

Your Mindful Poetry Moments Workbook



Mindful Poetry Moments Playlist 2020

NOTE: Weeks 1-4 are appropriate for all ages. The additional 5th week may be more appropriate for classroom use with students in the 4th or 5th grade and older.

For the 5th week, we have given you an alternate Mindful Music Moments selection if you prefer it for younger students.*

Week 1 (Begins March 30):

Carrie Newcomer, [Three Gratitudes](#)

We feel this is a wonderful poem for all ages.

Week 2:

Gregory Orr, [Let's Remake the World with Words](#)

Gregory Orr shares that the poem To remake the world with words is about “becoming aware of the world that we inhabit everyday-- to wipe away the dust of “everydayness” that has us not seeing things that are around us, not seeing or feeling the world we live in. The way sometimes after a heavy rain when the sun comes out everything seems washed and fresh and radiant.”

**Note: the interview we link to includes a story about Gregory killing his brother in an accidental shooting.*

Week 3:

Aimee Nezhukumatathil, [On Listening to Your Teacher Take Attendance](#)

“On Listening to Your Teacher Take Attendance,” introduces the theme of multicultural identity, girlhood grace and the feelings of otherness as her teacher mispronounces her non-Western name.



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Mindful Poetry Moments Playlist 2020

Week 4:

Naomi Shihab Nye, [Alive](#)

Week 5:

Brad Aaron Modlin, [What You Missed That Day You Were Absent From Fourth Grade](#)

From Brad –

“Maybe you have feelings and big questions that are hard to talk about. Maybe you sometimes stay awake worrying instead of sleeping. Or you think your life could be more peaceful than it is. Those nights are part of what this poem is about. Since it was published, many people—strangers—have written me to say that they have found connection to the poem, that they recognize their own experiences in it. I think when the big questions seem too confusing, or we feel lonely in the dark, we can take comfort knowing that we aren’t actually alone. We are kept company by all the people who are also lying awake, hoping for the answers that may arrive slowly. We just can’t see these companions because they are in their own beds in their own homes.”

**Note: This poem may not be suitable for younger listeners. There is a line that mentions the teacher smoking a cigarette. Please preview for your audience.*



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Resources

The On Being Project Resources

On Being Episodes feat. Poetry

[On Being: Carrie Newcomer – A Conversation With Music](#)

[On Being: Gregory Orr – Shaping Grief with Language](#)

[Poetry Unbound: A Poem About What Grounds You](#)

[On Being: Naomi Shihab Nye – Your Life is a Poem](#)

[Poetry Unbound: A Poem For What You Learn Alone](#)

Other Poetry-Related Resources from The On Being Project

[Starting Point: Poetry, the Human Voice](#)

[Poetry Unbound Series](#)

[Library: Poets & Poetry](#)

[Civil Conversations Project](#)

[Starting Point: Poetry for Tumultuous Times](#)

Other Online Resources

National Poetry Month

[Homepage](#)

[Teacher Resources](#)

Poetry Foundation

[Learning Lab](#)

[Poems for Children](#)

[Poems for Teens](#)

[Teacher Resources](#)

Academy of American Poets

[Teacher Resources](#)

[Teach This Poem](#)

Dodge Poetry

[Resources for Teachers](#)



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Resources

Other Online Resources (cont'd)

Edutopia

[Online Poetry Resources](#)

Poetry Out Loud

[Teacher Resources](#)

Scholastic

[Teaching Resources and Classroom Ideas](#)

National Education Association

[Bringing Poetry to the Classroom](#)

Poetry 180

[Project Website](#)

Center for Courage and Renewal

[Poetry Resources](#)

Facing History and Facing Ourselves

[Poetry Resources](#)

Books

[*Leaping Poetry*](#) by Robert Bly

[*Wishes, Lies, and Dreams*](#) by Kenneth Koch

[*Poetry Handbook*](#) by Mary Oliver

[*Triggering Town*](#) by Richard Hugo



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Mindful Poetry Moments

This poetry lesson was created by [Mindful Music Moments](#) in collaboration with [The On Being Project](#) for National Poetry Month 2020. Each week offers students and teachers alike the chance to pause and reflect on poetry's ability to encounter ourselves, the world, and the mystery of each other.

About The Poet:

Learn more about Carrie Newcomer at [The On Being Project](#) and [on her website](#).

Poetry Prompt:

Carrie Newcomer suggests this exercise:

“Try this for one week. At the end of each day write down at least eight small details you noticed within the previous 24 hours. At the end of each list write the words “Thank you.”

Read more about what Carrie wants you to know about Three Gratuities on this response template.

Poem: “Three Gratuities”

Poet: Carrie Newcomer

Written: 2013

Partner: The On Being Project

Carrie Newcomer is a Grammy and Emmy-winning singer-songwriter, artist, poet and educator. She lives in the woods of southern Indiana with her husband and two shaggy dogs.

Day 1: For our first day, let's just settle into listening to this poem. Breathe deep and notice how it makes you feel.

Day 2: Carrie wrote to us to tell you “In a song or a poem we can point toward something extraordinary and shimmering that lives below the surface of ordinary things.” As you listen today, what ordinary things do you notice in the poem?

Day 3: Today, after listening to “Three Gratuities,” we are going to sit in silence for one minute. During this time, think of three simple things you are grateful for.

Day 4: There is scientific evidence to show that people who practice gratitude, or feeling grateful, have improved health and wellness. Today, as you listen, place your hand on your heart, smile, and pay attention to what gratitude feels like in your body.

Day 5: This is our last day to listen to “Three Gratuities.” If this poem were a gift you could give someone, who would you want to give it to and why?

Three Gratuities

By **Carrie Newcomer**

Every night before I go to sleep
I say out loud
Three things that I'm grateful for,
All the significant, insignificant
Extraordinary, ordinary stuff of my life.
It's a small practice and humble,
And yet, I find I sleep better
Holding what lightens and softens my life
Ever so briefly at the end of the day.
Sunlight, and blueberries,
Good dogs and wool socks,
A fine rain,
A good friend,
Fresh basil and wild phlox,
My father's good health,
My daughter's new job,
The song that always makes me cry,
Always at the same part,
No matter how many times I hear it.
Decent coffee at the airport,
And your quiet breathing,
The stories you told me,
The frost patterns on the windows,
English horns and banjos,
Wood Thrush and June bugs,
The smooth glassy calm of the morning pond,
An old coat,
A new poem,
My library card,
And that my car keeps running
Despite all the miles.
And after three things,
More often than not,
I get on a roll and I just keep on going,
I keep naming and listing,
Until I lie grinning,
Blankets pulled up to my chin,
Awash with wonder
At the sweetness of it all.



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Three Gratuities

Response / Practice

By Carrie Newcomer

From poet Carrie Newcomer: “In a song or a poem we can point toward something extraordinary and shimmering that lives just below the surface of ordinary things.

This poem was created to read like a list or litany of gratitude, a window into the power of paying attention and lightly holding what we have seen. When teaching songwriting workshops I’ve had people tell me,“”There is nothing too exciting or momentous about my story, I’m just from Ohio (or insert small town here).”” But I have never met a person without an important and moving story to tell, never once. Contained within you are ordinary moments of deep meaning, of love and loss, delight and bewilderment, grief, disappointment, courage and hallelujah. There is a story in the small things and a clarity that happens when we frame our lives with a kinder and more grateful lens.””

Try this for one week. At the end of each day write down at least eight small details you noticed within the previous 24 hours. At the end of each item write the words “Thank you.”



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Mindful Poetry Moments

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About The Poet:

Listen to [On Being's episode](#) with Gregory Orr and find additional resources and poems. *NOTE: Adults please review this episode in advance. Orr talks about difficult things in his life.*

Poetry Prompt:

Gregory Orr wrote to you about this poem. He talks about "stealing" from the English Romantic poet William Wordsworth. There is a practice in poetry to dedicate a poem to another poet by using a subtitle to the poem in this format: "After Gregory Orr." You'll find Orr's full writing to you and the response template in your additional resources.

Poem: "Let's Remake the World with Words"

Poet: Gregory Orr

Written: 2005

Partner: The On Being Project

Gregory Orr is the author of more than 10 collections of poetry and several volumes of essays, criticism, and memoir. Gregory Orr is a master of the short, personal lyric.

Day 1: For our first day, let's settle into listening to this poem. What does it make you think about? How does it make you feel?

Day 2: Gregory Orr says this poem is about reexperiencing the "reality of the world with some emotional intensity and excitement." As you listen today, look around the room you are in as though it is a very important place and you are seeing it for the first time.

Day 3: In this poem, when Gregory Orr writes about the "dust of custom," he is referring to the poet William Wordsworth. Today, think of a person, place, or other thing deserving of fresh consideration, so they can shine again in your eyes and feel your gratitude toward them.

Day 4: In this poem, Gregory Orr asks us to pay attention to the details of our life. What or who do you want to pay more attention to in your life today?

Day 5: Today, imagine that the world was remade as you wish it to be. What would it look like? How would it feel? What words would you use to remake your world?

Lets Remake the World with Words

By Gregory Orr

Let's remake the world with words.
Not frivolously, nor
To hide from what we fear,
But with a purpose.

Let's,
As Wordsworth said, remove
"The dust of custom" so things
Shine again, each object arrayed
In its robe of original light.

And then we'll see the world
As if for the first time,
As once we gazed at the beloved
Who was gazing at us.



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Lets Remake the World with Words

By Gregory Orr

We have created a template for you based on Gregory Orr's "Let's Remake the World with Words" poem.

Your Name: _____

Let's Remake the World with _____.

After Gregory Orr.

Let's remake the world with _____.

_____.

_____.

_____.

Lets,

_____.

_____.

_____.

_____.



Lets Remake the World with Words

By Gregory Orr

When poets talk about poems (especially their own) it almost always has nothing to do with how the poems got written. I don't think about what my poem means when I write it, I just write the words down and see how they sound and if they seem interesting. BUT if I look at my poem later (now) and think about what's going on in it, what it might be after, then I can end up with something like this:

“To remake the world with words”—to become aware of the world that we inhabit everyday -- to wipe away the dust of “everydayness” that has us not seeing things that are around us, not seeing or feeling the world we live in. The way sometimes after a heavy rain when the sun comes out everything seems washed and fresh and radiant. And, for a poet, to use words to “remake” the world—to make us aware of the world again in all its intensity of just being there: so that somehow words that notice and name and describe the world we live in could be like that rain followed by sun: make the world (our world) radiant again, as if the meaning (and beauty?) that's in things could shine out—or, in the metaphor of the poem—the things of the world (our world) could be dressed again in their robes of light—their original dazzle and wonder as when a child sees something and the wonder of it fills them and shines out of their face.

To remake the world (with words) means to me to re-experience the reality of the world with some emotional intensity and excitement. Most of the time most of us (me included) kind of sleepwalk through our lives and the world we walk through. We don't “see” the things that are around us, they just kind of glide by (or they are covered with “the dust of custom”—that is, we're so used to seeing them, so “accustomed” to them that we don't see them anymore) (plus I like to say “dust of custom”—it makes a nice sound in my mouth, which I guess is why Wordsworth came up with it and why I “stole” it from his prose essay where I found it. Poets steal from other poets in order to keep ideas and phrases alive—Wordsworth's idea, his big idea, was to look at and enjoy the natural world—trees, streams, hills—the kinds of things he loved playing in as a kid in rural England—that's how Wordsworth “invented” nature and the joys/pleasures/wonders of childhood for us—he “invented them” in his poems—he “remade the world with words” and gave us (two hundred years later) the gift of enjoying the natural world, enjoying a walk in woods or a park—gave us the “rebirth” or “renewal” that comes with becoming aware of simple and everyday things again.

Lets Remake the World with Words

By Gregory Orr

This poem is about “seeing” things. Another short poem of mine that’s similar in implication is about hearing:

To be alive! Not just
The carcass but the spark.
That’s crudely put, but...

If we’re not supposed to dance
Why all this music?

To be vitally alive, we need to see and hear clearly—with eyes, ears, words, body and spirit. So it seems to me. (in this poem, I loved the sound of “carcass” and “spark” near each other—that pleasure in sounds is part of poetry’s meanings). In this poem “dancing” is equivalent to “remaking the world with words” in the earlier poem.

If we can get back to the intensity of things shining (and singing) it will be equivalent to looking at someone with love who is looking back at us with love. To “see” something isn’t necessarily a one-way street of us looking at it. If we are really alive, really open to life, then in certain moments it feels as if the things in the world are also looking at us: “as once we gazed at the beloved/ who was gazing at us.” This is not logically true, but it is emotionally/ imaginatively or spiritually true, or so the words of the poem seem to say.

Gregory Orr

Mindful Poetry Moments

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About The Poet:

Listen to the [Poetry Unbound](#) episode about this poem.

Poetry Prompt:

Aimee Nezhukumatathil opens the poem with “Breathe deep” as an expression of grounding in an uncomfortable situation.

Take a moment to think about a time when you needed to be brave. Then try to write a poem that starts with the same phrase “Breathe deep.”.

Poem: “On Listening to Your Teacher Take Attendance”

Poet: Aimee Nezhukumatathil

Written: 2018

Partner: The On Being Project

Aimee Nezhukumathil (neh-zoo-kuh-muh-tah-til) was born in Chicago and has written numerous award-winning books of poetry. In this poem, “On Listening to Your Teacher Take Attendance,” she introduces the theme of multicultural identity, girlhood grace and the feelings of otherness as her teacher mispronounces her non-Western name.

Day 1: For our first day, let's just settle into listening to this poem. Breathe deep and notice how it makes you feel.

Day 2: The poem begins with the poet taking a deep breath and noticing the smells of the classroom she's in. Today, while you listen, can you notice the smells around you?

Day 3: This poem talks about the experience of thinking about happy things when one feels uneasy. What happy things do you think about when you feel unsettled or uneasy?

Day 4: Aimee Nezhukumatathil gathers strength in the poem by remembering how she is loved. What is a memory of love that gives you strength?

Day 5: This is our last day listening to “On Listening to Your Teacher Take Attendance.” Today, notice today something new in this poem. What is it?

On Listening to Your Teacher Take Attendance

By Aimee Nezhukumatahil

Breathe deep even if it means you wrinkle
your nose from the fake-lemon antiseptic

of the mopped floors and wiped-down
doorknobs. The freshly soaped necks

and armpits. Your teacher means well,
even if he butchers your name like

he has a bloody sausage casing stuck
between his teeth, handprints

on his white sloppy apron. And when
everyone turns around to check out

your face, no need to flush red and warm.
just picture all the eyes as if your classroom

is one big scallop with its dozens of icy blues
and you will remember that winter your family

took you to the China Sea and you sank
your face in it to gaze at baby clams and sea stars

the size of your outstretched hand. And when
all those necks start to crane, try not to forget

someone once lathered their bodies, once patted them
dry with a fluffy towel after a bath, set out their clothes

for the first day of school. Think of their pencil cases
from third grade, full of sharp pencils, a pink pearl
eraser.

Think of their handheld pencil sharpener and its tiny
blade.



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About The Poet:

Listen to [On Being's episode](#) with Naomi Shihab Nye and find additional resources and poems.

Poetry Prompt:

Naomi Shihab Nye wrote: "When you're in a very quiet place, when you're remembering, when you're savoring an image, when you're allowing your mind calmly to leap from one thought to another, that's a poem."

Use this idea to write a poem of your own.

Poem: "Alive"

Poet: Naomi Shihab Nye

Written: 2011

Partner: The On Being Project

Naomi Shihab Nye was born in St. Louis, Missouri. She describes herself as a "wandering" poet, having spent the last 40 years traveling around the world to lead writing workshops and inspiring students of all ages.

Day 1: On our first day with this poem, let's just listen. What strikes you most about this poem? What do you notice right away?

Day 2: This poem features a series of questions posed to people, the Board of Education and even a dog. As you listen today, notice what you think the questions have in common.

Day 3: Have you ever said something untrue to a brother, sister or friend that hurt them, even if you didn't mean it to? Have you ever had something that was hard to give away, even if it shouldn't be (like the old milk in the poem)? Consider those things as you listen today.

Day 4: The title of this poem is "Alive." Could you guess why?

Day 5: As you listen to this poem today, think about someone who would enjoy hearing it or reading it. Who would you give this poem-gift to and why?

Alive

By Naomi Shihab Nye

Dear Abby, said someone from Oregon,
I am having trouble with my boyfriend's attachment
to an ancient gallon of milk still full
in his refrigerator. I told him it's me or the milk,
is this unreasonable? Dear Carolyn,
my brother won't speak to me
because fifty years ago I whispered
a monkey would kidnap him in the night
to take him back to his true family
but he should have known it was a joke
when it didn't happen, don't you think?
Dear Board of Education, no one will ever remember a test. Repeat. Stories,
poems, projects, experiments,
mischief, yes, but never a test.
Dear Dog Behind the Fence, you really need
to calm down now. You have been barking every time
I walk to the compost for two years
and I have not robbed your house. Relax.
When I asked the man on the other side
if you bother him too, he smiled and said no,
he makes me feel less alone. Should I be more
worried about the dog or the man?



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Alive

By Naomi Shihab Nye

Naomi Shihab Nye wrote: “When you’re in a very quiet place, when you’re remembering, when you’re savoring an image, when you’re allowing your mind calmly to leap from one thought to another, that’s a poem.”

Use this idea to write a poem of your own.



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About The Poet:

Listen to the [Poetry Unbound](#) episode about this poem.

Poetry Prompt:

We have all experienced the feeling of missing out when absent from school. We created a poetry template to explore these worries in a similar style to Brad Aaron Modlin's.

Poem: "What You Missed That Day You Were Absent from Fourth Grade"

Poet: Brad Aaron Modlin

Written: 2016

Partner: The On Being Project

Brad Aaron Modlin is the Chair of Creative Writing at the University of Nebraska at Kearney. He holds a PhD from Ohio University and an MFA from Bowling Green State.

Day 1: Let's just settle into listening to this poem. What does it make you think about? How does it make you feel?

Day 2: This poem has to do with being absent from school. What does it feel like when you have to miss school or another social event?

Day 3: The poem reflects on life lessons the poet wishes he would have learned in school but had to learn on his own. What is a life lesson you have had to learn that no one taught you?

Day 4: Brad Aaron Modlin wrote to us about this poem, he said "Maybe you have feelings and big questions that are hard to talk about. Maybe you sometimes stay awake worrying instead of sleeping. Or you think your life could be more peaceful than it is. Those nights are part of what this poem is about." As you listen today, perhaps look around at the other people in the room or think about people that you know, that they too have these feelings and thoughts.

Day 5: In the poem, Modlin writes, "The English lesson was that I am is a complete sentence." How does it make you feel to say "I am" as a complete sentence.

What You Missed That Day You Were Absent from Fourth Grade

By Brad Aaron Modlin

Mrs. Nelson explained how to stand still and listen
to the wind, how to find meaning in pumping gas,

how peeling potatoes can be a form of prayer. She took
questions on how not to feel lost in the dark

After lunch she distributed worksheets
that covered ways to remember your grandfather's

voice. Then the class discussed falling asleep
without feeling you had forgotten to do something else—

something important—and how to believe
the house you wake in is your home. This prompted

Mrs. Nelson to draw a chalkboard diagram detailing
how to chant the Psalms during cigarette breaks,

and how not to squirm for sound when your own
thoughts
are all you hear;also, that you have enough.

The English lesson was that I am
is a complete sentence.

And just before the afternoon bell, she made the math
equation
look easy. The one that proves that hundred of
questions,

and feeling cold, all those nights spent looking
for whatever it was you lost, and the one person

add up to something.



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What You Missed That Day You Were Absent from Fourth Grade

By **Brad Aaron Modlin**

We have created a template for you based on Brad Aaron Modlin's What You Missed That Day You Were Absent From Fourth Grade poem.

What I Missed That Day I Was Absent From ____ Grade by _____ . (Your name)

My teacher explained how

She took questions on

After lunch she distributed

And the class discussed the importance of

And just before the afternoon bell



What You Missed That Day You Were Absent from Fourth Grade

By Brad Aaron Modlin

“Maybe you have feelings and big questions that are hard to talk about. Maybe you sometimes stay awake worrying instead of sleeping. Or you think your life could be more peaceful than it is. Those nights are part of what this poem is about. Since it was published, many people—strangers—have written me to say that they have found connection to the poem, that they recognize their own experiences in it. I think when the big questions seem too confusing, or we feel lonely in the dark, we can take comfort knowing that we aren’t actually alone. We are kept company by all the people who are also lying awake, hoping for the answers that may arrive slowly. We just can’t see these companions because they are in their own beds in their own homes.”

What do you worry about?

What helps you calm down?

What advice would you give a friend if they were having difficulty with their emotions?