

## Poetry

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Springtime is a time of renewal and new beginnings. With April (National Poetry Month), as a guide, it's fitting to dive into or to continue reading new poetry books. Although many may have mixed feelings about poetry due to experiences in high school from reading Shakespeare or learning iambic pentameter, poetry doesn't have to be so difficult. Poetry is becoming accessible in the form of "novels in verse" while becoming more popular. With this technique, an author uses narrative to describe characters and the plot in a shorter style. This approach is easier for younger readers because there are fewer words on a page, making the reading experience faster, easier to understand, and more enjoyable. These novels are some of my favorites and are a good way to be introduced to poetry books.

*The Door of No Return*, Kwame Alexander's historical fiction, is told in poetic prose from the perspective of Kofi. Kofi, a young boy in 1860 Ghana, lives a lot like other 11-year-old boys: he has a crush on a girl named Ama, plays in his local river, and loves his family. The reader becomes especially attached to Kofi who experiences loss before going on a scary journey to the Americas as a victim of the Atlantic Slave Trade. This book shows experiences of Africans before they were shipped away from their homes. With Kwame keeping the focus on Kofi, he focuses on Kofi's personal experience as an individual who also represents many who suffered from similar experience as many.

Jason Reynolds pairs his writing with Jason Griffin's artwork in *ain't burned all the bright*, a novel that portrays reality from a Black family's point of view during the start of Covid-19. This distressing book is told in three long sentences as each page has a few words with illustrations. This renewal of memories from the start of the pandemic is hard to experience as Reynolds explains how news makes us numb to the harsh reality of the world. It brings up hard topics, but in the end is hopeful for a new future. One of my favorite parts is the comparison between breathing and not being able to breathe, literally during the time of Covid. The illustrations only highlight the words as Jason Griffin complements them perfectly. This is an important read and one that is very inspiring.

If you're trying to find other unique ways to consume poetry, the Poetry Path in Clinton gives you this opportunity. This self-guided course has 12 poems at historic places in Clinton and provides an ideal tour of the town. One of my favorite sites is on the playground at Clinton Elementary School which displays "Playgrounds" by Laurence Alma-Tadema and "The Swing" by Robert Louis Stevenson. These represent the setting

in which they are placed and are very accessible to all. Spring *is* the time to enjoy poetry and take a walking tour!