

POETRY UNITES AMERICA 2020

The POETRY UNITES KENTUCKY CONTEST under the patronage of Jeff Worley, the State Poet Laureate of Kentucky is open to all state residents

Kentucky is the third state, after New York and Kansas, to be featured in the series: POETRY UNITES AMERICA.

Jeff Worley, the Kentucky Poet Laureate, is pleased to announce a contest for the best short essay about a favorite poem. The contest is open to all Kentucky residents.

Jeff Worley issues the following call to Kentucky residents:

"Kentucky has always been rich in stories even before statehood when it was the new American frontier in the 18th century.

An ongoing film project, called Poetry Unites America, has picked Kentucky for its next film in the series—Poetry Unites Kentucky. Poetry Unites New York and Poetry Unites Kansas have been completed and can be found on the web.

Any Kentucky resident can submit an essay, a personal story, focused on a poem that you love, a poem that has changed your life. How did you find this poem? Why did it affect you so intensely? How has it mattered in your life?

Personal essays should be limited to 600 words and should be mailed to poetryunites@gmail.com by September 5th. Please type your story if at all possible.

The poet Jim Wayne Miller called Kentucky "a writerly state," and for good reason: our state has inspired generations of writers and authors.

There is no submission fee for this contest. Four winners, selected by a panel of award-winning writers, will be chosen for film segments in Poetry Unites Kentucky."

Let us hear from you!

Jeff Worley

Four winners of the best essays will be featured in the Poetry Unites Kentucky 30-minute unscripted documentary film, which will be posted on several websites: www.poetryunites.com, nywift.org, Poets.org, and PBS Allarts.org, (TBC).

The winners will be guests of honor at a celebratory ZOOM film screening in January 2021.

The film is expected to be broadcast on the PBS AllArts local channels (NYC), will be also pitched to Kentucky local TV stations, and will be available for any educational purposes for free.

POETRY UNITES AMERICA 2020

Poetry Unites Contest Guidelines

Participants are asked to write a two-page (or 600-word) piece about their favorite poem and about its importance in their lives. The selected poem should be by a published poet. The contest participant's essay can be in any style or form, but the piece should touch upon the following three questions:

1. What's your favorite poem, who wrote it, and when did you read it for the first time?
2. Why is this poem important to you?
3. Please provide some information about yourself: what does your day look like, what are your dreams, what do you expect from life?

The jury, headed by the State Poet Laureate of Kentucky, Jeff Worley, will select eight winners and each of their essays will be awarded a Certificate of Merit. The four winners will be selected by the film director to be featured in 30-minute documentary.

All winners will be invited to a celebratory film screening in January 2021. Travel within Kentucky and hotel accommodation (if needed) in Louisville will be covered.

The Jury Members:

1. Jeff Worley, Kentucky State Poet Laureate, 2019-2021
2. Edward Hirsch, Poet and President of Guggenheim Foundation
3. Hannah Drake, Poet, columnist, writer, lecturer at the University of Louisville
4. Shelda Hale, Lexington-based poet, writer, serves on the advisory board for the Kentucky Women Writers Conference, member of The Kentucky State Poetry Society advisory board, and a board member of the Kentucky Poetry Association
5. Ewa Zadrzynska, writer and filmmaker TBD

Submissions should be made electronically, and should be emailed to: poetryunites@gmail.com

The deadline for submissions is **September 5th, 2020**

Contest winners will be announced at the end of September and production of films of the four winners will commence. The production process will conclude in January, and the films will premiere at the celebratory film screening in Louisville.

Background of the POETRY UNITES AMERICA Series

The Poetry Unites program was developed and produced by Ewa Zadrzynska, a U.S. and Polish citizen for the Evens Foundation in Europe. It was inspired by the Favorite Poem project created by the US Poet Laureate, Robert Pinsky. With his blessing and with the financial help of the Evens Foundation, she started the program in Poland in 2006.

The series' films evolved to be more about people, poetry and places, and their primary goal from the very beginning has been to unite people, using the harmonizing power of poetry while promoting reading and writing.

POETRY UNITES AMERICA 2020

The Poetry Unites contest, in selecting the protagonists of the films, added a strong educational value to the program and broadened its reach. The contests were widely advertised by libraries, media and received the support of the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Culture. Many entrants said that the contest motivated them to look for their favorite poem.

The project in the very beginning consisted of the production of a series of five-minute films, shown on television, the Internet and in cinemas, in each of which a particular poetry lover speaks about his or her life in the context of presenting a favorite poem. Initial broadcasts began on Polish National Television in February 2006 and have been continued once a week, through 2013. Screenings of the films took place in France, Italy, Belgium, Poland, Israel, Hungary, and the United States.

Over the course of seven years, the public broadcasting network in Poland presented the series of 95 short films on Polish, French, Italian, German, Bulgarian, Belgian, American, Israeli poetry lovers from the ages of 6 to 94 to its millions of viewers.

Zadrzynska said, “The project, which celebrates the harmonizing power of poetry, introduces the medium as an instrument of mutual understanding in the world. The goal is to unite, promoting poetry and poetry readers in the hope that their enthusiasm will be contagious to thousands, if not millions, of others.”

Ewa Zadrzynska came up with the idea of adding the contest to the project and in 2008 the first contest opened to students of all grades was launched in Poland.

The contest became an annual event in Poland. In 2012 the contest was extended to other European countries. So far, the contest has been held twice in Germany, five times in Poland, and once in Bulgaria.

The State Minister of Culture and Media in Germany, Bernd Neumann, and the Polish Minister of Culture, Bogdan Zdrojewski, were supportive of the contests and granted it their personal patronage.

POETRY UNITES AMERICA

In 2014 the Poetry Unites project was brought to the USA and was renamed POETRY UNITES AMERICA. The first episode, Poetry Unites New York, was produced in 2014 with Edward Hirsch and Robert Pinsky serving as judges in the contest jury. Marie Howe was head of the jury.

In 2017 the Poetry Unites Kansas contest and films were produced, and the website for the project, www.poetryunites.com, was created.

In 2018 the two 30-minute documentary films, Poetry Unites New York and Poetry Unites Kansas, were edited and in April, 2019 the first episode of the series was premiered on the PBS AllArts Channels, including allarts.org. <https://allarts.wliw.org/programs/all-arts-documentary-selects/poetry-unites-new-york-bwhbgk/>.

POETRY UNITES NEW YORK
<https://youtu.be/ziNjJTLrmj4>

POETRY UNITES KANSAS
<https://youtu.be/LjHK2MNRkHE>