



The English-Speaking Union
English in Action

Here/There

American volunteers helping newcomers speak English

April 2014

APRIL IS NATIONAL POETRY MONTH!

National Poetry Month was established by the Academy of American Poets in 1996 to celebrate poetry, and to bring the art of poetry to national attention. According to the Academy of American Poets, "schools, publishers, libraries, booksellers, and poets throughout the United States band together to celebrate poetry and its vital place in American culture. Thousands of organizations participate through readings, festivals, book displays, workshops, and other events."

One way to join in is to participate in Poem in Your Pocket Day, on April 24th. Find a poem you like and carry it around with you the whole day. Read it to your friends and family. If you attend English in Action on April 24th, bring a poem with you and read it to your conversation partner.

Maya Angelou is an American author, poet, historian, songwriter, playwright, dancer, stage and screen producer, director, performer, singer and civil rights activist. Below is her poem, Touched by an Angel:

We, unaccustomed to courage
exiles from delight
live coiled in shells of loneliness
until love leaves its high holy temple
and comes into our sight
to liberate us into life.

Love arrives
and in its train come ecstasies
old memories of pleasure
ancient histories of pain.
Yet if we are bold,
love strikes away the chains of fear
from our souls.

We are weaned from our timidity
In the flush of love's light
we dare be brave
And suddenly we see
that love costs all we are
and will ever be.
Yet it is only love
which sets us free.



Celebrating Volunteers

National Volunteer Week, April 6-12, 2014, is about inspiring, recognizing and encouraging people to seek out imaginative ways to engage in their communities. It's about demonstrating to the nation that by working together, we have the strength to meet our challenges and accomplish our goals.

Some ways to volunteer in your community :

- Help out at a soup kitchen
- Volunteer at your local animal shelter
- Clean up parks and recreational areas
- Give your time to help out at your local English-Speaking Union branch or become an English in Action volunteer!



Tongue Twisters

Try to pronounce these tongue twisters as fast as you can!

- Knife and fork, bottle and cork, that is the way you spell New York
- If two witches would watch two watches, which witch would watch which watch?
- Unique New York
- Lesser leather never weathered wetter weather better
- Six sharp smart sharks
- What time does the wrist watch strap shop shut?
- Hi-tech traveling tractor-trailer truck tracker
- Vincent vowed vengeance very vehemently
- Friendly Frank flips fine flapjacks

Remember: When pronouncing tongue twisters, it is most important to get the pronunciation of all of the words correct. Start out slowly, and gradually build up speed until you get tied-up in the tongue!

Another kind of poetry is haiku. Haikus are three-line poems, with five syllables in the first line, seven syllables in the second line, and five syllables in the third line. Here is a haiku by Matsuo Basho about the blooming of cherry blossom trees:

*From all directions
Winds bring petals of cherry
Into the grebe lake.*

Check out <http://haiku.nytimes.com/> Jacob Harris created an algorithm (a calculation done by a computer) that takes stories from the *New York Times* and creates haikus out of the words.

CONVERSATION STARTER

Do you have any favorite poems?
What do you like about these poems?
Who are some famous poets in your native country?
Is there a poem you know by heart?
Teach it to your conversation partner.

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Editor: Karen Ruelle
Contributing Editor: Rachel Becker

The English-Speaking Union of the United States
144 East 39th Street, New York, NY 10016
(tel.) 212-818-1200 (fax) 212- 867-4177
www.esuus.org