A Poem a Day

Ralph Ellison Library

Children

|

Tweens (10-12)

|

Teens

|

Adults

|

Intergenerational

A Poem a Day

Feb 1, 2019

$1-50

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Byline
Ann Meeks, Adult Librarian, Ralph Ellison Library, Metropolitan Library System, Oklahoma City, Okla.

Short on time and money, we found a quick and inexpensive way to celebrate National Poetry Month: offering patrons a poem to take home every day in the month of April.

We created a large display table with books, DVDs and other materials for all ages, and we displayed free signs from the Poetry Foundation. We also created a sign that read, “Don’t forget to get your poem a day!”

Among the materials, I placed brightly colored half sheets of paper printed with a different poem every day.

Advanced Planning

I wanted to do something for National Poetry Month, which is in April. I didn’t plan ahead far enough or have a budget to do something more expensive. The previous year we had hosted a talk with an Oklahoma poet laureate, but as the system had “paused” programming to review it, I lacked funds. Plus, the time was short, so I couldn’t really market such a program.

I still wanted to do something, so I took inspiration from a few sources: other libraries using the "poem in your pocket" and emails I get from the Poetry Foundation.

I emailed library staff and asked them to send me their favorite poems. Some did. The only limitations I put were “rated G or PG,” able to fit on a 4-by-7 sheet of paper (although I did use front and back for a couple of long ones), and able to be distributed, either by giving appropriate author credit or because the poem is in the public domain.

Marketing

I sent our local NPR station this message: "In celebration of National Poetry Month in April, get a poem a day! Each day at Ralph Ellison Library in the month of April, you can get a copy of a poem featuring different poets, eras and on various subjects." Fortunately, they read it on the air.

I also had someone from our marketing department put a similar notice on Twitter and the library's website.

Budgeting

This was an inexpensive program. The main costs were paper/computer ink and staff time in selecting 30 poems.

Day-of-event Activity

The initial set-up was simply creating the display and having the first poem ready to put out. I always prepared poems a few days in advance, so if I was not available, other staff could put them out.

I was surprised how popular this program was. I thought only a couple of people would take the poems, so I only printed five of each to start. As the month progressed I noticed that some of the papers were disappearing, and people were coming in specifically to get that day’s poem. I kept an eye on the stack and reprinted more as needed throughout the day.

Program Execution

Picking the poems was a lot of fun. On each poem I included a brief blurb about the poet and the source for the poem. Our library serves a lot of African American patrons, and I wanted to pick poets to celebrate that. I also wanted a variety to appeal to all ages and interests.

I selected classic poems and children’s poems, including Shel Silverstein, Jack Prelutsky and Mother Goose. Since it was April, I picked more poems related to spring and warmer weather. I wasn’t surprised that a Tupac Shakur poem was popular, but so was one called “The Early Bird.”

Initially, I thought I could keep track of the poems just by seeing what I printed, but I realized I needed a master list. That way I could review what we used, so we could have a good mix.

I have found that people are more likely to pick up something bright and colorful, so I used either colored paper or white paper with colorful illustrations.

One of the most exciting aspects of the event was I had two poems from the community — one from a customer who asked if we'd be interested in her haiku (yes) and one award-winning poem from my nephew. I hope to get more patron-submitted poems next spring. We have a poetry group that meets monthly, and I hope to get them to submit some poems.

Advice

Do it! If you're interested in poetry at all, it will be fun thinking of a poem for the day and researching a little about the poet. You can involve staff and community members who want to share their picks.

If you have any other programs during National Poetry Month, this is a nice add-on, or it can be a stand-alone passive program. It is a good chance to create a display to promote your poetry materials for all ages.

Did you try this program at your library? Share your experience using this form.

Supporting Materials

Document
poetry_day_flier.pdf
Document
poetry_day_flier_2.pdf
Document
poems_for_poerty_month.pdf
Download this Program as a PDF

- Programming Librarian Facebook Group

More Programs

Mar 7, 2019
Children (9 and under)+ |
Image



National Poetry Month

Audiences:

Audience
Children (9 and under)
Young Adult (17 - 20)
Adults (21 and up)
Intergenerational
Jun 14, 2018
Children (9 and under)+ |

Image



Literary Games

Audiences:

Audience
Children (9 and under)
Dec 21, 2018
Children (9 and under)+ | $
Image



Community Poet-Tree

Audiences:

Children (9 and under)
Tweens (10-12)
Teens (13-16)
Adults (21 and up)
Intergenerational