

CELEBRATE POETRY AT WORK DAY



inspiration, tips & tools



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Inspiration

In a survey of 1500 CEOs, IBM reported that creativity was the top leadership quality needed to take businesses into the future—it ranked higher than integrity and global thinking.

While you might find this result surprising, it won't likely surprise you that poets are, well, creative.

Perhaps that's why *Harvard Business Review* has discussed the value of poetry for professionals. And why a business leader like Sidney Harman was known to ask his staff to hire poets as managers.

Tweetspeak Poetry believes in poetry at work—bringing it to work and finding the poetry that's already there.

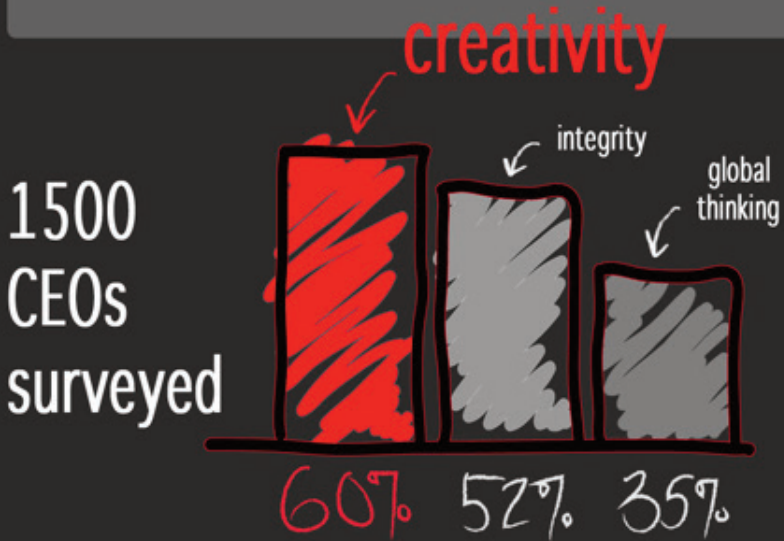
That's why we sponsor Poetry at Work Day.



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creativity is now the most important leadership quality for success in business

—Fast Company



as it so happens . . .

Reading and writing poetry also develops creativity.

—harvard business review

The Benefits of Poetry at Work as Discussed by *Harvard Business Review*

- teaches us to deal with and simplify complexity
- can improve our ability to better conceptualize the world and communicate it
- helps us develop a more acute sense of empathy
- can make us more sociable than our non-poetry-reading counterparts
- develops creativity
- helps infuse life with beauty and meaning, in a context where it is sometimes hard to remain invested with wonder and purpose

Source: <https://hbr.org/2012/11/the-benefits-of-poetry-for-pro>



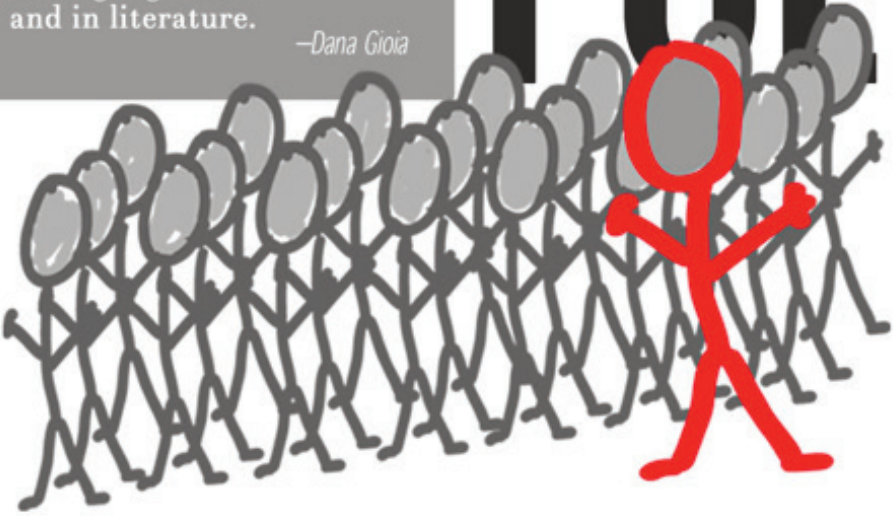
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“

I had an enormous advantage over my colleagues because I had a background in the imagination, in language and in literature.

—Dana Gioia

ADVANTAGE: POET



Tell me a poem, a story
of a favored poet or poem,
one that changed your life,
your mind, opened up
possibilities, or made you
feel secure as your anchors,
your moorings, were removed.
Speak to me of your need;
describe the expectations
(are they great ones?), explain
how we soar together, toward
the sun, if not the moon,
tell me how I become

part of your larger self.

—Glynn Young, author of the book *Poetry at Work*



POETS NEED WORK NEEDS POETS



“The poet needs the practicalities of making a living to test and temper the lyricism of insight and observation. The corporation needs the poet’s insight and powers of attention...

—david whyte

“I used to tell my senior staff to get me poets as managers. They look at our most complex environments and they reduce the complexity to something they can begin to understand.

—sidney harman



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Poetry Works

“ For a long while I did not read much poetry—focusing on career, family, and ‘getting established.’ I read fiction when I could find time.

That changed when I became part of a company’s speech-writing team. No one else on the team read poetry, but a friend kept pressing on me the need to read poetry if I was really serious about being a speechwriter.

He gave me copies of the collected poems of three great modernist poets: T. S. Eliot, Dylan Thomas and Wallace Stevens. It didn’t take much convincing; I could easily see that poetry and speeches—truly fine speeches—have much in common in terms of form, flow, cadence, voice, rhythm and how they sound to the ear.

Differences exist, to be sure, but I readily saw that I could learn much about speechwriting from poetry. ”

—Glynn Young, author of the book *Poetry at Work*



“ Poets in business hear things others can miss. Every workplace conversation has an interior and overt stream, and it’s usually the poet who hears the interior dialogues before others do, because they are shaped by words and phrases originating in hopes, dreams and fears. ”

—Glynn Young, author of the book *Poetry at Work*

poets punching time clocks

Most poets had (or have) **day jobs**

Did you know where these famous poets worked?

T.S. Eliot • banker
Robert Burns • farmer
A.R. Ammons • salesman
James Dickey • ad agency
Jorge Luis Borge • librarian
Ted Kooser • insurance sales
Robert Frost • chicken farmer
Marianne Moore • public library
Archibald MacLeish • *Fortune* editor
Geoffrey Chaucer • clerk & diplomat
William Carlos Williams • pediatrician
Wallace Stevens • insurance company
Edwin Arlington Robinson • customs house



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“ I am now proud to say that I am a nurse who writes poetry, reads poetry, facilitates others [to do so] and promotes poetry whenever and wherever I can.

I have begun to see that being a poet in my workplace is a more authentic way of being professional. ”

—Sue Spencer, hospice worker in the U.K.





Tips

5 Basic Tips for Poetry at Work

modified from Glynn Young's *Poetry at Work*

1. Read Poetry • Reading a single poem is easily manageable. *Every Day Poems*, a subscription service through *Tweetspeak Poetry*, makes it simple by delivering an excellent poem a day by email.

Reading poetry focuses my mind away from the immediate stresses in my work life. It presents an idea, subject, or theme entirely apart from my usual work experience, challenging my mind to think differently. And it moves me to a different means of expression.

2. Take a Poem Apart • I start with a poem, usually a short one, and ask: Why does this poem start that way? What images does it evoke? Why are phrases used that way? Why use that word, when another would have been sufficient or even better? What idea is it trying to convey, and does it work? Or could it work better some other way?

3. Speak Poetry • It's tempting to think I understand a poem when I read it silently, but when I read it aloud, my understanding can change. Speaking a poem out loud can



also offer a soothing rhythm—eddies of calm in a chaotic work day.

4. Listen in Poetry • No matter what kind of job we have, at one time or another we find ourselves in meetings. My job takes me to lots of meetings. About two years ago, I started “listening in poetry” at these meetings, even taking notes structured like poems.

This allows me to chunk statements and ideas, organize my thoughts, and structure my responses. It makes the time spent in meetings more productive and interesting.

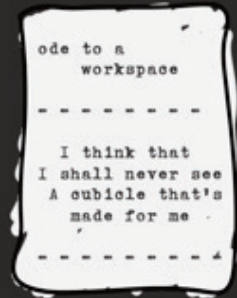
5. Write Poetry • Sometimes I write poetry to deal with workplace stress. For example, I’ll take a work problem, conflict, success or failure I’m wrestling with and write it out as a poem. Expressing the situation, interaction, or event in poetic form helps me make sense of it.

Poetry is not a cure-all for workplace stress. But it is one constructive way to deal with it, and cheaper than doctors, physical therapy and psychiatrists. And perhaps it can help produce something good from the stress—something in the form of a poem.

HOW YOU CAN CELEBRATE

Poetry at Work Day

Write a poem about your workspace



Invite a poet
to read over lunch

Take a break for poetry
instead of a cookie



Read a favorite poem out loud

Tweet with hashtag **#PoetryatWork**
to tell the world how you celebrate



Scottish Parliament
@ScotParl

 Follow

Are you celebrating "Poetry at Work Day" today? We are lucky @ScotParl to have poetry both outside & inside: ow.ly/szuTF



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Library Hotel NYC

@LibraryHotel

Follow

Writing poems in honor of Poetry at Work Day!
[instagram.com/p/jJ9DrOuZXO/](https://www.instagram.com/p/jJ9DrOuZXO/) #poetryatwork #poetry
#libraryhotel @tspoetry @EDayPoems



Virgin Trains

@VirginTrains

Follow

@blackmbn Keeping me happy is a nice thing to do, I hate it when I'm feeling all sad and blue... ^FB



UWS Library

@uwslib

Follow

& one for all our students, especially MHN :)

library counter
she hands back a pile
of anxiety & stress

[sc]

#poetryatworkday #libraries



Mrs. Greens

@MrsGreensMarket

Follow

@EDayPoems @tspoetry free range chicken breast /
pinkness, tender in my pan / slowly turning bronze





Tools

Poems You Can Read Today

We encourage you to explore the world of poetry, but for today we're giving you a few poems about work to start (or continue) that journey.

Boss

Stares at the corner where
two glass walls meet, almost
the exact point where the sun
sets, caught in the rise
of his people asking, probing
how and more and the descent
of his own boss seeking cuts.
He chooses the way
he's been taught, looking
upward, knowing there's little
reward in the daily, where
life is.

—Glynn Young



Food Service

The overseer of meats
at Mehlman's Cafeteria

would plate a slice of meatloaf
when he saw my brother in line.

The morning window woman
at Community Bakery

knows without asking: cinnamon
doughnut, coffee with cream.

When the angry woman in the wheelchair
sends back her eggs on Christmas Eve,

the night manager who remembers
I had a blueberry waffle last time

cracks two in a bowl, takes
the whisk from the cook

and beats 'til fluffy, teaching,
"This is how she likes them."

—Laura Lynn Brown



Self-Employed

She is always asking
for more.

More hours making words,
more days finding
the things she loves—

people, art, a good font.

But she gives me
chocolates.

How can I say
no?

—L.L. Barkat

BREAKING NEWS UPDATE

Poets find poetry at work

Sending Flowers

The florist reads faces, reaches into the mouths of customers.
Turns curled tongues into rose petals,

teeth clinking against one another into baby's breath.
She selects a cut bloom, a bit of leaf,

lays stem alongside of stem, as if building a wrist
from the inside. She binds them

when the message is right, and sighs at the pleasure
of her profession. Her trade:

to wrangle intensity, to gather blooms and say, here,
these do not grow together

but in this new arrangement is language. The florist
hands you a bouquet

yanked from your head, the things you could not say
with your ordinary voice.

—Hannah Stephenson



MORE GREAT POEMS ABOUT WORK

Mowing • Robert Frost
What Work Is • Philip Levine
Po' Boy Blues • Langston Hughes
The Secretary Chant • Marge Piercy
The Instruction Manual • John Ashbery
Calling Him Back from Layoff • Bob Hicok



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Activities You Can Try Today

Cut It Out Poetry

What you'll need

- old catalogs
- scissors
- pens
- index cards or full-sized paper
- glue or glue sticks
- pinboard and pins
- sample poem already pinned up

Place the materials in a classic gathering place where things can be posted. The cafeteria. Near the water cooler. A conference or break room.

Leave instructions as follows

- did you know today is Poetry at Work Day?
- cut out words and phrases
- arrange into poems
- glue your words & phrases onto cards to make it official
- sign if you like, and post!



Sample Cut It Out Poem

We are in receipt
of your communication.
Your file is closed.

That's not the case,
closed.

I want to learn
about your letter.
It's no fault of yours.

You want a signed statement.
You demand a payment ledger.

He/she, will and/or
complete a Case
Closure Detail Document.

We did not
close the case.

Yes No.
If you have any questions
please circle one.
But we require No.

They claimed
injuries, injuries sustained.
Please send (proof of who was paid).
No one has been paid.

Yes No.
Please circle one.

Benefits were exhausted.
I'm exhausted
and need a recovery

contractor, speech
impaired. Stopped.

There is no possibility
where one is not required.

—LW Lindquist, insurance adjuster; phrases from a Medicare letter



Circle-It Poetry

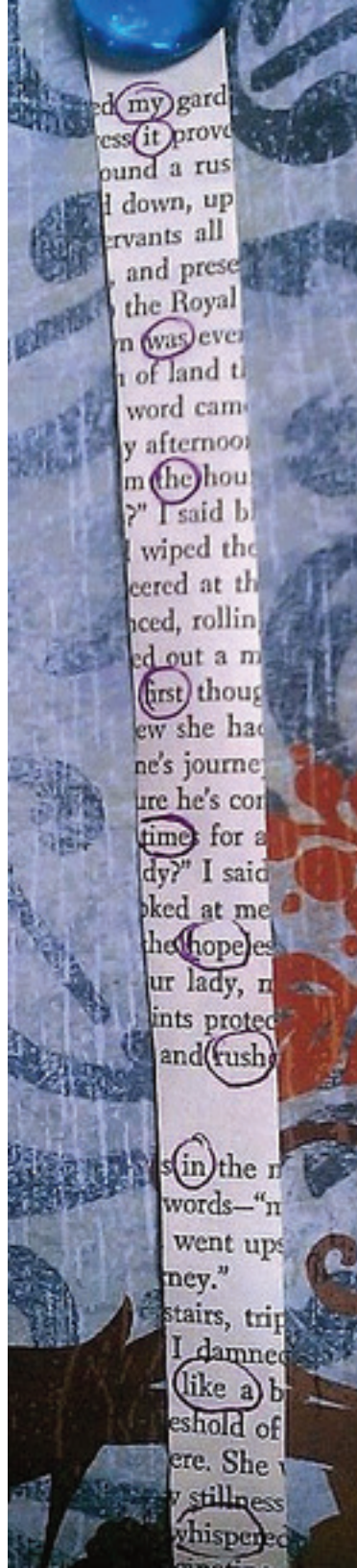
What you'll need

- old newspapers or magazines
- pens or markers
- scissors
- pinboard and pins
- sample poem already pinned up

Leave instructions as follows

- did you know today is Poetry at Work Day?
- cut out a strip of print
- circle single words from top to bottom to create a poem
- sign if you like, and post!

Sample Circle It Poem



Break It Poetry

What you'll need

- old books in a basket or bin
- pens or color markers
- paper, color or white
- pinboard and pins
- sample poem already pinned up

Leave instructions as follows

- did you know today is Poetry at Work Day?
- find a quote you like from any of the books here in the basket
- break the quote into lines to make a poem
- sign if you like, and post!

Sample Break It Poem

Sometimes peace

looks like

W

A

R

You cannot tell them apart

Sometimes

these islands

look

very

small

(quote from a Hilary Mantel book, broken to make poetry)



CELEBRATE

Poetry at Work

(just consider it part of your benefits package)

ALL
YEAR
LONG

Make your inbox happy

Start your workday with a poem paired with beautiful artwork—subscribe to Every Day Poems



Get regular poetry prompts and Poetry at Work articles with a free subscription to the Tweetspeak weekly newsletter

Wishing you a wonderful Poetry at Work Day

Come enjoy poetry with us at
tweetspeakpoetry.com

on Twitter: @tspoetry

check out Every Day Poems
for a great poem a day

