

Who Said That? Exploring Maine Poets



April is National Poetry Month, a celebration of verse and the people who create in verse forms. Poetry may be brief with a fixed form such as the sonnet, or it may tell a story with an entire novel written in verse. Explore a Maine poet, historical or contemporary, to understand the poet's preferred form, influences, and experiences. Share your findings in a blog or write a poem about your own experience in a similar format.

Edna St. Vincent Millay, 1892 – 1950

**This example is a model for one Maine poet.
Students could select from a list or as assigned.
Each resource could be printed and sent home in a packet.*

Biographical:

Create a timeline of important events and places in Millay's life

- [Poets.org: The Academy of American Poets: Edna St. Vincent Millay](#)
- [Modern American Poetry: Edna St. Vincent Millay](#)
- [Maine Writers Entry](#)
- [Edna St. Vincent Millay Society](#)

Poetry:

Millay was the only the third woman to receive the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry. Explain why that is a significant event. What is about her poetry that garnered such an honor?

- [Pulitzer Prize for Poetry winners](#)
- [Edna St. Vincent Millay Pulitzer Prize Poems of Edna St. Vincent Millay](#)

Plays:

Millay was also a playwright. Read a one-act play by Millay. How is the poet evident in the play? What are the similarities between the verse form and play form? Read the play aloud with your family.

- [Aria da Capo](#)
- [Two Slatterns and a King](#)

Ongoing Recognition:

Millay's Rockland home has recently been restored. Learn about the restoration - who, why, how? Plan an event appropriate to the annual Millay Arts and Poetry celebration.

- [Millay House](#)

Other resources for teaching poetry:

High school teachers [Kelly Gallagher and Penny Kittle](#) have created a [guide for daily journaling](#), which is “designed to encourage students to capture this moment in history.” Consider adapting and using this guide for your own students. Here are three journal prompts you can use with your students next week:

- Why does the coronavirus outbreak matter to me?
- Why does it matter to the people around me (my family, friends, community)?
- Why does it matter to the world?

(Note: These prompts are adapted from [Project Zero's “3 Ys” thinking routine](#).)

Writing poetry can help students document this moment of history-in-the-making. Ask students to compose their own poems in their journals. Students may free-write poetry, or you can use the following strategies to help guide their writing:

- Ask students to create a [Found Poem](#) using language from a news article they recently read.
- Ask students to read George Ella Lyon’s poem “[Where I’m From](#)” and then to create their own poem inspired by this poem called “Where I am Right Now.” Students can use [this handout](#) as a guide. Just change the phrase in the first box from “I am from . . .” to “I am now . . .”
- Most students around the world are now studying from home. Ask students to read Pablo Neruda’s poem “[Ode to My Socks](#)” (“[Oda a los calcetines](#)”) and then to write their own “ode” to an object in their space, as a way of recording what they see and how they feel as they learn from home.

Poetry plays an important role in strengthening our democracy and civic life. Ask students to read the following quote from author James Baldwin:

“The poets (by which I mean all artists), are finally the only people who know the truth about us. Soldiers don’t. Statesmen don’t. Priests don’t. Union leaders don’t. Only poets.”

Then, ask students to choose a poem they have read in class, or from the website [Poetry 180](#). Students can reflect in their journals on the quote and their chosen poem, using the following prompt:

- What “truth” does this poem tell? How does the James Baldwin quote shape your understanding of poetry in general and this poem in particular?

Students can also use poetry to raise awareness about injustice and unfairness, which can help students feel a sense of agency at a time when they may be feeling powerless or frightened. Adapt the Facing History lesson [Speaking Up and Speaking Out](#) to help students consider the power of voice and creative expression as means of calling attention to an issue and bringing about change.

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