

Maureen Perry

Resources for your rhymes

Sites for slam/spoken word/performance poetry¹

Poetry need not sit on a static page. It comes alive in public readings, open mics, and poetry slams. In the words of host Bob Holman, such events take place “in church basements, in laundromats, in high school cafeterias.”² Why not use the Internet to further explore poetry’s sights, sounds, and sensibilities?

Many of these resources could fit more than one of the categories listed here, but I have placed them under the categories that I feel best showcase the respective sites. I have also emphasized U.S.-based resources (with a notable exception) strictly to keep the list manageable. I have tried to honor a variety of poetic styles.

For us spoken word poets, I have included tools for writing, recording, and refining our pieces. For all of us who support the art, I have included audio and video sites. Since poetry gains power from being shared, I’ve also included a variety of organizations and online communities.

I’ve even highlighted the Web sites from some famous poetry venues. Some powerful poetry is coming out of the smaller local venues, as well. Check out—or read at—an open mic near you.

Dictionaries/glossaries/terminology resources

- **Glossary of Poetic Terms.** If you seek to try different poetic techniques, this well-researched glossary can help you learn about some of them. Along with phonetic pronunciations for many of the terms, it provides cross-references and hyperlinks. *Access:* <http://www.poeticbyway.com/glossary.html>.

- **Hiphop, Performance Poetry, Spoken Word, Slam: Definitions from a Teenager.** Though I lump all of these categories together in this column, the distinctions among them are worth considering. An experienced host of open mics, the poet Eman thoughtfully clarifies the different terms. Poets can use this document as a guide to better describe, and thus promote, their own works. *Access:* <http://poetry.about.com/od/poeticspoetryanalysis/a/emandefinitions.htm>.

- **Open Mic: The Definition.** This About.com document offers a working definition of the open mic and links to some related how-to articles. Author Bob Holman is an experienced host, poet, and professor. Due to his solid advice, I would particularly recommend this site to a novice host. *Access:* <http://poetry.about.com/od/livepoetry/a/openmic.htm>.

- **Poetry Is.** George Quasha has developed series of short videos he calls Speaking Portraits. In these videos other poets describe what poetry means to them. The clips invite us viewers to ask ourselves the same question. *Access:* <http://www.quasha.com/art-is/poetry-is>.

- **WriteExpress Online Rhyming Dictionary.** WriteExpress Corporation has Better Business Bureau accreditation and produces a variety of tools for writers. With this tool you can search not only for end rhymes/last syllable rhymes, but also for beginning

Maureen Perry is reference librarian at University of Southern Maine Lewiston-Auburn College, e-mail: mperry@usm.maine.edu

© 2011 Maureen Perry

rhymes/first syllable rhymes and for double rhymes. *Access:* <http://www.writeexpress.com/online2.html>.

Recording tools

- **Audacity.** This is a classic tool for digital audio recording and editing. All the same it bears mentioning, especially for those who want to share their works online or to at least get a feel for how their poems sound. *Access:* <http://audacity.sourceforge.net/>.

- **Aviary.** This is an exciting suite of tools. Its audio editor, Myna, and its music creation tool, Roc, would be the most relevant to this discussion. Phoenix, its image editor, and Talon, its screen capture component, would nonetheless serve poets well for creating Web sites or other publicity materials. *Access:* <http://www.aviary.com/>.

Poetry in audio

- **Cup of Poetry.** This podcast series comes from Penguin Publishers. Many of the episodes contain multiple poems skillfully tied together with timely themes. *Access:* <http://us.penguin.com/static/pages/publishersoffice/radioroom/index.html>.

- **GLT's Poetry Radio.** WGLT and the Illinois State University English Department have teamed up to produce this series. Each brief installment features a single poem and pairs it with a well-chosen piece of music. *Access:* http://www.wgl.org/podcasts/poetry_radio/index.phtml.

- **Indiefeed Performance Poetry Channel.** This podcast contains not only the audio files of cutting-edge poems, but also (in most cases) links to the poets' Web sites. It has a readily available link for contact with the podcast's host. *Access:* <http://www.indiefeedpp.libsyn.com/>.

- **Internet Poetry Archive.** The University of North Carolina Press and the North Carolina Arts Council cosponsor this site, which features some known poets—including Nobel Prize winners Seamus Heaney and Czeslaw Milosz. It brings together audio clips of the poets reading their work, the text of the poems, and some graphics that may help the

listener further appreciate the poems. *Access:* <http://www.ibiblio.org/ipa/>.

- **Naropa Poetics Audio Archives.** This collection comes from Naropa University's Jack Kerouac School of Disembodied Poetics (its Department of Writing and Poetics). It features readings, performances, lectures, workshops, etc., from well-known U.S. avant-garde poets. *Access:* <http://www.archive.org/details/naropa>.

- **Poetry Echoes.** This podcast series is the online poetry slam for New York City's Special Education District 75. The site is an inspiration for those in teacher education programs or for anyone working on poetry with public school students. *Access:* <http://www.district75.net/poetry/>.

Poetry on video

Because of its familiarity I have omitted YouTube, but it is certainly a source of poetry on video. Here are some sites more specifically dedicated to video poetry.

- **Billy Collins—Action Poetry.** These short, animated videos feature selected poems from former U.S. Poet Laureate Billy Collins. Several graphic artists have contributed the animation. *Access:* <http://www.bcactionpoet.org/>.

- **Favorite Poem Project.** Former U.S. Poet Laureate Robert Pinsky's project involves a collection of 50 videos: each video features an ordinary American reading and talking about a poem he or she loves. Additionally, the site includes resources for teachers. *Access:* <http://www.favoritepoem.org/index.html>.

- **Fooling with Words.** This companion site to the Bill Moyers PBS series features video clips (under the "Poets Read" section), a teacher's guide, lesson plans, and other resources. In addition to the performance clips, the site features interviews with some of the poets. *Access:* <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/foolingwithwords/index.html>.

- **Lannan Podcasts.** This site contains a mix of audio and video podcasts, but I'm placing it in the video category. The series includes both poetry readings and conversa-

tions with well-known poets. *Access:* <http://podcast.lannan.org/>.

- **Poet Vision Webcasts.** The Library of Congress has digitized and made available these recordings, originally filmed between 1988 and 1990. Ten famous poets, including some former U.S. Poets Laureate, read and discuss their work. *Access:* <http://www.loc.gov/poetry/cyberpoet.html>.

- **Poetry Theatre.** Through this Web site, actor Anthony Herrera (*As the World Turns*) has gathered some other famous names—including Tyne Daly, Charles Durning, Malachy McCourt, and Willie Nelson—to share favorite poems. Another section of the site showcases performances by some student groups. The site also contains links to poet biographies. *Access:* <http://www.poetrytheatre.org>.

- **Slope's American Sign Language Poetry Special Edition.** *Slope* magazine devoted a 2004 special issue to American Sign Language poetry. Featured poets include the late Clayton Valli (an ASL poetry pioneer) and national prizewinner Jeremy Quiroga. *Access:* <http://slope.org/archive/asl/>.

Organizations/communities

- **Maya Angelou: The Official Website.** Angelou brings life to her poetry and brings her poetry to life. Through this site's news updates, reading list, and contact section, she builds her community of fans. The video gallery of her work (under "Media") and the biography are a bonus for researchers. *Access:* <http://mayaangelou.com/>.

- **National Forensic (NFL).** This NFL is the premier organization for middle school and high school debate and speech, including poetry reading/interpretation. Some of this site's coaching resources may prove useful to anyone who mentors young performance poets. *Access:* <http://www.nflonline.org/Main/HomePage>.

- **Performance Studies Division, National Communication Association (NCA).** For those interested in performance scholarship, the NCA Performance Studies Division is the leading organization. Among

NCA's publications is *Text and Performance Quarterly*. *Access:* <http://www.natcom.org/index.asp?bid=10824>.

- **Poetry Foundation.** As the publisher of *Poetry* magazine, the Poetry Foundation deals with written poetry, but its site also includes audio, video, news, and blogs. Check out the Learning Lab, the Poetry Tool (for browsing), and the virtual poetry tours (Chicago and Washington, D.C.). *Access:* <http://www.poetryfoundation.org/>.

- **Poetry International Web.** This site could fit in a few different categories. It has audio files of some poems and video performances of some others. Since it brings together poets from many different countries, *a community* is the best description. The poetic texts appear in their original languages and in English translation. Also valuable are the articles, the interviews, and the links to other organizations. *Access:* <http://www.poetryinternationalweb.org/>.

- **Poetry Out Loud Project.** The National Endowment for the Arts and the Poetry Foundation collaborate to sponsor a national recitation contest for youth. However, this site does more than promote the contest. It is such a rich collection of resources—including lesson plans, writing activities, and a blog—that it merits its own entry aside from the Poetry Foundation entry. *Access:* <http://www.poetryoutloud.org/>.

- **Poetry Slam, Inc.** How can I list resources for slam poets without including this group, the official governing body of poetry slams worldwide? The site's forum is a must for SlamMasters, though it would be useful for anyone. The site has a news section, as well as a slam map

NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS
and
POETRY FOUNDATION
present



and links to tournament information. Have fun with the online store (including freebies) and the Poet Gallery. *Access:* <http://www.poetryslam.com/>.

- **PoetrySpeaks.** Created by the publisher Sourcebooks, Inc. this site offers books and online poetry audios and videos for sale. Among the valuable free features are the PoetryMatters blog and Your Mic, where you can upload your poetry in audio, video, or text format. *Access:* <https://www.poetryspeaks.com/>.

- **Public Programs Office, ALA.** Let's not forget our own professional association! Cultural programming, including poetry events, is part of its very mission. *Access:* <http://www.ala.org/ala/aboutala/offices/ppo/index.cfm>.

Venue blogs and Web sites

- **City Lights Bookstore.** Founded in 1953, this San Francisco landmark is the first all-paperback bookstore in the United States. Obviously it markets its publications via this Web site, but the site contains many other resources. Noteworthy is the "Events and Readings" section, with the *Live from City Lights* podcast series. *Access:* <http://www.citylights.com/>.

- **Nuyorican Poets Café.** This venue has been an institution since 1973. The Oxford African American Studies Center even includes an entry about it.³ Along with its merchandise catalog and events calendar, this site



includes many interesting links. The Gallery of Nuyorican Stars includes links about such famous alumni as Benjamin Bratt and Savion Glover. The list of educational sites and learning communities includes the Power Writers Workshop, which comes through the NYC High School System. *Access:* <http://www.nuyorican.org/>.

- **Pleasant Note Coffeehouse.** Located in Auburn, Maine, this is the open mic where I currently read. This spring will mark the fifth anniversary of its current versuion. I

mention it in tribute to local events across the country. *Access:* <http://www.auburnuu.org/pnch.html>.

- **Poetry Project at St. Mark's.** The Poetry

Project has been a part of New York's cultural scene since the late 1960s. Denise Lever-tov and Alice Walker, among others, have performed here. The site promotes the live events, but memberships allow for offsite participation, as do its Facebook group and Twitter feeds. *Access:* poetryproject.org.

- **The Round.** Started in Seattle, this series of live events has expanded to Tacoma, Washington; Austin, Texas; Portland, Oregon; and Lebanon, Pennsylvania. Each event brings together slam poets, musicians, and painters. Many of these evenings have been recorded. The Seattle, Tacoma, Austin, and Portland Rounds have a Facebook presence. *Access:* <http://www.theround.org/>.

- **Stone Soup Poetry.** Stone Soup Poetry is a long-standing (more than 30 years) open mic in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Strongly influenced by the Beat poets, Stone Soup nonetheless showcases a variety of styles. This entry pays tribute to its founder, the late Jack Powers. When the blog announces featured performances, the posts also work well as poet profiles. An exciting development is the link to Stone Soup's online magazine *Spoonful*. Also handy are the links to other venues. *Access:* <http://stonesouppoetry.blogspot.com/>.

Notes

1. I wish to thank Evelyn Greenlaw and the rest of the Information Commons staff at USM Lewiston-Auburn College for their support.

2. Bob Holman, "Open Mic: The Definition," poetry.about.com/od/livepoetry/a/openmic.htm.

3. *Oxford African American Studies Center* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006-2010), s.v.

4. "Nuyorican Poets," www.oxfordaasc.com. ¶¶

