

During National Poetry Month (#npm17) engagement activities, you will notice that a lot of the prompts or tips we received from our #npm17 poets all involve focusing on our senses. The programming staff here at Arizona Humanities asks you during this month to find time to slow down and do that very thing - focus on our senses. In a world where we are pulled, literally, in a million directions, finding time to slow down and develop "trail eyes", to experience the moment is almost impossible if not fleeting. We cannot be our better selves if we don't find time to reflect in what is around us now...at this very moment.

In most parts of the country, spring has heightened our senses and made us start to "feel some kind of way". Here in Arizona, we encourage you to take a moment to write about spring. Visit your local library and check out the nature section, maybe grabbing the National Audubon's Field Guide to the Southwestern States as ways to identify the unknown, maybe even finding new descriptive words to describe the everyday things. We actually just want you to take this time to slow down, write a poem about the times, and tuck it away to be read in 2018. See how far we have come in those months and examine what mattered to us then, and then begin again.

Share your poems with @AZhumanities on twitter, facebook, and Instagram. Tag your poems with #azhumanities #npm17 to be featured on Arizona Humanities social media.

Ken Lamberton Writing Prompts: April 1 - 6

April 1st

Write a poem about April. What does April look, feel, smell like? What memories do you associate with the month?

April 2nd

Write a poem using the following words: crepuscular, mockingbird, lampshade, ordinary, and unconvinced.

April 3rd

Choose a line from a favorite poem and use it as the first line in a new poem. When you finish the poem, remove the first line.

April 4th

Write a poem from the perspective of a family pet or an animal you admire. Try to use all the senses. Invent a new sense. For example: a kingsnake in the garden that sees in ultraviolet light or can taste the color orange.

April 5th

Write a poem in the form of a letter from your future self.

April 6th

Find an ordinary object like a brick. Take a few minutes a write down every word you can think of that describes the object. Use all your senses. Now write a poem about the object without using those words.

Jaclyn Roessel Writing Prompts: April 7 – 9

April 7th

Each of us has a relative (or close family friend) in our lives whose story of perseverance, overcoming tragedy or trial has helped us to move forward. What if you could send them a letter to thank them? What would you share with them?

April 8th

Make a list of three favorite items which give you pleasure. Take 5 minutes to write a love letter to this item never disclosing what the item is, only descriptions of it.

April 9th

Carry your practice outside...practice 2 minutes of deep listening - close your eyes and observe the sounds around you. Open your eyes and write about the sensation of these sounds, what you heard and how you felt listening to the space, world around you.

Roanna Shebala Writing Prompts: April 10 - 15

April 10th

What is your mother's Maiden name? What does it mean? What is the origin of her name? What does it mean to you?

April 11th

What is your father's last name? What does it mean? What is the origin of his name? What does it mean to you?

April 12th

What do you call your Maternal Grandfather (papa, Granddaddy, grandpa,)? What does it mean? How did you come to call him that name? What does he mean to you?

April 13th

What do you call your Paternal Grandfather (papa, grandda, grandfather)? What does it mean? How did you come to call him that name? What does he mean to you?

April 14th

What smells remind you of your parents? What makes you like them?

April 15th

What smells remind you of you? What makes you?

Tucson Youth Poetry Slam Writing Prompts: April 16 - 21

April 16th

Using the "Starter Pack" meme, create an "I Am" poem.

April 17th

Write an ode about your favorite desert plant.

April 18th

Envision what a world without borders looks like it & write it down.

April 19th

Using the letters of your first name, write a poem describing your city.

April 20th

Write a list poem about the things/people that bring you joy.

April 21st

Describe things your family tree is made of. From that list, write a poem.

Jake Friedman Writing Prompts: April 22 -25

April 22nd

Follow the sounds. Poetry is essentially matching content to form, semantics to phonetics, meanings to sound. Writing poetry is about working with the material quality of language—the affordances of an object, its texture, shape and weight. Feel the way words fit in your mouth—how they move across the tongue, the lips, the teeth, the throat, the jaw, the eyes, the cheeks—how they all fit together. It's a very physical process, a terrain or a landscape. Allow pronunciation to serve as the path through which you can navigate it.

April 23rd

Find something you've been thinking about for a really long time. It could be something that bothers you, something you're obsessed with, something that gives you weird, unexplainable pleasure. Lean into the unknown and the uncomfortable. Interrogate it. Think about what you desire. What you're ashamed of. Something that makes you angry. Our thoughts and emotions are not pure subjective experiences. We think and feel things through a lens of culture—the way we were raised, maybe, what we see on TV. Be honest with yourself. Don't be afraid. Poetry is a way to reveal structures of thought. And once you've identified the structure, you can build on to it or tear it down.

April 24th

Think about the line. Be intentional in your line breaks. Think about what kinds of subversive or alternative meanings might be hidden in your language, that you can bring out with a line break. In an ideal poem, each line should be able to be read independently of the sentence of which it's actually a part, to be meaningful on its own—to refer, somehow to some larger meaning in the text. Think about grammatical structures, sentence trees—you can snip cleanly at the new branches, you can break something in half, but be deliberate in where you decide to cut. You're shaping something. You're working with a living thing.

April 25th

Try to avoid abstract experiences or universal statements. This is not to say that you shouldn't try to write something universal, that people can connect with—this is what we're all trying to do—only that you can't do it with generalizations. Poetry is like looking at the world through a pinhole. You have a very small space in which to work. Focus on one particular instance—one emotion, one story—and follow it though. Be truthful.

Arizona Humanities Writing Prompts: April 26 - 30

April 26th

Think about your most personal memento. If an archaeologist were to find that memento, what would it be? What does that object say about you or what does the object mean to you? Is it connected to a loved one or a favorite memory? What story could this object tell the archaeologist about the person who used to own it? Write a poem that describes this object and its history behind it.

April 27th

Think of a place that you have never been to before and write a poem about it. What would that place look like? Would it be hot or cold? Secluded or crowded? Is this a place you would go to to escape, relax, have fun or reminisce? Who or what would you take with you to this place if you could never go back to where you came from? Describe what you see, hear and smell. How does this place make you feel (comforted, excited, emotional, sad)? Does this place already exist or is it somewhere completely new?

April 28th

For the last three days of #npm17 wake up at sunrise and capture what the waking of the morning feels like by writing a 16-line poem that does not rhyme. Focus on how long it takes for the sun to expose itself in full to you. What does it remind you of, how does it make you feel, give us at least 2 metaphors/similes that aren't cliché. Next, focus on the sounds around you. Does the traffic hide the songs of the many birds? Is there a certain type of bird that sings louder than the others? What kind of bird is it? Finally, focus on how the morning air feels on your skin and inside your nose. Contrast those feelings to a moment in your past, whether it was just lying in your bed or if it was when you were a child and it was the first time you didn't have to wear a jacket outside and share with us how that felt.

April 29th

Although we might be biased, Arizona truly has the most beautiful springs because of the diversity throughout the state. Today's prompts will ask that you grab some postcards from a local store and write poems on them to send to a friend, a local politician, or even send one to us here at Arizona Humanities. Write a poem on a postcard that describes the pinks, reds, and purples during the best sunsets in the country. Take another post card and tell us about the smells of blossoming palo verdes and document the movement of their blooms along the streets and sidewalks. What metaphor or simile correctly captures the sounds of road and new buildings construction, write a poem about it? Write a recipe poem that describes the taste of the special dishes that focus on recent cactus blooms? Finally, share with us the feelings behind it already being 90 degrees in most parts of the state.

April 30th

Write a 24-line poem with just questions only.