

SPARKS

Poem in Your Pocket Zines

by 826 National, in
partnership with
Academy of American
Poets

GRADES 6–12**TYPE****POETRY**

What words do we carry with us? This Spark introduces students to the Poem in Your Pocket Day celebration and invites them to create a pocket-sized poetry zine.

WHAT YOUR STUDENTS WILL LEARN

Students will learn about Poem in Your Pocket Day and discover the joy and power of carrying—and sharing—poetry.

WHAT YOU WILL DO**BEFORE YOU BEGIN**

Make an example zine by following the directions for [Poem in Your Pocket Day Zine: Querido/a Presidente — Mentor Text](#).

Or, you can make your own using the provided zine template.

Either way, have a completed zine ready to share with students in STEP 3.

STEP 1

Begin by asking students a somewhat personal question: What do they carry in their pockets? This could be things that they keep in their pocket, generally, or things that are in their pocket, right now—you'll wait while they check. There are no wrong answers here, so embrace whatever objects they come up with. . . phone, student ID, gum wrapper, lint, etc. Record a running list on the board.

When students have exhausted all ideas, ask: why do you carry these things? Student responses will likely center on the idea of purpose or frequency of use. Circle all of the items from their list that have a specific purpose—i.e. objects they use often.

Close the discussion by introducing the idea that the things we carry with us often reflect what we use on a daily basis, which in turn reflects our values. For example, the student ID might reflect that your school values safety. . . even the gum wrapper that you've decided to stash in your pocket until you come across a garbage can might reflect that you value the environment.

STEP 2

Next, share that there is a day during National Poetry Month in April that embraces this very idea—we value what we carry, and we carry what we value—called Poem in Your Pocket Day.

Poem in Your Pocket Day first began in 2002 as an education initiative in New York City, and in 2008 the Academy of American Poets expanded the celebration to a national level, encouraging people across the country to participate in the joy of poetry by carrying a poem in their pocket for a day and sharing it with others.

Share with students that today, they'll join in the celebration by creating a pocket-sized zine that features a poem of their choice: either a favorite poem from another poet, or a favorite poem they wrote.

***Educator Note:** You can find out more about this national initiative, as well as more ideas for celebrating, at the Academy of American Poets' [Poem in Your Pocket Day](#).*

STEP 3

If students are unfamiliar with zines, now's a great time to share the Poem in Your Pocket Day Zine: Querido/a Presidente — Mentor Text ([English](#) and [Spanish](#) versions are available to download) with students as an example.

Ask for a volunteer to read the zine aloud. Then read it out loud again, this time asking students to notice how the zine designer displayed text, illustrations, and other design elements on the page. How do these artistic choices add to their understanding of the poem?

STEP 4

Next, students will pick a poem they want to feature in their own zine. This can be a poem that they've already written, a favorite poem you've read in class, or they can browse the poems below, written by 826 student authors:

- [Eternal Youth](#) by Junaynah, Grade 11, 826NYC
- [Baby Bird](#) by Charm R., Grade 5, 826 New Orleans
- [La Luna De Mi Vida](#) by Karla M., 826LA
- [The Galaxy Loves Me](#) by Mo, Grade 2, 826 Boston
- [The Place in My Mind](#) by Renee, 826NYC
- [The Perfect Morning](#) by Josiah, 826DC
- [Breathe](#) by Juna, 826michigan

Looking for even more pocket poems? You can also share the Academy of American Poets' [Poem in Your Pocket Day PDF](#), which includes a collection of poems students may choose from.

STEP 5

Before students get started on their zine, they should spend some time planning how they'll transfer their chosen poem to the zine template.

First, students should decide how they want to split up the poem across six pages. On scratch paper, have them chunk the poem into no more six parts—one part for each page on the zine template. Students should plan to “fill” every page, but note that not every page needs text. Some pages can feature illustrations or designs only.

Next, ask students to underline words, phrases, and/or details that they’d like to highlight visually in the zine, along with a quick note on how they plan to highlight it. What images might they illustrate? How might they play with the way the text appears on the page?

STEP 6

Now, pass out copies of the [Poem in Your Pocket Day Zine: Blank Template — Handout](#). Students should use the rest of the time to recreate the poem of their choice, in zine form.

STEP 7

When they finish, invite students to share their zines. Students can share their completed zines with a partner, in small groups, or if time allows, they can share a favorite page with the whole group.

To close, ask students to carry their pocket poem zine with them today, and to share it with friends and family. In this way, they are extending the life of the poem—by carrying it from the page, to the world, and into others’ lives.

MATERIALS

- [Poem in Your Pocket Day Zine: Blank Template — Handout](#)
 - At least one copy per student
- Poem in Your Pocket Day Zine: Querido/a Presidente — Mentor Text ([English](#) and [Spanish](#) versions are available), or create your own example zine
- Scissors

- 1 pair per student
- Poem in Your Pocket Day Poems
 - 826 Student Poems (see provided links)
 - Download The Academy of American Poets' Poem in Your Pocket Day PDF, found at: <https://poets.org/national-poetry-month/poem-your-pocket-day> for more poems
- Optional:
 - Markers or colored pencils
 - Blank paper (if students would like to create their own zine without the template)