poetry and the sweet perfume of promise.

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