

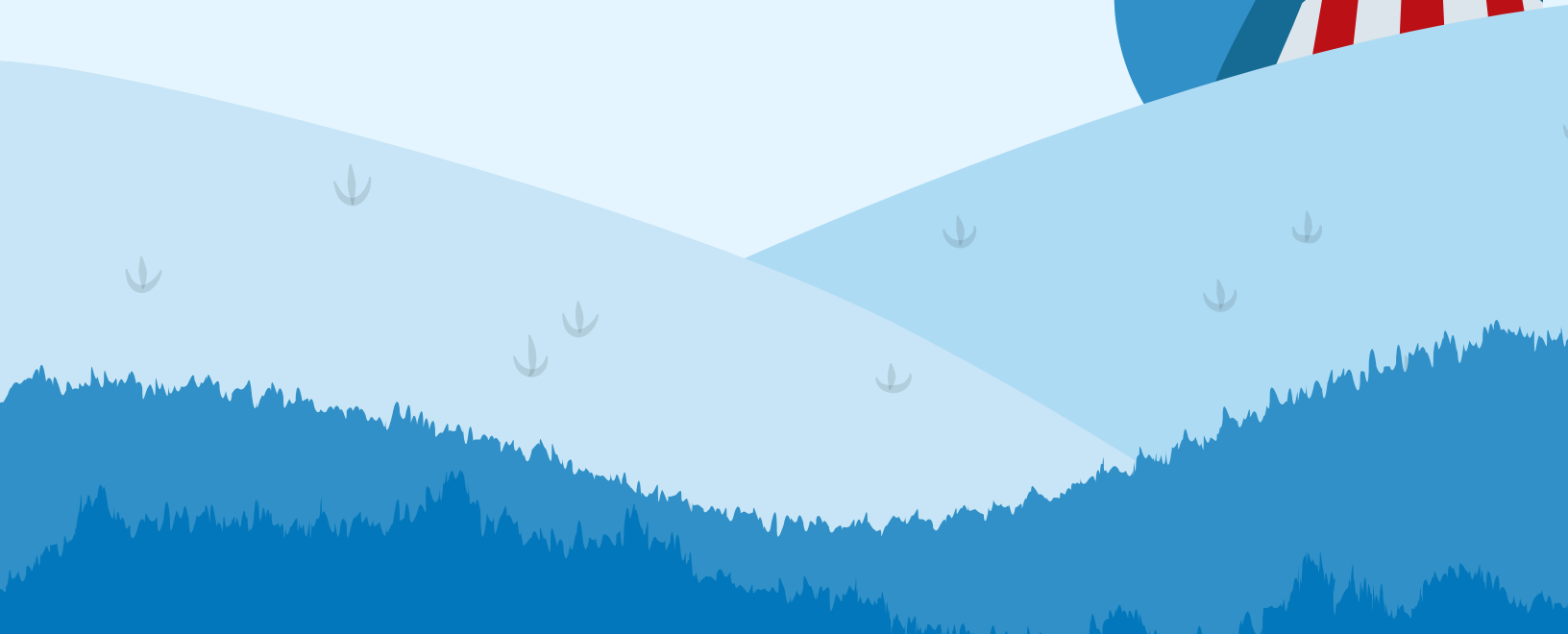


2023

Upcoming Events ///
Recap /// News ///
Interview

Spring Newsletter

The Favorite Poem Project



Upcoming Events

Save the Date! Please mark your calendars for an exciting year as the Favorite Poem Project celebrates our 25th anniversary!

01. May 7th at 2:00pm

25th Anniversary Celebration - A Favorite Poem Project reading. This reading will bring a variety of speakers together to share their favorite poems, featuring Robert Pinsky, Katie Farris and Ilya Kaminsky among others. This event is a part of the Mass Poetry Festival and will take place at the Peabody Essex Museum. Students attend free!

02. September 9th at 8:00pm

Robert Pinsky's Poem Jazz - "Proverbs of Limbo": A tribute and fundraiser for the teaching fellows at BU working at Boston Arts Academy. Join Robert Pinsky, Stan Strickland, Laurence Hobgood and others in a performance of PoemJazz right here at CitySpace, 890 Commonwealth Ave. A new PoemJazz album will be for sale at the event. Purchase tickets in advance. More info coming at favoritepoem.org.

03. September 26th at 7:30pm

The Robert Lowell Memorial Lecture series featuring award-winning poet Major Jackson alongside BU MFA alum Annette Frost. There will be a reception and book-signing to follow. Hillel House, 213 Bay State Rd. 4th Floor.

A NOTE FROM ROBERT PINSKY

founder of the favorite poem project

The Favorite Poem Project has not only survived, but thrived, for twenty-five years.

Amid so much cultural change, so many revisions and conflicts in curriculum, many kinds of crises and antagonisms, conflicting definitions of democracy, and of culture itself—the FPP continues and expands. The new website now includes a range of materials along with the first videos and new ones, accounts of new events, freshly organized materials for teachers and students and other readers.

Why and how has the FPP lasted? Maybe because the idea is simple: concentrating on actual, individual readers and specific poems. Fundamentals survive fads.

That would not be enough in itself. Credit goes to the work by a succession of FPP directors, beginning with Maggie Dietz and including Rebekah Stout, Brandy Barents, Duy Doan, Laura Marris and in recent years Annette Frost, who has been the captain of the enhanced and expanded www.favoritepoem.org.

Personally, I'm proud of the poetry written by those hard-working administrators—a few of them have published wonderful books of poems!

Also to be thanked: a host of readers, contributors, alumni of the Summer Institute for K-12 Educators . . . the many people who have shown ways to use our basic idea: that poems are things people want to say, as fundamental a pleasure as dancing.

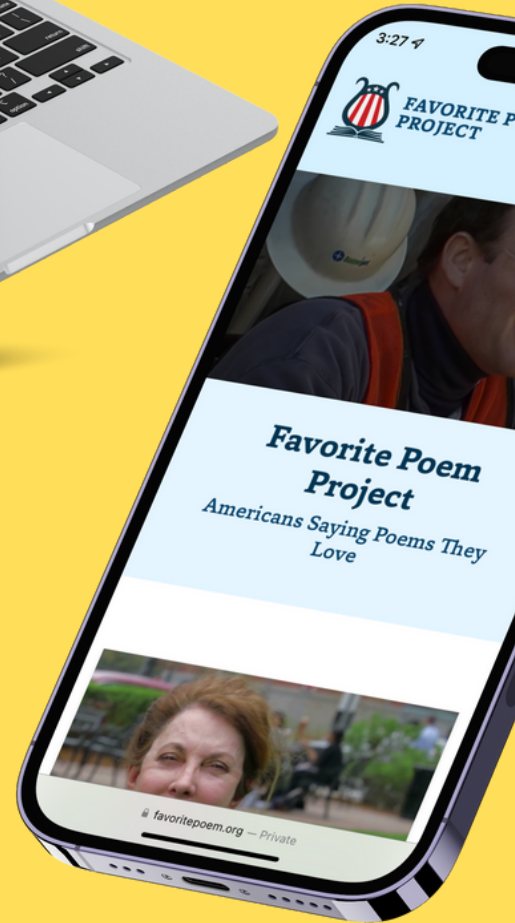
2023

We've had an exciting year so far!

Last fall we had a wonderful RLML with poets A.E. Stallings and Togara Muzanenhamo. This spring the fabulous reading featured John Murillo and Annaka Saari. There was a great turnout at both events and we are so happy to be back up-and-running fully in-person after the pandemic.

In April we held a unique FPP reading: Favorite Passages from the Hebrew Bible. This memorable reading featured Robert Pinsky, Phil Schultz, Jean Morrison, Sassan Tabbatai, Louis Chude-Sokei, Karl Kirchwey, Natalie Shapero, Susan Mizruchi and Erika Meitner sharing stories and anecdotes from their lives paired with passages from the Old Testament.





This winter, we officially launched our new website in celebration of our 25th year anniversary.

The Robert Pinsky Poetry Archive is now live under the Poetry Archive tab. Additionally, we have a fully renovated Classroom Resources section with free lesson plans for poetry educators. We would like to thank BU CAS and BUCH for their generous support in making this website possible.



In March the Favorite Poem Project and the Creative Writing Program traveled to Seattle to attend AWP where we met wonderful people and shared our new website and its resources.

Andrea Cohen



Andrea Cohen's poems have appeared in The New Yorker, The Atlantic Monthly, The Threepenny Review, and elsewhere. Recent poetry collections include Everything and Nightshade; a new collection, The Sorrow Apartments, is forthcoming. Cohen directs the Blacksmith House Poetry Series in Cambridge, MA.

FPP: Tell us a little bit about your background and what brought you to teaching poetry.

COHEN: Without planning it, my life has revolved around poetry. That has mainly meant loving language and making stuff up. I've been reading and writing poems since I was maybe 6 or 7. I first taught poetry when I was 21 and a graduate student at Iowa. I remember what I was wearing in that first class—because the one thing I knew was how woefully unprepared I was for the task.

What is the best part of the MFA workshop?

It's gratifying to see students making breakthroughs with their poems—understanding new ways to open a poem up, for instance, or how to think about their writing. Also gratifying: seeing how generous students can be with each other in their critiques. And I love getting to share poems that I love with students, which is to say, getting to do what teachers did for me—expose me to poets whose work would guide me as a writer and reader, and simply as a person walking around in the world.

What is your favorite poem to teach?

I don't know that I have a favorite poem to teach. I always draw a blank when someone asks about a favorite poet or poem or influence. There are poems that I like to read aloud to students, and even after reading them countless times, I have a hard time not choking up. James Tate's "The Lost Pilot" comes to mind. Also, Taha Muhammad Ali's "Meeting at an Airport."

Have any of your best poems started in the classroom (while teaching)?

I don't think so. I don't tend to write much in a group setting.

What is your favorite physical location to write?

The question makes me wonder if there is another question, i.e., favorite figurative place to write? I tend to write in my kitchen or dining room. But wherever I am, pretty much, I just find a table and see what happens.

If you are ever in a writing slump, what do you do to unslump yourself?

I think that a slump could mean different things for different people. Maybe for some people it means not writing. I am a creature of habit and pretty much write every day, because that makes me happy. Of course, there are days when the writing goes better than other days. I think the trick is just to show up in case the good poem might decide to present itself that day.

**What age were you when you had your most influential writing teacher?
What was important about their teaching?**

Philip Levine was my teacher when I was an undergrad at Tufts. His poetry and his encouragement were very important to me. He told me there was such a thing as graduate school for poetry and told me where I should apply and where I should go. My life would have been different without that guidance.

If you could give a single piece of advice to someone new to teaching poetry, what would it be?

I think it would be to encourage young poets to find their own voices, through writing and reading and via the generous element of time. And I would encourage them to remember what the Polish poet Wisława Szymborska said when asked why she had published so few poems: "I have a trash can in my home."

SEND US YOUR NEWS

Do you have an FPP-related poetry event or opportunity you'd like to share with our audience? Contact fpp@bu.edu with the details. We would love to hear from you!



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