

Luminous Things: The Amazing Poetry of Women Poets Laureate

homage to my hips

by Lucille Clifton, Poet Laureate, Maryland, 1979-1985

these hips are big hips
they need space to
move around in.
they don't fit into little
petty places. these hips
are free hips.
they don't like to be held back.
these hips have never been enslaved,
they go where they want to go
they do what they want to do.
these hips are mighty hips.
these hips are magic hips.
i have known them
to put a spell on a man and
spin him like a top!

We will explore the poetry of women Poets Laureate of the US, and selected, similarly recognized women poets of Canada, Ireland, England, Scotland, and New Zealand. From the personal to the political, from the celebratory to the sad, from the real to the surreal and the mysterious—it's all there in the wonderful poems of these award-winning poets.

Text: No text. The coordinators will provide a list of poets along with links and suggestions.

Format: Discussion. Participants will select a poet and her poems from a suggested list or from their own research and give a *short* presentation on the poet along with a few questions about the poems for discussion. Coordinators provide guides on reading and enjoying poetry.

Coordinators: Linda Shmoon, Chris Rose, Karen Stein. Chris initiated LLC's poetry discussion group at Providence's Rochambeau Library. Karen taught American literature and Women's Studies at URI; Linda taught writing and rhetoric at URI.

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**Luminous Things: The Amazing Poetry of Women Poets Laureate
Fall 2022 Course Calendar**

Date	Class agenda	Discussion Leaders
Sept. 13	Session #1: Brief intro to the course, the semester and to each other. Breakout rooms (topic TBD). Short presentation on history of the position of Poet Laureate Session #2: Louise Bogan, US Consultant in Poetry, 1945 – 46.	Linda Karen
Sept. 20	Session #1: Ada Limon, US Poet Laureate, 2022 - 23 Session #2: Carol Ann Duffy, Poet Laureate, England, 2009-18	Linda Chris
Oct. 4	Session #1: Maxine Kumin, US Consultant in Poetry, 1981 - 82 Session #2: Louise Gluck, US Poet Laureate, 2003 - 04	Linda White Margery Connor
Oct. 11	Session #1: Rita Dove, US Poet Laureate, 1993- 95 Session #2: Jackie Kay, Makar, Scotland, 2016 - 2021	Mary Morra Patricia Bisshopp
Oct. 18	Session #1: Natasha Tretheway, US Poet Laureate, 2012 -14 Session #2: Grace Cavalieri, Maryland Poet Laureate, 2018 -	Hilary Orbach Margaret Rogers
Oct. 25	Session #1: Josephine Jacobsen, US Poet Laureate, 1971 - 73 Session #2: Tracey Smith, US Poet Laureate, 2017 - 19	Mary Welch Barbara Nesto
Nov. 1	Session #1: Joy Harjo, US Poet Laureate, 2019 - 22 Session #2: Kay Ryan, US Poet Laureate, 2008 - 10	Roz Kurzer Gordon Hayes
Nov. 8	Session #1: CD Wright, RI Poet Laureate, 1994 - 99 Session #2: Louise Bernice Halfe, Parliamentary Poet, Canada, 2021 - 22	Ellen Ober Penney Stein
Nov. 15	Session #1: Amanda Gorman, US Youth Poet Laureate, 2017 Session #2: Liz Lochhead, Makar, Scotland, 2011 – 16	Liz Kaplan Chris Rose
Nov. 29	Agenda: Semester summary. Debate: Candidates and corrections, and a poll.	Linda, Karen, Chris

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Guidelines for Introducing a Poet Laureate and Leading a Discussion about Two/Three Poems

The preparation process and dates, in brief.

1. **Start soon:** Use the annotated list of Women Poets Laureate as a starting point to explore your choices for introducing a poet laureate to the class and choosing two or three poems for discussion.
2. **By Sept. 13, 2022:** Choose your poet and your preferred date for leading the discussion by Sept. 13, 2022. Tell Linda lkshamoon@gmail.com
3. **Two weeks before your discussion date:**
 - a. Prepare brief introductory remarks of about ten minutes (See guidelines and suggestions, below.)
 - b. Make a list of 8 – 10 poems that are available online that you would like us to read. Share the list with the class or send the list to Linda.
 - c. Prepare a list of questions about the two poems we will discuss in class. Send the question list to Linda <lkshamoon@gmail.com>
4. **One week before your discussion date:** Rehearse your introductory remarks to make sure they stay within the ten-minute time limit. Please be prepared to speak from an outline, rather than read verbatim. If you want to present slides or video clips, Linda can help with share screen.

Important guidelines and outline for your introductory remarks:

- ***Aim at 10 min. or so. This is a firm time limit.***
- Tell us why you selected this poet.
- Tell us when and why, officially, the poet was selected as national poet or poet laureate.
- Tell us a few helpful points of information about the historical or political era, to give context to the selection of this poet and/or poetry.
- Tell us a few essential biographical details about the poet. Limit these to 5 minutes, maximum.
 - Include only those details that will help the class appreciate the poet or poems you have selected.
 - Do not include lists: no lists of awards, publications, degrees, etc.
- Possibly include a couple of helpful quotes by the poet and insightful quotes by critics or scholars.

Important guidelines and outline regarding a poem and your questions:

1. Explain why you have selected the poem. Share anything that made the poem special for you.
2. Briefly add any other information or thoughts about the poem that you think would be helpful for the class to understand: Special terms, places, images, vocabulary that you could elucidate.
3. Read the poem aloud or ask for a volunteer.
4. Pose a question from your question list to help get the discussion started.
5. As the discussion continues, pose other questions from your question list, as seems appropriate.

Questions to provoke discussion and help us dig into a poem:

- Do you find this poem (or poet) appealing? Does it draw you in? Why?
- Do you see in this poem a particular sequence, structure, narrative? What are the highpoints or turning points? Does there seem to be a particular occasion that sparks the events of the poem?
- Is there a speaker, an “I” of the poem? What can we tell about her? What does she reveal about herself, directly or indirectly? Are there other speakers or characters? What do they contribute?
- What about the imagery and the language of the poem? Do you find them striking, surprising, penetrating? Where in the poem? Are some of these puzzling? Which ones?
- What would you say is the tone of the poem? Is this appropriate? Surprising? Puzzling?

Women Poets Laureate: An Annotated List

1. **US Women Consultants in Poetry to the Library of Congress (1937 – 1965)**
2. **US Women Poets Laureate Consultant in Poetry (1986 – 2023)**
3. **Canadian, Youth, England, Wales, Scotland, Ireland, New Zealand national women poets**
4. **Research Starting Points**

US Women Consultants in Poetry to the Library of Congress: From 1937 to December 20, 1985, the position was titled "Consultant in Poetry to the Library of Congress." Poets who occupied this position are usually referred to as "consultants in poetry," or simply "consultants."

1945-46 **Louise Bogan:** Prof. Brett C. Millier, Middlebury College, named Bogan "one of the finest lyric poets America has produced." But her work was often disparaged because she was a woman and wrote in traditional forms in an age of experimental poetry. (Karen will introduce this poet)

1948-49 **Léonie Adams:** An educator, consultant, editor, and poet, Leonie Adams was best known for her lyric poetry reminiscent of both the Romantic and Metaphysical periods. Babette Deutsch called her "the poet of light...."

1949-50 **Elizabeth Bishop:** Bishop's poetry is filled with descriptions of her journeys. In poems such as "At the Fishhouses" she finds beauty in the mundane or ugly.

1971-73 **Josephine Jacobsen:** Jacobsen's poetry ranges from traditional structures to free verse, and centers on the mysteries of being human and the relationships between the physical and the spiritual realms.

1985-86 **Gwendolyn Brooks:** According to George Kent "Brooks combined a strong commitment to racial identity and equality with a mastery of poetic techniques, but she has also managed to bridge the gap between the academic poets of her generation in the 1940s and the young Black militant writers of the 1960s."

US Women Poets Laureate Consultant in Poetry: The position of "Poet Laureate Consultant in Poetry" was established by an act of Congress on December 20, 1985.

1992-93 **Mona Van Duyn:** In her poem "Toward a Definition of Marriage," Van Duyn compares married love to a novel, a circus, and a collection of old papers. She has been described as seeking to find reason in an unreasonable world.

1993-95, 1999-2000 **Rita Dove:** Poet Brenda Shaughnessy noted that "Dove is a master at transforming a public or historic element—re-envisioning a spectacle and unearthing the heartfelt, wildly original private thoughts such historic moments always contain."

1999-2000, 2003-4 **Louise Glück**: Her poems take readers on an inner journey by exploring their deepest, most intimate feelings. She has been termed “the poet of a fallen world.”

2008-10 **Kay Ryan**: Ryan’s tightly compressed, rhythmically dense poetry is often compared to that of Emily Dickinson and Marianne Moore; she is known for her “barbed wit.”

2012-14 **Natasha Trethewey**: Trethewey is a “poet of exquisite delicacy and poise who is always unveiling the racial and historical inequities of our country and the ongoing personal expense of these injustices.”

2017-19 **Tracy K. Smith**: In her book *Life on Mars* Smith uses images from science and science fiction to articulate human desire and grief.

2019-22 **Joy Harjo**: Harjo draws on First Nation storytelling and histories, as well as feminist and social justice poetic traditions, and frequently incorporates indigenous myths, symbols, and values into her writing.

2022--23 **Ada Limon**: Limon’s poetry is highly detailed, spirited, and conversational, although more recent poems address loss, chronic pain, and concern for nature. (Linda will introduce this poet)

Canadian Women Poets Laureate:

2004-6 **Pauline Michel**

2018-19 **Georgette LeBlanc**

2021-22 **Louise Bernice Halfe**

Youth Poets Laureate

2017 **Amanda Gorman**: Gorman wrote and performed “The Hill We Climb” for President Biden’s inauguration. Her art and activism focus on issues of oppression, feminism, race, and marginalization, as well as the African diaspora.

2018 Patricia Frazier

2019 Kara Jackson

2020 Meera Dasgupta

England Poet Laureate:

2009 – 19 **Carol Ann Duffy**. Chris will introduce this poet

Wales National Poet

2005-06 **Gwyneth Lewis**

2006-08 **Gwyn Thomas**

2008–16 **Gillian Clarke**

2022– **Hanan Issa**

Scotland Makar (National Poet for Scotland)

2011-2016 [Liz Lochhead](#)

2016-2021 [Jackie Kay](#)

2021-present [Kathleen Jamie](#)

Ireland Poetry Prize Recipients: Ireland does not name a national poet laureate, but several organizations give prestigious national poetry awards. Since 2005, the national newspaper The Irish Times gives a coveted yearly *Poetry Now* award.

2020 **Eiléan Ní Chuilleanáin**

2018 **Leontia Flynn**

2016 **Caitríona O'Reilly**

2014 **Sinéad Morrissey**

2005 **Dorothy Molloy**

Also of note: **Colette Bryce, Moya Cannon, Mary O'Donnell**

Research Starting Points

[The Poetry Foundation](#)

[The American Academy of Poets](#)

[Famous Poets and Poems.com](#)

The (Canadian) Parliamentary Poet Laureate

(see next page)

POETIC TERMS

alliteration	the repetition of sounds in a sequence of words. (See also consonance and assonance .)
allegory	narrative with two levels of meaning, one stated and one unstated.
assonance	the repetition of vowel-sounds.
blank verse	unrhymed iambic pentameter.
climax	the high point; the moment of greatest tension or intensity. The climax can occur at any point in a poem, and can register on different levels, e.g. narrative, rhetorical, or formal.
consonance	the repetition of consonant-sounds.
couplet	two lines of verse, usually rhymed. Heroic couplet: a rhymed iambic pentameter couplet.
diction	word choice, specifically the "class" or "kind" of words chosen.
elegy	since the 17 th century, usually denotes a reflective poem that laments the loss of something or someone.
end-stopped line	a line that ends with a punctuation mark and whose meaning is complete.
enjambéd line	a "run-on" line that carries over into the next to complete its meaning.
foot	the basic unit of meter, usually combining a stress with one or more unstressed syllables.
free verse	poetry in which the rhythm does not repeat regularly.
imagery	the visual (or other sensory) pictures used to render a description more vivid and immediate.
meter	a regularly repeating rhythm, divided for convenience into feet .
metonymy	a figure of speech in which something is represented by another thing that is commonly and often physically associated with it, e.g. "White House" for "the President."
ode	a genre of lyric, an ode tends to be a long, serious meditation on an elevated subject.
rhythm	the patterns of stresses, unstressed syllables, and pauses in language. Regularly repeating rhythm is called meter .
scansion	the identification and analysis of poetic rhythm and meter. To "scan" a line of poetry is to mark its stressed and unstressed syllables.
simile	a figure of speech that compares two distinct things by using a connective word such as "like" or "as."
stanza	a "paragraph" of a poem: a group of lines separated by extra white space from other groups of lines.
symbol	an image that stands for something larger and more complex, often something abstract, such as an idea or a set of attitudes. (See imagery .)

synecdoche	a figure of speech in which a part of something is used to represent the whole, e.g. "wheels" for "car."
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tone the speaker's or author's attitude toward the reader, addressee, or subject matter. The tone of a poem immediately impresses itself upon the reader, yet it can be quite difficult to describe and analyze.

METRIC FEET

Iambic The rhythm closest to ordinary speech. Unstressed STRESSED:
i THINK / that I / will NE/ ver SEE

Trochaic – STRESSED unstressed
WITH the / DEW and / DAMP of / MEAdows

Anapestic -- unstressed unstressed STRESSED
The asSYR /ian came DOWN / like the WOLF / on the FOLD

Dactylic STRESSED unstressed unstressed
WOman much/ MISSED how you / CALL to me / CALL to me

Counting the number of feet in a line,
the most common is the PENTAMETER = 5 feet;
TETRAMETER = 4 feet; TRIMETER = 3 feet