

Poetry as a New Global Force for Good

(21.03.2019, Prague) In light of the recent horrific terrorist attack in Christchurch in New Zealand and the general rise of movements tied to xenophobia, anti-semitism, Islamophobia, and anti-immigrant sentiment, poetry can be a much-needed force for good in international affairs. The Czech social media platform Poetizer wants to usher in this new role for poetry.

Today we celebrate the 20th anniversary of UNESCO's World Poetry Day. On this important anniversary, it is fitting to take a fresh look at poetry and its potential to become a powerful force for good in current international affairs. Despite what school curriculum may suggest, poetry is not simply the study of dead white men's elitist thoughts regarding nearby flowers and pretty women. Poetry's popularity and relevance is growing each year across the world as it becomes a new meaningful form of self-expression.

Over the past few years poetry has become a very strong force for those speaking against globally felt social injustices and prejudices. Interestingly enough, the vast majority of this new generation of poets and poetry-lovers is part of Generation Z or a Millennial. The most famous representative of this trend is the young Canadian-Indian feminist poet Rupi Kaur who has sold millions of her poetry books globally. Lately, poetry has become increasingly popular in the Western hemisphere. It grew to such an extent in 2018 that some analyses even consider poetry to be a new form of religion that believes in honesty and equality for everyone. The absence of prejudice is its core value. Poetry has become the preferred choice for people searching for meaningful self-expression.

Poetry has much to offer in today's increasingly divided world. It has the power to bridge gaps between people globally as it builds real connections based on our common human experience, irrespective of our nationality, social status, religion or political views. In a world where social media is often characterized as promoting only the edited highlights of a person's life, traditional social media platforms may not be the best place to share innermost thoughts, worries or memories. That is why Lukas and Johana Sedlacek, a couple residing in Prague, designed Poetizer: a social networking site just for writing, reading and sharing poetry. The site, originally launched in 2017, has since gone global and one can currently find 120,000 poems written by users in 120 countries on it.

Poetizer encourages people to interact with each other irrespective of their nationality, social status, religion or political views and to build meaningful friendships based on their common human experience of the world. The vision of this social media platform, which was founded in the Czech Republic, is for people to better empathize with one another by tearing down those walls we so often have up and that are so often reinforced by harmful ideologies and lack of exposure to *otherness*. Imagine how different humanity could be if we started communicating through poems and embracing all that we have in common.

Appendix:

5 reasons why you should start writing poetry

Writing poetry has enormous benefits both for the writer and for the reader. A few of them are mentioned below:

1. **Powerful way to communicate.** Poems, being typically short and rhythmic, are usually more accessible than other forms of writing. Meanwhile, each word, often agonized over, explains so much in such a short text. Research from the University of Exeter in 2013 even suggested that our brains may be “wired” to enjoy poetry, as it creates an emotional response in the brain similar to that of music. Therefore, poetry may be more powerful in spreading a message than other, longer forms of writing. While fascinating, it’s rare for a PhD thesis to go viral.
2. **Like mindfulness? Try poetry!** Taking all the time you need to clearly articulate your thoughts, experiences and emotions has been lauded as an effective aid to help people to work through issues and better understand their own feelings. Indeed, poetry has been used as part of therapy and stress management programs to help everyone, from troubled kids to members of the army.
3. **A non-judgmental, always-accessible place to share your feelings and experiences.** Worried about bothering a friend? Need to let out some feelings before falling asleep? Writing poetry provides an incredible outlet that can help you better record, identify and understand your emotions. Moreover, becoming a member of a poetry community such as Poetizer and discovering how many people can empathize with your experiences can be a great way to realize that you never need to feel alone.
4. **Hope and understanding.** These are times when every voice - particularly those often marginalized in our polarized mainstream discourse - needs to not only be heard but to be understood. What does it feel like to be you? What do you need the reader to hear, to feel, to do? Writing a poem brings a reader into your head: share your story.
5. **Personal and professional skills for life.** Analytical thought, clarity of expression, communication, confidence and public speaking are all skills that up-and-coming poets have noted as improving through their involvement in poetry. Additionally, no matter what stage you’re at in life, the diverse ideas and experiences that reading poetry exposes you to will help to expand your horizons.

It has never been easier to get involved in poetry. The poetry-sharing platform Poetizer makes it easy to write, stylize, edit, improve, promote, and publish your work from any location at any time. Need to take some time for yourself? Want to improve your writing skills? Wish someone would listen to how you feel? Why not give poetry a go.