

ENJOYING POETRY

February – March 2024 Newsletter

Our group continues to flourish with members reading a wide variety of poems, all of which are enjoyed and discussed by everyone. Members chose poems in all shapes and sizes. Some are old, some brand new. Some rhyme, some don't. It really doesn't matter. No rules you see. Poetry has no rules. It just boils down to what you like, what you enjoy.

David Harmer

December 2023 -January 2024 Newsletter

Our group, which is beginning to attract several new members, continues to read and discuss poems of all genres. The best bit, however much we love poetry and we do, is the opportunity to chat, reminisce and have a laugh.

David Harmer

October – November 2023 Newsletter

Our group continues to attract new members as we rejoice and revel in the delights of poetry past and present in all its forms, patterns, moods and voices. If it rhymes that's great. If it doesn't that's great too. If it wallops out iambic pentameters or wanders in the freest of free verse, it's all good. There's a poem out there for every one to enjoy and we keep on finding them.

David Harmer

April – May 2023 Newsletter

We have been reading some wonderful poetry recently, with several members finding poems from a number of different sources such as family letters, old newspapers and personal archives. Often these poems are very simple in construction but make a powerful emotional impact. Of course, Pam Ayres continues to make us laugh and the generous gift to the group of The Nation's 100 Favourite Comic Poems has been a great success. Our numbers are growing and we hope to be putting some of our favourite poems on display at the April Members' Meeting for all to enjoy.

Please remember we aren't a writing group (although some of us do share our own work) and we aren't a Poetry Speaking group. We just like poems and enjoy sharing them with each other.

David Harmer

December 2022 – January 2023 Newsletter

The Enjoying Poetry group continues to do just that, as members bring along a huge variety of poems and read them out for us all to relish. Some of the poems are famous, some anonymous, some rhyme, quite a lot don't, some are very old, others brand new. Above all, we all have a really great chat and a lot of laughs. Some new members have arrived, bringing a welcome new energy to the group. We are always very surprised that there aren't hundreds of U3A members waiting to join us, they are really missing out.

David Harmer

April – May 2022 Newsletter

The group is now back at Café Prégio and enjoying the face-to-face meetings once again. As ever, there is a great variety of excellent poetry on offer. Our last meeting began with extracts from Beowulf and ended with Pam Ayres! Fantastic! With new members joining, the discussion and laughter around the table is even more lively and stimulating than ever.

David Harmer

February – March 2022 Newsletter

The Enjoying Poetry group managed to meet a couple of times to enjoy our usual mix of poetry. Old and new, funny and serious, rhyming and not rhyming, it all counts! Not everybody likes the same thing of course but there is always the joy of reading and discovering new writers as well as revisiting old favourites. We postponed our final meeting just before Christmas and hope to meet again in January, if by then it is reasonable to do so given the current surge in Covid.

David Harmer

June – July Newsletter 2021

Every month I send out a selection of poems to group members, many of whom then get in touch with me to say that they have enjoyed reading them. It's important to read poetry from the past, so this month I included Wordsworth's wonderful poem 'To The Cuckoo' although it caused me to reflect that I don't think I have actually heard a cuckoo for many years now! Equally, it is important to keep up-to-date with current work, reading poems that reflect the diverse world we live in. This is one such; a wonderful poem from the American poet Grace Schulman.

Because

*Because, in a wounded universe, the tufts
of grass still glisten, the first daffodil
shoots up through ice-melt, and a red-tailed hawk
perches on a cathedral spire; and because
children toss a fire-red ball in the yard
where a schoolhouse façade was scarred by vandals,
and joggers still circle a dry reservoir;*

*because a rainbow flaunts its painted ribbons
and slips them somewhere underneath the earth*

*because in a smoky bar the trombone blares
louder than street sirens, because those
who can no longer speak of pain are singing;*

*and when on this wide meadow in the park
a full moon still outshines the city lights,
and on returning home, below the North Star,*

*I see new bricks-and-glass where the Towers fell;
and I remember my lover's calloused hand
soften in my hand while crab apple blossoms*

*showered our laps, and a yellow rose
opened with its satellites of orange buds,
because I cannot lose the injured world*

without losing the world, I'll have to praise it.



Like other group leaders I am tentatively exploring the idea of meeting up together again later this year, should the Government allow it. I would love to hear what the group thinks.

David Harmer

April – May 2021 Newsletter

I am still sending out regular batches of poetry each month and several members get back to me, often with suggestions of poems they would like to share. Interestingly, the group has grown because the U3A Literary group, of which I am a member, asked if they could have the poems emailed to them as well. This month featured poems by Sir John Betjeman, John Clare, the English poet, U. A. Fanthorpe and the Welsh poet Gillian Clarke.

John Clare is a particularly fascinating writer as he was born in grinding poverty near Peterborough in 1793, which then was in Northamptonshire. His memorial calls him "The Northamptonshire Peasant Poet". He did attend school until he was 12 but was an agricultural labourer, gardener, a traveller with Romany people and moved to Rutland in 1817 as a lime burner before returning home. Malnutrition stemming from childhood may have been the main factor behind his five-foot stature and may have contributed to his poor physical health in later life. He began writing poems in 1820 and continued to publish all his life. He was very successful and highly praised as a poet in his lifetime though found earning a living to care for his wife and seven children difficult. Inevitably, he was patronised by the aristocracy and the literary world who bought and praised his work but found him a curiosity. Torn between the two worlds of high society and rural peasantry he became depressed and suffered severe mental health issues. He was eventually committed to an asylum in Essex and latterly Northampton, where he died. His poetry, in which he used many dialect words and scant punctuation, underwent major re-evaluation in the late 20th century and he is now often seen as a major 19th-century poet. His nature poetry is marvellous.

David Harmer

August – September 2020 Newsletter

We are all still managing to keep in touch which is great. I send out batches of poems every now and then which I email to group members or send by post to others. Many members have suggested poems that they would like me to share. Tennyson is very popular with the group at the moment but one member, Irene Chapman, delighted us all by choosing a very interesting and complex poem by Theodore Roethke. I continue to choose as wide a variety of poems as I can, ranging from TS Eliot to Dr. John Cooper Clarke, via Pam Ayers and Sir John Betjeman. It all counts! Even better, was when one member, Jan Louis, wrote her own poem! Now this isn't a writing group but I am never going to say no to members who want to express their ideas and feelings through their own work. This is it.

Lockdown 2020

Turn the keys on all the doors. Shut the windows on all the floors.
Stay in.

Shut up shops and all the stores. Turn your faces from the spores.
Stay in.

Turn your hand to homebased chores. Shut down the time with you and yours.
Stay in.

Shut your mouths and support the cause. Turn out and clap for the underpaid scores.
Stay in.

Turn on the TV to hear Cabinet bores. Shut out the death toll to help the snores.
Stay in.

But wait.....
Shut out the intel the nation abhors. Turn around and take a pause.
Go out?

Turncoats in government change the laws. Shutting down national doubting roars.
Go out?

Open your eyes and open your doors. Take the risk for capitalist claws.
Go work.

Jan Louis

I thought it's a really strong, well expressed and direct poem. Very good Jan and thank you. Many members of the group email me or write letters, discussing poetry and reacting to the poems I have sent them. I think that we are doing as well as can be expected in these difficult days and my thanks to all the members who get back to me about the poems we share.

David Harmer

June – July 2020 Newsletter

The Enjoying Poetry group was really beginning to flourish before lockdown. We enjoyed a wide variety of poems from a range of different writers and had some great discussions and even better, some great laughs!

Since lockdown I have been circulating poems on a regular basis through Beacon as well as writing to those members who don't have an email address. I have received several ideas from members of poems they like and I have circulated those.

I have had a couple of phone calls too and encourage anybody in the group who would like a chat about poems, life, the lockdown and anything else to call me.

David Harmer

April – May 2020 Newsletter

The Enjoying Poetry group meets on the third Tuesday of every month at Café Prego, 10.30 to 12.00. We enjoy reading and discussing poems that members of the group brings along to read. There are no themes as such, people just bring along a poem they like. Recently we have had poems ranging from Geoffrey Chaucer to Pam Ayers. There is a lot of lively chat and a lot of laughter! Contact me for more information (see contact number inside the back page).

David Harmer

February – March 2020 Newsletter

The Enjoying Poetry group has made a great start with three well attended meetings so far. Members have brought along a fantastic range of poems from the downright hilarious to the very serious. As well as reading and hearing poems, the group enjoys the memories and anecdotes the poems give rise to and there is often a lively discussion about the poems and what they mean to us as a group. Above all, we enjoy a good laugh and a good chat.

David Harmer

December 2019 – January 2020 Newsletter

The Enjoying Poetry group is now firmly established, meeting at Prego on the third Tuesday of every month from 10.30 a.m. to 12.00. Members have brought poems ranging from Pam Ayres to TS Eliot as well as poems from pre-twentieth century writers. It's fun and everybody has something to say about the poems they enjoy. It is so simple. If you like a poem, bring it along and read it and say why you like it! We are quite full but there is always room for one or two more.

David Harmer