

# READ

A newsletter written by the  
adult learners and tutors  
in Adult Literacy Services.



Fall 2020

## From the Editor

Happy fall everyone! In this issue, we're so proud to publish many of the poems written by our learners and tutors during our Summer Reading Challenge. Our poetry teacher Laurie and our guest poet, Luis Antonio Pichardo, also share their thoughts about this amazing summer program. Get ready to enjoy the work of our incredibly talented participants! Maybe they'll inspire you to write some poetry too?



**Randall Hinson**  
Adult Literacy Librarian

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# Learning circles are a new kind of class for adults at the Los Angeles Public Library!

**Learning circles are basically study groups for adults who want to take online courses together.** The online courses can come from many places, including colleges, newspapers, YouTube, or databases on the LAPL website. There is almost no limit to the kinds of courses you can take in a learning circle! So far, we've had learning circles on basic computer skills, acrylic painting, American sign language, interview skills, knitting, and much more!

Learning circles make online courses more interesting and fun, because instead of taking the class all by yourself, you take it with other people! You can make new friends and help one another learn as you study. Learning circles are as much about building a community of learners as they are about the subject being studied.

Just recently, two of our literacy coordinators, Abel and Priscilla, helped lead learning circles. Below, they tell us what it was like!



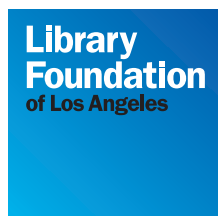
**Priscilla Rojas-Naiman:** Angi Brzycki, adult librarian at the Hollywood Branch, and I recently concluded a six-week learning circle on the 1619 Project.

For those unfamiliar with it, the 1619 Project was a massive effort by The New York Times Magazine to detail the history of slavery, its lasting effects

within our culture, and to celebrate the often-suppressed role of formerly enslaved peoples in making American democracy manifest. Its aim was to reframe the country's history by placing the consequences of slavery and the contributions of Black Americans at the very center of our national narrative.

The 1619 Project Learning Circle was difficult to get through but highly needed in light of today's climate. An average of 15 people joined us each week on Zoom from all over the country. They

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came prepared by having read the essays the NY Times collected and heard the podcasts assigned so that the discussion would be fruitful. There were participants who came to this country not knowing that the Black community had so many trials over the centuries. Many of us that did go to school in the US, learned that the history that was taught to us was sugar-coated and missing many details. I believe that this series opened the eyes of all our participants. More importantly, it helped us understand how to actively make change and not passively sit back and watch.



**Abel Santibañez:** Our learners participated in a 6-week learning circle via Zoom where they learned about the fundamentals of public speaking. The course taught them important terms like “rhetoric” and “arrangement” in

order to provide a solid framework. Learners provided feedback to each other as they outlined their speeches. The culmination of the course required our learners to give their speeches. They were professionals about it, so much so that some learners dressed in business attire and placed their computers in a way that would allow them to stand as they gave their speeches. All of the students who participated mentioned this was their very first time making a public presentation. It is even more admirable when you discover that all of them are ESL students. It takes courage and dedication to speak in front of people in a language you’re still learning. Donna Kim and Hande Guzey, two participants in our learning circle, also wanted to say a few words about their impression of the class.

many elements to make a good public speech and I learned those elements through Coursera “Public speaking” for 6 weeks program. We have been reading at home, discussed topics together in Zoom class, made a speech and reviewed the outline of speech together as peer view. On 6th week, we had presentation and celebrated the final with triumph.

I think I have more confident to present in front of people. Thank you for the support of teachers and team members and LAPL!!



**Hande Guzey:** It was my first time preparing and giving a speech since elementary school. In the past, I did presentations, and trained a small group of people for a short time. But I never took lessons about it. In the Public Speaking class, I realized

there were so many details, and methods. I learned preparation of speech takes more time than you speak. It helps you to make an effective speech, so it’s worth it. Receiving feedback from classmates is also very good and important before the actual speech. I feel more confident to make an effective speech for the next time in front of people after this wonderful class.

If being part of a learning circle sounds interesting to you, visit [lapl.org/learning-circles](http://lapl.org/learning-circles) to see all the learning circles currently being hosted!

If there is something you would like to study in a learning circle, send us your ideas. We’d love to read them! If enough people are interested in a subject, we’ll try to form a learning circle about it.



**Donna Kim:** This was the first time preparing and giving speech. Teacher Abel and other team members helped me to make it possible.

The most important thing I learned is there are

# It's a Match

## About It's a Match

A special relationship is created when a tutor and learner are successfully matched together. *It's a Match* allows tutors and learners to express how they feel about their match in their own words.



Tutor Ben Tenn

### Ben's Story

By Ben Tenn

Janet was matched to me as a student late in 2019 and for months we met twice a week at the Mid-Valley Library. Since April we have been meeting via Zoom only. Janet is a delightful, always smiling and happy woman, a mother of two grown children. She is eager to improve her literacy, most particularly to speak more clearly and effectively with family, friends and potential employers. She has made wonderful progress and will continue to do so through the use of the terrific materials provided by the program. But most importantly, through her own efforts and enthusiasm to learn more English in addition to her native Spanish. Well done Janet!



Learner Jeannette Salazar

### Jeannette's Story

By Jeannette Salazar

This is Jeannette Salazar. I'm in the library program. I'm happy and satisfied with the program. The library is closed but I take my class on Zoom. My tutor is Ben Tenn. He is an excellent tutor. I feel confident with him. When I don't understand something he explains it to me until I understand. He and the program have impacted my life because it is a good opportunity to learn English. I am no longer afraid when other persons speak to me. Thank you for maintaining the program and thanks to Ben for being my tutor.





## About Creative Corner

*Creative Corner* is where literacy learners share their personal stories, recipes, movie reviews, and other creative writing!



Learner Cesar Gomez

### Frontiers – The story of the Mexican-American War By Cesar Gomez

Something that I always admire in people is their perseverance and curiosity. The impulse to take on challenges and to break limits. This is how explorers crossed the oceans, which was the most ambitious exploration challenge centuries ago. But humanity also has another side that is not so admirable in my opinion.

For example, the concept named “border.” This is a line between two countries. I think it is only in the mind of some of the people. Some people care about borders but other people don’t think about them at all. But borders are a harsh reality in the lives of some people. I hope that one day countries will remove the borders that they have invented. I also know that this is a utopian ideal. For that to be possible, we need people around the world to reach a social balance where they live with respect and kindness and freedom and justice, and also that they live this way by conviction not by imposition.

In the mean time, I would like to examine how one particular border was established. Let’s see how it can affect the lives of entire communities. It is interesting to look at North America and its political limits. Let’s start in the 19th century. At that time,

there was a war for territory between the United States and Mexico called the Mexican-American War. What was the origin of this conflict?

In the early 19th century, the United States began a rapid expansion by acquiring new territories. In 1809 it took over Louisiana. Then in 1819, the United States took over the Florida peninsula in a military intervention that culminated in the Adams-Onís treaty.

In 1822, a year after the beginning of Mexico’s independence, the United States recognized the Mexican nation and wrote the Velazco Treaty which established territorial limits. It was at this time that the United States showed its intentions to take over the part of Mexico that is now Texas. When the U.S. failed to obtain this part of Mexican territory by the treaty, they began a “peaceful” occupation, encouraging thousands of Americans to move to Texas and settle there. In 1829, the United States offered to buy Texas for 5 million dollars. The offer was rejected. At that point, Anglo-Saxon colonists in Texas launched an independence movement. They made the declaration of independence with only the name of one Mexican included, Lorenzo de Zavala. All other names were from American settlers. This is when the Mexican-American war began.

Today this is a well-known story where the Texan rebels win despite the circumstances. They captured the Mexican president, President Santana, in the battle of San Jacinto, and he was forced to sign a treaty to recognize the banks of the river Bravo (Rio Grande) as the new Mexican-American border. In the year 1845, this is how Texas then became part of the United States.

In 1846, more territory was fought over. A group of 300 armed men seized the city of Sonoma which was still part of Mexico. They were driven by rumors of military actions by the Mexican government against American colonists. They used a white flag with a bear and a star. Another reason given for the start of the Mexican-American war was the demand for compensation from the government for damage caused in Texas during the war of independence. The United States forces landed in Veracruz and from there conquered the Mexican capital, Mexico City. The Mexicans were then forced to sign the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo with which the United States added to their country the states of California, New Mexico, Arizona, Nevada, Utah, Colorado and part of Wyoming.

There are many stories about the Mexican-American war that are not pleasant. On the other hand looking at the current times, though they are full of difficulties, I can see beneath the politics and see the people instead. I see people of all kinds most of whom have good relationships with individuals from other nations. I like it when I'm in Mexico to see foreigners enjoying Mexico and having a good time interacting cordially with the people who live there as well as others from all over the world. When I'm in the U.S.A, I see how kind people are and that the number of Latinos living or visiting this country is incredible. The image before the world and in general of the relationship between Mexico and the United States is that there is conflict. But if you see below the politics, there are those who do not see the Mexican-American border as a limit. They are those who travel and who like to feel like free citizens in the world. Sometimes borders can get in the way. I hope this is different in the future.



### What have you done to cope with this quarantine?

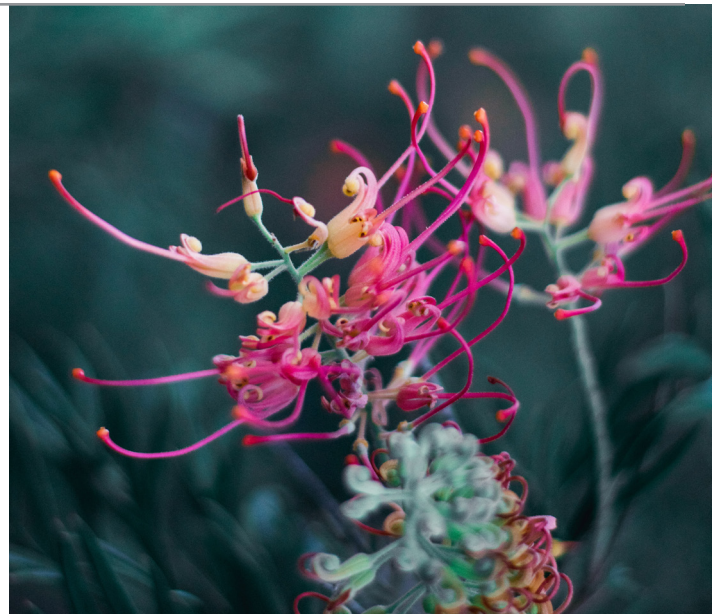
By Fatima Kian

Maybe because I'm not a very sociable person the quarantine situation is not hard for me. The only part that made me depressed was keeping me far from sharing my painting which I found a solution for that & I've made a WhatsApp channel to share my painting with people.

Also, I have Zoom meeting with friends & family now & then which comfort me a lot.

Another good thing that happened to me is riding a bicycle every day for exercise which I didn't do it before quarantine.

In general, I think I'm an optimistic person & I see the half full of the glass.



### How to Paint a Spider Flower

By Fatima Kian

For painting Spider Flower or any kind of flowers in watercolor you need to follow few steps.

First: you need to choose reference photo with good composition or you can make your own composition but you have to study few photos of the flower from different angles to find the best composition. At the same time choose the color that you like your flower to be.

Second: sketch the flowers with HB pencil. When you are satisfied about it then start to paint them.

In painting process you need to follow directions:

1. Wet the paper.
2. With a wet brush pick the color & do the background & first wash of the flowers' color.
3. With dry brush start to build up the background flowers which should be foggy & blurry. Try to finish them when the paper is still wet.
4. Let the paper dry & then wet it again with spray bottle.
5. With dry brush & paints in higher intensity apply second coat on the flowers, stems, or leaves.
6. With wet brush apply third coat which should be the darker value in the flowers.
7. Final touches could be the darkest value & few details for integration.
8. Sign your painting with date.



## Because I Can't Breathe if I Don't Say Something!

By Salvadora Sosa-Prieto



Learner Salvadora Sosa-Prieto

Do you feel unheard when saying something? Yes, I sometimes do. In order to be heard, we have to learn to listen and look for signs of social injustice. I always want to say something, but for some reason I don't—I feel judged because of my accent, appearance, beliefs, religion, culture, education, immigration status, preferences, or ideals among others.

It all started during my childhood when I wanted to say something, and express my emotions, but I could not due to family and society rules. Since that time, I started feeling I could not breathe! Yes, I could not breathe when asked about not wanting to wear the same clothes as my sister, when

I could not tell my teacher to not compare me with my classmates, I could not breathe when I was harassed by others because my father abandoned us when I was just a girl, I could not breathe when I heard others tell me “why are you going to the university if you are a woman and old enough?” Also, I could not breathe when I realized that there are social injustices in many communities, states, countries, and continents. Many of us have experienced childhoods similar to mine, one that was full of injustices and criticism for wanting to strive over others, to be an individualist, for events we had no control over, and to settle for less. On top of that, many of us have experienced racism at schools, at work, and in other walks of life.

Social injustice, including racism between countries, has existed for so long, with the privilege of one group over another. Year after year we hear of many injustices with very little results. In honor of the death of George Floyd, I'd like to join the Black community and tell them that I feel their pain like mine. MLK once said “I have a dream,” when I heard that, I knew I had the same dream and, for sure, every one of us has the same dream. The time to take action has always been by starting with something small, but it is in our hands: In my case, reading has been helping me to fight the injustices around me and be respectful of others' ideas.

If you already started doing or saying something, don't stop and raise your voice just to benefit yourself, meet others who deal with the same oppression as you; do what you want others to do for you. If you don't know where to start, how about reading, or watching a movie or documentary, or listening to others; learn from these stories to understand and to accept others' differences. Respect for the rights of others is peace.

Now I can breathe because I said something!

# Summer Reading Challenge Poetry Series

## Summer Reading Poetry Series

For many learners, the Summer Reading Challenge poetry series was their first time learning about, writing, and reading poetry. Through the four-week course, their poetic language grew, and along with it their confidence in expressing themselves poetically. Even conversations became a perfect place to “speak in poetry.” As Laurie Lew, the poetry class teacher, puts it, “The great discovery for me in teaching this class is how naturally we all use the language of metaphor.”

Perhaps this was why our learners connected with each other and the class from the beginning. As English language learners, they were all discovering how to express themselves in an unfamiliar language – one notorious for its complex rules. Perhaps the freedom which poetry allows the poet gave each of our participants the chance to express themselves, gracefully and thoughtfully, without having to worry about those rules. The poetic voice was in them already. All they needed was the freedom Laurie provided and a space to comfortably share their thoughts and feelings.

Below, we take a brief look back at our magical poetry series. Teacher Laurie Lew shares with us her experience teaching the class, and our students and volunteers share their poetry. These poems are moments from each learner's life; experiences of the difficult times we find ourselves in; memories of love and of mundane, everyday moments. And at the end, our guest poet - Luis Antonio Pichardo - shares a poem to celebrate the Summer Reading Poetry Series.

Enjoy!

-Abel Santibañez



# Summer Reading Challenge Poetry Series

## From Teacher Laurie Lew About Teaching the Poetry Class:



I've been a volunteer with the literacy program since 2016; in my other life I'm a high school librarian and English teacher, dedicated to the value of clear and direct verbal communication. Poetry operates on a very different plane! According to Robert

Frost, "it's the one permissible way of saying one thing and meaning another;" which is to say that poetry is rooted in metaphor. The great discovery for me in teaching this class is how naturally we all use the language of metaphor, whether describing what we see out the window or communicating our feelings. A lovely example comes from a student describing a painting by Van Gogh: "Two doors show us one door is for coming in and the other for going out and I remember birth and death."

I'm grateful for the time I spent with these students, who are so imaginatively gifted in their writing and genuinely appreciative of each other's work. The hand clapping emoji (👏) made a frequent appearance on the screen, and we all shared the feeling of the student who said she came to these sessions because one of her classmates was a "genius!" A special note of appreciation to Luis Antonio Pichardo, who co-taught one class and read his own poems at our culminating event-- demonstrating, as one student put it, that a poem "written in two languages is a double power!" Learning and practicing another language, as these learners do every day, makes you fully aware of the words you chose. Entering the mind of a poet, you awake to the strange power of language to transform the everyday. For all poets are essentially language learners!



# Student Poems

## Super Moon and Grandson

Found super moon, On Venice street.  
On the way home from work.  
In Autumn night.

Staring, following bright yellow moon,  
Slowing down wheels & handle under neon.  
Let Moon Walk in my yard.  
“Good Night” to the moon on the tree top of lemon.  
Closing wooden gate with sleepy hand.

Opening the mail from daughter.  
Hi from universe heard.  
Holding breath, Staring ultrasound.  
Waving tiny fingers, Praying curved posture.  
Jumping heart with joy. Thinking round forehead.

Found super moon, On my daughter.  
On the way from journey.  
At the Autumn of life.

-By Donna Kim

## Lockdown Apples

green, crispy  
starving, tasting, sharing  
dozens of apples on a tree  
Hanging there!

-By Hande Guzey

## I Hear

Two men speak about something  
The speech between them joins to the wind  
Blowing into my place with all the noises from the street  
Like a new, bad orchestra.

-By Hande Guzey

## Spring with Covid 19

Spring rain drizzling, Soft warm sunshine.  
Eyes of flower blooming, Eyes of leaves leafing.  
Red, Orange, Yellow, green, blue, and pink.  
Beautiful words “touch & breath” fade.  
Loose old wooden gate opened by the spring wind.  
Fragrance of daughters carried in. Intact visit.  
Sitting alone by the window, Seeing the Spring pass by  
with distance and mask. The beautiful word ‘smile & smell’ hide.  
My time is lost?

-By Donna Kim



### About Van Gogh's Bedroom

In small room with two chairs and a table.  
I can see a man's room who is not rich.  
He works there and lives there too.  
This painting is bold color stark contrast  
and you can see a different person who lives there.  
We see the green window that shows us painter is a naturalist.  
When I watch this drawing I can see sincerity too.  
Two blue door shows us one door is for coming in  
and the other is for going and I remember birth and death.

-By Homa Tahmourasee Zadeh

### Healer

Abre tus ojos,  
abre tu mente,  
abre tu corazón,  
y verás  
cosas maravillosas! Yo  
lo declaro!

Cuando veo mi reflejo  
en tu mirada inocente, soy  
la más feliz  
y agradezco que  
mis manos obedezcan  
cuando las estiro  
para abrazarte,  
para besarte,  
para arrullarte  
entre mis brazos  
hasta que quedes  
placidamente dormida.

A tu risa le doy  
el poder de sanar  
tristezas, con tus manitas  
enderezarás sentimientos  
negativos,  
con tu caminar tambaleante  
todavía por tus tiernos años  
dirijirás el camino para  
los que están  
hundidos en la oscuridad  
de sus rencores. Yo  
lo declaro!

Y con tu sola presencia  
harás salir el sol  
para tus seres  
queridos que solo  
viven para tu brillar,  
mi amor,  
mi sangre,  
mi dulce Luna, Yo  
lo declaro!

-By Magui Severiano

### The Third Meditation

I was sitting on a bench of a dark peaceful river;  
There was a beautiful warm glow from the moonlight on the water  
She said.  
A paper boat was on the grass by my side;  
I was completely safe.  
She continued.  
If there is anything in my mind I was holding to  
Place it to the paper boat; choose to let it go  
She continued.

Everything that I didn't want to stuck with  
Was horizontally raining towards me  
I lifted my shield and tried to put them into the paper boat  
Poor paper boat  
How would it carry all my heavy thoughts?

Why was I alone in the dark?  
I was so scared.  
Place the boat on the water, and watch it drifted away  
She continued.  
I looked at the paper boat  
Sinking when I placed it on the river  
Poor paper boat.

-By Hande Guzey



## Summer Reading Challenge Poetry Series

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### Healer (In English)

Open your eyes,  
open your mind,  
open your heart,  
and you will  
see wonders! I  
declare it!

When I see my reflection  
in your innocent eyes, I'm  
the happiest, I'm  
so grateful  
that my hands obey  
me when I  
reach out  
to hug you,  
kiss you,  
lull you in  
my arms until you  
fall asleep  
peacefully.

To your laughter I give  
the power to heal  
sadness, with your little  
hands you will straighten  
negative feelings,  
with your wobbly walk  
still for your tender years  
you will lead  
the way for those  
who are sinking  
in the darkness of  
their grudges, I  
declare it!

And with your presence alone  
you will  
make the sun rise  
for your loved ones  
who only live for you  
to shine, my love  
my blood,  
my sweet Luna. I  
declare it!

-By Magui Severiano

### Praise Song For Us

Some of us stuck in a small house  
Some others in a big one  
Maybe in a dormitory or care homes  
Praise song for communities

Some of us have to go to work in danger  
Otherwise some of us can't find essential stuff for living  
Losing jobs increased the anxiety  
Praise song for essential staff

I hear the noise of silence  
Some of us should learn to respect others  
Even if we aren't on the same page  
Praise song for kindness

Respect, love, taking care of each other  
Checking out friends, neighbors if they are okay  
Some of us feel loneliness more than others  
Isolation is real in ages

Praise song for anxiety, praise song for every moment  
Love friends, strangers, neighbors  
Praise song for spreading love  
That is the only solution.

-By Hande Guzey

### I'm Sima, I Want To Write A Poem About Love

I like hearing the voice of bird in the forest  
I like swimming in the ocean  
I like walking early in the morning  
I like drinking coffee with my friends  
I like listening to classical music  
but I love my children. They are my only love.

-By Sima Uttamchandani



### Pandemic July 2020

Rough season, Wolf myself, in dawn.  
Strolling around neighbor without job.  
Sending cautious signal to human in 6 feet distant.  
Rough season, tough warrior myself in bright sunshine.  
Wearing face mask, shield and gloves,  
Fighting to get bread, meat and toilet paper without thought.  
Rough season, Deaf myself in ripe afternoon, surfing,  
browsing and reading the internet without aim.  
Rough season, myself around sun set. Talking flowers,  
Imitating bird's song, watching, breeze thru leaves,  
playing with squirrel without company.  
Rough season, laugh at myself in the dim light,  
Asking me where are my patients? What did I do for them?  
Answering no answer. Holding 2 hands tight without pray.  
Rough season, cough out sigh on wet pillow,  
thinking the victims of Covid19 and all helping hands,  
Longing for life of yesterday without treatment.  
Rough season, Shooting stars one after another in the middle of night.  
Dreaming of Tomorrow under new sun.

-By Donna Kim

### If I Hold Your Hands, You Cry

If I hold your hands, you cry.  
My darkness gets bigger as spotted.  
Frighten you point to point.  
If I hold your hands; you cry

My hands smell of soil, smell of blood.  
I am a tiller which grows tall in the peasant nights,  
I was washed in roily cloudy water, purified.  
I am so close to the stars in the nights,  
A hand spans in the lights.

If I hold your hands, you cry  
The village I was born in if you knew.  
The night is bigger than my night,  
Its pain is deeper than my pain.  
If I hold your hands, your hands get cold!

-Translated by Hande Guzey from poet Cahit Sitki Taranci



# Summer Reading Challenge Poetry Series

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## Playing With Granddaughter

Playing with granddaughter. Sitting on the spiral narrow stairs.  
Playing fairy with 3 year old. Attention! Tumbling downstairs.  
Heavy head first. big guts next, reading glasses last. Laughing bashfully.  
Oops! Too old for playing fairy.

-By Donna Kim

## Ode To Poetry Class!

The first song at birth. Smelling Mama's sweat. Sucking mama's nipple. Seeing mama's tear.  
Reading mama's lips. Hearing mama's song. Holding mama's fingers.  
Mama's gone. Her lips are gone. Writing her song in mother tongue in poetry class.

-By Donna Kim

## Homma

Without saying a word  
With a warm-hearted  
  
I miss you my friend  
Someday in a word  
Bright with laughter  
You are my hope like a sunflower  
This winter  
We'll stay at the Golden gate Bridge  
You'll draw the sea on a white drawing paper  
I'll paint the scenery of the world  
With a thumping bass sound  
When I hear a Dolphin sing  
We'll play the Salsa dancing

I dream of being your friend today  
Can I see you tomorrow?  
My heart is still beating  
It builds up in longing

-By Coco

## Happiness

I'm so happy  
To see the sunrise like a princess smiling  
I'm so happy  
To hear the little birds singing  
I'm so happy  
To touch the peace of silence  
I'm so happy  
To taste the sweet vanilla ice cream  
I'm so happy  
To feel you hugging a fantastic dream  
I'm so happy  
To learn something that changed my life forever  
Why didn't I know before?  
All these small happiness  
Staying inside of me  
But never too late  
I just found this gift now

-By Coco



# Volunteer Poems

## After Van Gogh's Bedroom

A very masculine bedroom  
Everything neat and in its place  
Clothes hung on hooks  
Bed made  
A sturdy wooden bed with  
a warm red woolen blanket.  
As if the occupant has just left for work  
Outside work, manly work  
maybe chopping trees or  
building houses  
While the room waits patiently  
for his return

-By Barbara Margolies

## Untitled

The boy's room awaits his return,  
a bit scattered --  
the way he left it,  
he way he is,  
but spare -- like the lean lad himself.

Art adorns the bright blue walls;  
portraits of self, a scene, a scribble  
surround the cot.

The window -- neither open nor quite closed --  
almost lets us see the wide world  
into which he has run.

-By Karen Carlson

## The Wedding Ring

Slipped on my finger  
on a beautiful day in June 24 years ago.

In Hawaii  
my husband went snorkeling  
in the ocean with the turtles.  
When he emerged,  
his wedding ring was gone.

We got a new one,  
but that one slipped away too,  
only to turn up in a dresser drawer  
several years later.

The third ring has endured  
the rest of the 24 years.

I hope it decides to stay  
and does not take off again.

Although I hear Hawaii is  
lovely this time of year.

-By Barbara Margolies

## A Poem In Response To Van Gogh's Bedroom

The bedroom...  
A place for secret thoughts  
Brought to the fore  
By its walls' safe fortitude.

The bedroom...  
Where lessons learned earlier  
Are readdressed  
Finding further application.

The bedroom...  
So quiet,  
So cool,  
It is an unintended space.

-By Henrietta Kiner



### From Poet Luis Antonio Pichardo:



As a Poet/Artist, and as the Founder and Executive Director of DSTL Arts, a nonprofit arts organization, I have worked to engage the community through the arts at multiple levels. From mentoring emerging poet/artists, to participating in and creating artist residencies in community-based settings, I have found that artists reside in every corner of our neighborhoods. Sometimes all it takes is encouraging them and drawing them out.

When I was invited to help facilitate a session of the Poetry Workshop series offered by LAPL's Adult Literacy Program, I was excited to hear the poetic voices of the adult learners involved in the workshop series. At first, some expressed their reservations in calling themselves poets, with some admitting they had never written poetry before starting the workshops, but I immediately knew that I was surrounded by artists. Their ideas and questions signaled a true understanding of the purpose of poetry.

Through facilitating a conversation surrounding the purpose of poetry and the value of writing in all the languages we know, I encouraged the participants to engage in a writing exercise that I use in my own practice. I asked each participant to answer two simple questions for the entire group: 1) Where does poetry come from? and 2) What is your favorite drink?

Using the answers each participant provided, I challenged them to incorporate the words of their peers in a new poem they would potentially dedicate to their workshop instructor and to poetry as a whole. Without their knowing, I was also taking notes with the intention of writing a poem that incorporated all of their answers and thoughts surrounding poetry.

The result is the poem I debuted at their culmination reading. The result is a poem I dedicated to them, my compatriots in poetry. The result is "My Language Box," a poem that I hope reflects the thoughts and words of these talented poets whom I have the privilege of sharing a community with.

-Luis



### My Language Box

Poetry: a rearrangement  
of language files,  
drawers indexed  
by alcohol recipes  
and mocha coffee,  
iced or not, but from  
Coffee Bean, and carvings  
of sea rocks; folders  
cascading from the back  
of the mind the way  
homemade lemonade  
seeps, not too sweet,  
not too sour, into  
the connections between  
our minds; abolished  
thoughts trickling forward  
leaving the faint scent  
of death and tequila,  
leading to nervous  
shocks of my heart  
and blood tasting  
like sparkling water  
gone a little flat.  
Poetry: an orange  
juice dreaming  
of being horchata,  
the ice cold tea  
that is energy  
awakening in a stretch  
of my toes.  
Poetry: the Turkish  
coffee that sits  
in my language box.



# Achievements!

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Learner **Elizabeth Isais** has some wonderful news to share: "Hi, my name is Martha Elizabeth Isais. First of all, I want to thank Los Angeles

Public Library and, especially, Ms. Alicia Chavarin, for allowing me to learn about the resources available in the Adult Literacy Program. Being part of this program has allowed me to improve my quality of life. Working with a tutor one-on-one and participating in conversation classes has helped me improve my English skills and as a result I now have a better job and I work as a Teacher Assistant for LAUSD. My next goal is to take the U.S. citizenship test so I can vote someday and make a difference in my community." Congratulations, Elizabeth! We're so happy to have you in our program!

"**Rosa Cid** is an eager learner," says tutor Claudia Alaix. "She is very good at communicating verbally and has a extend vocabulary. She is a dedicated student, always asking for homework. I am sure that if she continues like this, she will learn more and more and will have more confidence in herself." Wonderful!

"Learner **Yana Chen** is taking 2-3 conversation classes each week as well as participating in the one-on-one tutoring twice a week. This hard work is really paying off in comprehension and fluency!" says tutor Mark Lewis. "Yana also recently finished Challenger book 3. She's really flying through them; very conscientious!" We are so inspired by your dedication, Yana!

Learner **Teli Avanesi** graduated from Challenger 2 to Challenger 3! Great job, Teli!

"In less than 2.5 months together, Coco and I are mid-way through our third novel," says tutor Alexis Hyder about learner **Jinkyung Im**. "She is driven to increase her comfort reading and speaking English, and dives right in to each chapter we read. She's a voracious learner and a joy to work with. I'm so proud of all that she has achieved!"

Tutor Margaret McLain is pleased to announce that learner **Shahrooz Tarzampour** has successfully completed the first course in the Electrician Program at West Valley Occupational Center! Congratulations, Shahrooz!

Conversation class teacher Julie Martinez had this wonderful news to share about



# Achievements!

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her class: “Every week when the students convene, they now say hello to one another and ask about happenings in each of their lives. Seeing the community that has blossomed has been so heartwarming. My students have said this class is their community and social circle; they share recipes and life tips with one another. During quarantine, we have had some excellent conversations: discussing mental health/quarantine coping strategies, holding a medical terminology class, and facilitating a class that delved into Black history to provide students with further context during the BLM movement. Though the circumstances are not ideal for all, I am happy more students from the surrounding Los Angeles area have had access to my class, increasing the attendance (14-17 students a week)!!!”

Learner **Rita Garcia** is sharing her love of reading with her college-age granddaughter: “They exchange books and book recommendations, and love talking about the books. The experience gives Rita great pleasure and, I think, inspires her granddaughter to continue her reading,” says tutor Toya Harrison. We love this!

Tutor Claudia Alaix reports that learner **Juana Juarez** has made a lot of progress.

“She is able to read some letters that she receives by mail. She understands the documents that she signs at the doctor or at work much more, and in general she has noticed not only her own progress, but also the benefit of literacy. She has begun to use cell phone text messages much more, managing to read and send messages. I am very proud of her progress and dedication.” Fantastic work, Juana!

Learner **Bertha Ramirez** completed Challenger book 4 recently! Way to go, Bertha!

Literacy coordinator Gloria Cervantes is happy to report that learner **Kensuke Ota** has reached Challenger 8! Nice job!

“I’m very proud of my learner, **Mee Suk Lee**, for her devotion to mastering vocabulary,” says tutor Alexis Hyder. “When we reached the Lessons 1-8 review in Challenger 5, Mee Suk determinedly wrote out each word in the Word Index, along with its definition, in order to reinforce her understanding. She practiced on her own so that when she and I worked through the terms together, she had a strong command of them. I was very impressed! I look forward to meeting together in person once again.” Beautiful!



### Families for Literacy

Families for Literacy is a program for learners already enrolled in the Adult Literacy Program (ALP) of the Los Angeles Public Library who are caregivers to children under the age of 18. The purpose of the program is to promote literacy in the home by showing adults how to read to children. Students receive tips on how to read to the child and earn free books that become part of the home library.

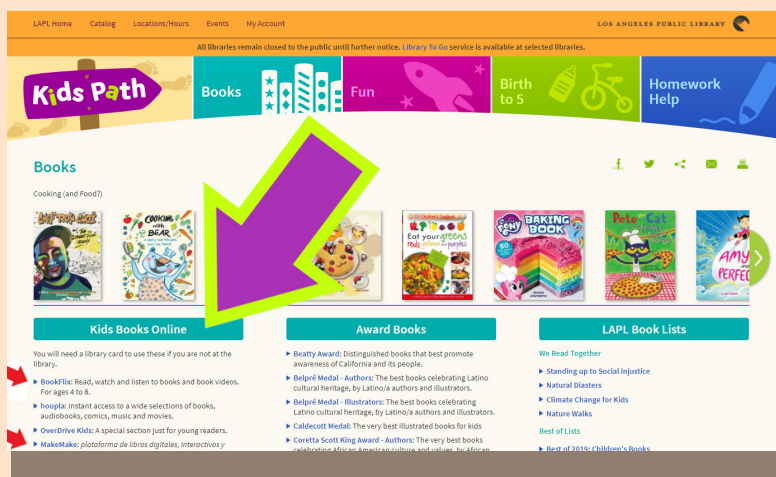
### Tips for Caregivers:

Looking for ways to relax and enjoy family time? Reading with your children can boost everyone's literacy skills and will promote bonding. There are many ways to share books with children. You can ask questions: about what is on each page, what they think will happen, or why something did happen. Talk about the people in the story, their feelings, the setting, even the pictures. As a matter of fact, you can "read" an entire book just by looking at the pictures and describing what is happening in each one. Take turns "reading" the pictures in this way to tell a new story together. Talking and reading with children will help both of you develop critical skills necessary for increasing literacy. Enjoy your time together!

### Reading Online:

Some LAPL branches are open with Library to Go service. You can call to place items on hold or do it on a digital device and then call to make an appointment to pick your books up at the library. However, you can also find lots of ebooks and other items using the library's digital resources. Tumblebooks and BookFlix both have many children's titles to choose from. You can read the books with your children or (for some books) let your device read the book to you. MakeMake is another option, but all of the books are in Spanish! Look around on these sites for something to read with your family. You won't believe how much good stuff is ready and waiting for you.

To find Tumblebooks, Bookflix, and MakeMake, visit [lapl.org/kids/books](http://lapl.org/kids/books) and look under Kids Books Online. Have your library card ready!





## About Stuart

Stuart Silverstein, one of our dedicated English Conversation class teachers, shared the beautiful story below about his experience being a volunteer tutor.

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## Learning English With a Family Feeling By Stuart Silverstein



After explaining the expression “people of color” during a recent English Conversation class, a student soon asked a penetrating question: Isn’t white a color, too?

What followed was a lively and wide-ranging discussion. We talked about how “people of color” has gone a long way

toward replacing “minorities” and similar terms in conversations about race and ethnicity today. We also got into how the definition of whiteness has evolved over the decades, and how the terms we use to describe specific groups keep changing. A case in point: the progression from “Hispanic” to “Latino/Latina” to “Latinx.”

Good questions like this – and the good discussions they produce – are among the things I have loved most about teaching in the adult literacy program since October 2017.

What I also love are the warm bonds, and sense of friendship and family, that have developed in our class. I have seen friendships develop across ethnic and language boundaries among my students. It has been a joy for me, too, to get to know my students and learn about their personal stories.

And when I refer to family, I mean it literally as well as figuratively. A mother and her college student son come to our class regularly,

and the dad occasionally joins us, too. We also have had two mother-daughter pairs of students, as well as two sisters and several married couples. These days, a young woman currently living in Iran sometimes manages to tune into Zoom with us – despite a 10½-hour time difference. She got started with the encouragement of her fiancé in Los Angeles -- and when his work schedule permits, he joins the class, too.

What's more, when we were meeting weekly in the Canoga Park Library before the pandemic struck, parents often would bring their young children with them. I encouraged that. I didn't want my students to miss class because they lacked childcare help. And getting acquainted with the children turned out to be another terrific way that we learned about each other's families and lives.

Last, but certainly not least, I love the compassion and human warmth of so many of our students. Those qualities surface in many ways. I remember a

student who, while giving an oral presentation, walked over to hug a classmate who started to cry because she was reminded of the hardships she encountered living in this country. I often teach vocabulary through music, and songs like “Humble and Kind” and “Lean on Me” have deeply resonated with the class. What's more, our discussions about the similarities and differences among words such as compassion, empathy, sympathy, mercy and pity generated so many questions that the conversations stretched on for weeks.

The kindness and inquisitiveness that pervade the class inspire me as well as my two Zoom teaching partners on Saturday afternoons, Priscilla Rojas-Naiman and Tim Roberts. And every Saturday, after our class ends, I come away with the same feeling: I can't wait until we meet again next week!

