



POETRY IN THE
NATURAL WORLD



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About the Book

In recent years, our poetic landscape has evolved in profound and exciting ways. So has our planet. Edited and introduced by the twenty-fourth Poet Laureate of the United States, Ada Limón, this book challenges what we think we know about “nature poetry,” illuminating the myriad ways our landscapes—both literal and literary—are changing. “You Are Here” features fifty previously unpublished poems from some of the nation’s most accomplished poets, including Joy Harjo, Diane Seuss, Rigoberto González, Jericho Brown, Aimee Nezhukumatathil, Paul Tran, and more. Each poem engages with its author’s local landscape—be it the breathtaking variety of flora in a national park, or a lone tree flowering persistently by a bus stop—offering an intimate model of how we relate to the world around us and a beautifully diverse range of voices from across the United States. Joyful and provocative, wondrous and urgent, this singular collection of poems offers a lyrical reimagining of what “nature” and “poetry” are today, inviting listeners to experience both anew.



About Ada Limón:



Ada Limón is the author of six books of poetry, including “The Carrying,” which won the National Book Critics Circle Award. Her book “Bright Dead Things” was nominated for the National Book Award, the National Book Critics Circle Award, and the Kingsley Tufts Poetry Award. Her most recent book of poetry, “The Hurting Kind,” was shortlisted for the Griffin Poetry Prize. She is also the author of two children’s books: “In Praise of Mystery,” with illustrations by Peter Sís; and “And,

Too, The Fox,” which will be released in 2025. In October of 2023 she was awarded a MacArthur “Genius” Fellowship, and she was named a TIME magazine woman of the year in 2024. She is the recipient of a Guggenheim fellowship and wrote a poem that was engraved on NASA’s Europa Clipper Spacecraft. It was launched to the second moon of Jupiter in October 2024. As the 24th Poet Laureate of The United States, her signature project is called “You Are Here” and focuses on how poetry can help connect us to the natural world. She will serve as Poet Laureate until the spring of 2025.





Engage with “You Are Here”

Learn

Seattle Reads Kick-Off

Wednesday, March 26 at 6 p.m.
Auditorium, Central Library, 1000 4th Ave.

Presented by The Seattle Public Library Foundation

Poetrees Writing Workshop with Claudia Castro Luna

Saturday, April 26 at 2 p.m.
Columbia Branch, 4721 Rainier Ave. S.

Coffee & Creativity

Friday, May 2 at 11 a.m. – 1 p.m.
Frye Art Museum, 704 Terry Ave.

Presented in partnership with Creative Aging at the Frye. Registration and more information: www.fryemuseum.org/calendar/event/coffee-and-creativity-may-2025

Arts, Naturally

Friday, May 2 at 2 p.m.
Frye Art Museum, 704 Terry Ave.

Presented in partnership with Creative Aging at the Frye and the Memory Hub, UW Memory and Brain Wellness Center. Registration and more information: <https://fryemuseum.org/calendar/event/arts-naturally>

Claudia Castro Luna and Xiomara Melgar

Verde como te quiero verde! / Green, oh green, how I do love you!

Saturday, May 3 at 2 p.m.
South Park, 8604 Eighth Ave. S.

This program will be offered in Spanish.

Lynda Mapes and Rena Priest discuss “The Trees Are Speaking”

Thursday, May 8 at 7 p.m.
Auditorium, Central Library, 1000 4th Ave.



Listen

Traveling Music: Honoring the Life and Poetry of Colleen J. McElroy

Sunday, April 6 at 2 p.m.

Auditorium, Central Library, 1000 4th Ave.

Writers Read

Sunday, April 13 at 2 - 4 p.m.

Online

Presented by African-American Writers' Alliance. More information at aawa-seattle.org

KUOW Book Club with Katie Campbell, Laura Da' and Cedar Sigo

Thursday, April 24 at 7 p.m.

Auditorium, Central Library, 1000 4th Ave.

Presented in partnership with the KUOW Book Club

African-American Writers' Alliance Open Mic

Thursday, May 8 at 7 p.m.

Third Place Books, Seward Park, 5041 Wilson Ave S.



Ada Limón discusses "You Are Here: Poetry in the Natural World"

Friday, May 16 at 7 p.m.

Auditorium, Central Library, 1000 4th Ave.

Saturday, May 17 at 11 a.m.

Green Lake Branch, 7364 E. Green Lake Dr. N.

Saturday, May 17 at 3 p.m.

Columbia Branch, 4721 Rainier Ave. S.



Engage with “You Are Here”

Listen

An Evening with Laura Da’ and Cedar Sigo

Tuesday, May 20 at 7 p.m.
Auditorium, Central Library, 1000 4th Ave.

Landscapes of Healing

Thursday, May 22 at 7 p.m.
Lapis Theater at Hugo House, 1111 E. Olive

*Presented in partnership with Hugo House and Pongo Poetry Project.
More information and registration at hugohouse.org*

Writing the Land: A Reading by Seattle Latine/x Poets

Thursday, May 29 at 7 p.m.
Auditorium, Central Library, 1000 4th Ave.
Presented in partnership with La Sala

Share

Poetry Potlucks

Join an informal gathering to listen to and read poetry aloud. Inspired by this year’s Seattle Reads selection “You Are Here,” select two or three favorite poems related to the natural world and share them out loud with the group. This is a feast of words, rather than food.

Thursday, April 10 at 6 p.m.
Northeast Branch, 6801 35th Ave. N.E.

Sunday, April 13 at 2 p.m.
Highpoint Branch, 3411 S.W. Raymond St.

Wednesday, April 16 at 6:30 p.m.
Ballard Branch, 5614 22nd Ave. N.W.

Friday, April 18 at 2 p.m.
Central Library, Level 4, Room 2, 1000 4th Ave.



Wednesday, April 30 at 6:30 p.m.
Broadview Branch, 12755 Greenwood Ave. N.
Sunday, May 4 at 2 p.m.
West Seattle Branch, 2306 42nd Ave. S.W.

Thursday, May 8 at 6 p.m.
Capitol Hill Branch, 425 Harvard Ave. E.

Wednesday, May 21 at 6:30 p.m.
Ballard Branch, 5614 22nd Ave. N.W.

Discover

Explore these free events presented by some of this year's community partners!

Brynn Saito and Brandon Shimoda with Frank Abe "The Gate of Memory"

Thursday April 10 at 7 P.M.
Elliott Bay Book Company, 1521 10th Ave.

Presented by Elliott Bay Book Company. Learn more at elliottbaybook.com/events

Mai Der Vang "Primordial"

Wednesday May 7 at 7 P.M.
Elliott Bay Book Company, 1521 10th Ave.

Presented by Elliott Bay Book Company. Learn more at elliottbaybook.com/events

Words of Courage Letterpress Broadside Exhibit

April and May 2025
Level 3 at Central Library, 1000 4th Ave.

Presented by Seattle Children's Hospital, Seattle Arts & Lectures, Partners in Print, Neenah Paper, Puget Bindery, Ecological Fibers, Boxcar Press, Evolution Press

Writers in the Schools Year-End Reading & Celebrations

Elementary & Middle Schools
Wednesday June 4 at 6 p.m.
Town Hall Seattle – The Forum, 1119 8th Ave.

Middle & High Schools
Thursday, June 5 at 6 p.m.
Town Hall Seattle – The Forum, 1119 8th Ave.

Presented by Seattle Arts & Lectures Writers in the Schools





Engage with “You Are Here”

Discover

Seattle Youth Poet Laureate Chapbook Launch

Tuesday, June 24 at 7 p.m.

Elliott Bay Book Company, 1521 10th Ave.

Presented by Seattle Arts & Lectures Youth Poetry Fellowship

Frye Parlor x Jayme Yen

Frye Art Museum

Wednesdays through Sundays

11 a.m. – 5 p.m.

Admission is always free. Learn more at fryemuseum.org





Spotlight on Select Contributors

Laura Da'



Laura Da' is a poet and teacher. A lifetime resident of the Pacific Northwest, Da' studied creative writing at the University of Washington and the Institute of American Indian Arts. She is Eastern Shawnee. Her first book, "Tributaries", was published by the University of Arizona Press and won a 2016 American Book Award. Da' has held residencies at the Hugo House, Tin House, and Jack Straw. Her newest book, "Instruments of the True Measure," is the

winner of the Washington State Book Award. Da' lives near Seattle with her husband and son.

Cedar Sigo



Cedar Sigo was raised on the Suquamish Reservation in the Pacific Northwest. He studied at The Jack Kerouac School of Disembodied Poetics at the Naropa Institute. Sigo is the author of "All This Time"; "Royals"; "Language Arts"; and "Stranger in Town". Of his work, Ron Silliman writes, "Cedar Sigo is a Frank O'Hara for the twenty-first century: witty, erudite, serious, with a terrific ear and eye for the minutest details, at home in the world of the arts." In 2022, Sigo received

a poetry grant from the Foundation for Contemporary Arts. Sigo has taught at St. Mary's College and Naropa University. He lives in Lofall, Washington.





Discussion Questions

1. What is the first thing that comes to mind when you think of “nature poetry”?
2. Ada Limón explains the title of the anthology and how it was born from her real-life experience walking on a trail near her home: “As I stared at the trail map, I saw the friendly little red arrow that pointed to where I was on the map, its caption: You Are Here. It seemed not only to serve as a locator, but as a reminder that I was living right now, breathing in the woods, that there was life around me, that the natural world was right here and I was a part of it; I was nature too” (p. 4). Why do you think it’s valuable for humans to think of ourselves as a part of nature?
3. “You Are Here: Poetry in the Natural World” explores various themes within the natural world such as beauty, love, rage, displacement, the climate crisis, and grief among others. In Ashley M. Jones’ “Lullaby for the Grieving: at the Sipse River” she writes: “make small steps. In this wild place there are signs of life everywhere. Sharp spaces, too: the slip of a rain-glazed rock against my searching feet” (p. 43).

What theme(s) in the anthology were you most drawn to and why?

4. In the Foreword Carla Hayden, Librarian of Congress, writes: “This anthology goes hand in hand with Limón’s other project initiative, “You Are Here: Poetry in Parks” which brings poetry installations to seven national parks across the country” (p.1). How do you think engaging with poetry might change your experience of nature?
5. In “Hackberry,” Cecily Parks writes: “a place I love is about to disappear. When the summer sunset drives into the west side of our house, burning with a heat we’ve been warned about, I look out the two square windows that are filled with hackberry leaves whose greens vary according to light and wind...” (p. 81).

Has reading this collection changed how you feel about how humans have impacted the natural world? What positive changes to our everyday lives might help improve the natural world?



6. Which poem(s) resonated with you the most and why?
7. In Ruth Awad's "Reasons to Live", she speaks to the cyclical nature of life and resilience of humans and the world. Awad writes: "Because if you can survive the violet night, you can survive the next, and the fig tree will ache with sweetness for you in sunlight that arrives first at your window. . . ." (p. 145). What role does hope play in the human and natural world's fight for survival and sustainability? Has hope been helpful to you in times of crisis or at different stages of your life?
8. What are some ways that reading poems from this anthology have changed how you think about the natural world and our place in it?
9. In José Olivarez's "You Must Be Present" he writes: "my relationship with (love) (nature) (money) (fill in the blank) is like my relationship to weather—i only see it when it's pouring on my head. i'm sorry to the trees i grew up with. i didn't ask. i never learned. or even wondered (about their names). (their families) (their longings) i only dreamed of (me) climbing onto their shoulders" (p. 29). Does this resonate for you? What are ways you have tried to be more present in your environment?
10. In the introduction to this anthology, Ada Limón writes: "I hope you will consider making your own version of a 'You Are Here' poem to grow alongside ours- whether you put pen to paper or visit a beloved natural park or plant potted flowers on your stoop in Brooklyn-so we may continue to flourish. I hope this anthology serves as a reminder that there is more time to plant trees, to write poems, to not just be in wonder at this planet, but to offer something back to it, to offer something back together. Because nature is not a place to visit. Nature is who we are" (p. 5). If you were to write a "You Are Here" poem, what elements would you include in your work?





Suggested Reading from The Seattle Public Library

Poetry

“Living Nations, Living Words: An Anthology of First Peoples Poetry” edited by Joy Harjo

This collection of works by contemporary Indigenous poets includes poems by local authors Laura Da’ and Cedar Sigo, whose work is also featured in “You Are Here.”

“The Lost Spells” by Robert MacFarlane and Jackie Morris.

Poet MacFarlane and illustrator Morris collaborated on this evocative collection of poems and watercolors that vividly portray common flora and fauna in their native England.

“I Sing the Salmon Home: Poems from Washington State” edited by Rena Priest

Salmon are a keystone species in the Pacific Northwest, and Priest, a member of the Lhaq’temish (Lummi) Nation, chose to honor them by compiling this anthology during her tenure as the Washington State Poet Laureate.

“This One We Call Ours” by Martha Silano

In these moving poems, Seattle-based poet Silano describes the catastrophic effects of climate change on her environment and exhorts her fellow humans to protect the natural world around them.

“When We Only Have the Earth” by Abdourahman A. Waberi

In his most recent collection, French-Djiboutian poet Waberi celebrates the planet and its creatures, and encourages readers to join the collective fight to save the natural world from degradation.



Nonfiction

“Cascadia Field Guide: Art, Ecology, Poetry” edited by Elizabeth Bradfield, Marie Fuhrman and Derrek Sheffield
Juxtaposing natural history with poetry, prose and art from over 100 Pacific Northwest creators, this wide-ranging anthology offers a unique guide to the Cascadia bioregion and its plants, animals and geography.

“Don’t Read Poetry: A Book About How to Read Poems” by Stephanie Burt
This thoughtful and accessible guide provides an excellent introduction to a literary form that can be daunting to many. Whether you’re a new poetry reader or a long-time fan, Burt’s book will help you appreciate the poems in “You Are Here” on a deeper level.

“The Serviceberry: Abundance and Reciprocity in the Natural World” by Robin Wall Kimmerer
In this slim, contemplative volume, Potawatomi botanist and author Kimmerer offers an alternative vision for our relationships to each other and the natural world inspired by the Serviceberry tree and its abundant gifts.

“Vanishing Treasures: A Bestiary of Extraordinary Endangered Creatures” by Katherine Rundell
From sea horses to pangolins to raccoons, Rundell illuminates the marvelous qualities of 23 species that are threatened or facing extinction. Her short, poignant essays on these animals quietly underscore the magnitude of their potential loss.

“The Light Eaters: How the Unseen World of Plant Intelligence Offers a New Understanding of Life on Earth” by Zoë Schlanger
Drawing on the latest botanical research, science writer Schlanger explores the complex and incredible strategies that plants have developed in order to adapt and survive on this planet. This work challenges our conceptions of consciousness and invites us to reexamine our relationships with plants.





Suggested Reading from The Seattle Public Library

Fiction

“Open Throat” by Henry Hoke

In this imaginative and melancholy novella, a queer mountain lion lives a precarious existence under the Hollywood sign, observing the puzzling behaviors of the humans of el lay, aka Los Angeles.

“Migrations” by Charlotte McConaghy

In a near-future ravaged by climate change, Franny Stone, a passionate but troubled environmentalist, convinces a fishing boat captain to help her track the last remaining flock of Arctic terns on their flight home.

“The Overstory” by Richard Powers

Trees – and the desire to save them from destruction – connect the lives of nine characters from very different walks of life in Powers’ sweeping novel of ecological activism.

“Pink Slime” by Fernanda Trías

Toxic red algae is the source of a devastating epidemic in this bleak but lyrically written dystopian novel from Uruguayan author Trías.

“The Seed Keeper” by Diane Wilson

Returning to her family’s homeland after the death of her husband, a Dakota woman finds solace by reconnecting with the seeds and soil of her people in this atmospheric and thought-provoking novel.



Youth

“The Words in My Hands” by Asphyxia

In a dystopian world where people’s relationships to nature have been cutoff, a Deaf teen builds their own relationship to the natural world through gardening.

“Braiding Sweetgrass for Young Adults: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants”

by Robin Wall Kimmerer

Adapted by Monique Gray Smith with illustrations from Nicole Neidhardt, “Braiding Sweetgrass for Young Adults” explores our reciprocal relationship with the earth through sharing Indigenous wisdom, scientific knowledge and lessons from the plant world.

“A Snake Falls to Earth” by Darcie Little Badger

A teen Lipan Apache girl from our world and a cottonmouth snake from the Reflecting World are brought together by environmental change and centuries of family ties.

“Poems to Live Your Life By” by Chris Riddell

Artist and writer Chris Riddell has curated a lovely illustrated collection that will sustain readers as they grow up. The book includes works from both famous and lesser-known poets, from selections of Shakespeare’s plays and sonnets to lyrics to an indie rock song by Phoebe.

“Dry” by Neal and Jarrod Shusterman

A catastrophic drought in California forces teenager Alyssa to make impossible choices to survive.





About Our Community Partners



African-American Writers' Alliance

The Seattle-based African-American Writers' Alliance (AAWA), a diverse and dynamic collective of writers of African descent provides an informal and supportive forum for new and published writers. They help one another polish skills, provide peer review, and create opportunities for public readings and other media venues. Ultimately the group encourages members to publish individually and collectively. The African-American Writers' Alliance hosts monthly open mics and other programs throughout the city and throughout the year. Find more information at www.aawa-seattle.org



Creative Aging at the Frye

Creative Aging at the Frye: Creative, arts-based programs for all aging adults, including those living with memory loss. Our programs encourage participants to deepen their life experiences and connect meaningfully with others through art. Find detailed information about Creative Aging programs and events at: www.fryemuseum.org/creative-aging



Hugo House

Hugo House is a nonprofit literary arts organization that aims to open the literary world to everyone who loves books or has the drive to write. Their mission is to give people a place to read words, hear words, and make their own words better. They strive to create a place where that vision comes to life. Where experienced writers become teachers, sharing the craft with new writers. Where passionate readers gather to discuss a new novel. Where writers find quiet corners to hone their ideas. Where communities converge to hear new talents and literary stars. Learn more at hugohouse.org



KUOW Book Club

Join Katie Campbell and KUOW Book Club as they read books with connections to the Pacific Northwest. Learn more at kuow.org/books





La Sala

La Sala is a Seattle-based nonprofit dedicated to elevating and promoting the artistic and cultural contributions of the Latine/x community in the greater Seattle area. It empowers Latine/x artists and arts organizations by providing access to professional development, art spaces, institutional connections, and commissioned opportunities. Learn more at www.lasalanw.org

The Memory Hub, UW Memory and Brain Wellness Center



Bringing together people, programs and partners, the Memory Hub operates as a vibrant dementia-specific community center, collaborative workspace and training center. Spearheaded by the UW Memory and Brain Wellness Center (MBWC), and located on the campus of founding partner the Frye Art Museum, the Memory Hub welcomes visitors year-round to explore what it means to live well with dementia. Learn more at: www.thememoryhub.org/



Open Books: A Poem Emporium

Open Books is a poetry bookstore and community space that features an assortment of new, rare, and out-of-print poetry books, chapbooks, journals, and more. Learn more at open-books-a-poem-emporium.myshopify.com/



Poetry Northwest

Poetry Northwest is a non-profit poetry magazine that is published in print biannually, with new features published online monthly. While poetry is at the center of their work, they also publish book reviews, essays on poetics and other cultural explorations, and visual arts features. Poetry Northwest a platform for regional, national, and international writers to intersect with an audience of discerning readers. Learn more at poetrynw.org





About Our Community Partners



Pongo Poetry Project

Pongo Poetry Project is a 30-year-old Seattle-based non-profit whose mission is to engage youth in writing poetry to inspire healing and growth. Pongo was founded on the knowledge that poetry writing offers a unique vessel for healing from devastating trauma. Pongo offers therapeutic poetry programming and publication opportunities for systems-impacted youth, and inspires the creation of poetry projects based on its evidence-based methodology through trainings and technical program support.



CULTURE

4Culture Poetry in Public

Poetry in Public—formerly known as Poetry on Buses—celebrates local voices in one of our most vital shared spaces: transit. This year’s theme, Places of Landing, embraces the poetry of our daily lives. It honors the movements, places, and feelings that tell the stories of our days. This year’s program was brought to you by 4Culture, King County Metro, and Sound Transit, with Poet Planner Laura Da’ as the creative lead.



Seattle Arts & Lectures Youth Poetry Fellowship

The Youth Poetry Fellowship (YPF) is made up of young writers and leaders who are committed to poetry, performance, civic and community engagement, education, and equity across the Puget Sound region. At community events throughout the year, Fellows share their powerful voices, leadership, and love of community. Learn more at lectures.org/youthprograms





About Seattle Reads

Seattle Reads is a city-wide book group, where people are encouraged to read and discuss the same book. It's designed to deepen engagement in literature through reading and discussion.

Everyone is invited to participate in Seattle Reads by reading the featured book, joining in a book discussion, and/or attending programs with the featured writer. Seattle Reads "You Are Here" is presented in partnership with African-American Writers' Alliance; Creative Aging at the Frye; Elliott Bay Books; Hugo House; KUOW Book Club; La Sala; the Memory Hub, UW Memory and Brain Wellness Center; Open Books: A Poem Emporium; Poetry Northwest; Pongo Poetry Project; 4Culture Poetry in Public; Seattle Arts & Lectures Youth Poetry Fellowship; Third Place Books.

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Contributors to this program and guide include Abigail Bass, Emily Billow, Okunyi Bèhree, Stesha Brandon, Paige Chernow, Jennie Diaz, Kristy Gale, Ken Gollersrud, Andrea Gough, Katie Hilles, Alan Jacobson, Duan Li, Lynn Miller, Danny Ramirez, Jane Singer, Eliza Summerlin, Annie Vasquez, and Richard Visick.

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Seattle Reads Through the Years

- 2025:** *You Are Here: Poetry In the Natural World* Edited by Ada Limón (Milkweed, 2024)
- 2024:** *Parable of the Sower* by Octavia Butler (Grand Central, 2019)
- 2023:** *The Swimmers* by Julie Otsuka (Anchor Books, 2023)
- 2022:** *The House of Broken Angels* by Luis Alberto Urrea (Back Bay Books, 2019)
- 2021:** *The Vanishing Half* by Brit Bennett (Riverhead, 2020)
- 2020:** *There There* by Tommy Orange (Vintage, 2019)
- 2019:** *The Best We Could Do* by Thi Bui (Abrams Books, 2017)
- 2018:** *Homegoing* by Yaa Gyasi (Vintage Books, 2017)
- 2017:** *The Turner House* by Angela Flournoy (Mariner Books, 2016)
- 2016:** *We Are All Completely Beside Ourselves* by Karen Joy Fowler (Plume Books, 2013)
- 2015:** *The Painter* by Peter Heller (Vintage Books, 2015)
- 2014:** *For All of Us, One Today: An Inaugural Poet's Journey* by Richard Blanco (Beacon Press, 2013)
- 2013:** *Stories for Boys* by Gregory Martin (Hawthorne Books, 2012)
- 2012:** *The Submission* by Amy Waldman (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2011)
- 2011:** *Little Bee* by Chris Cleave (Simon and Schuster, 2009)
- 2010:** *Secret Son* by Laila Lalami (Algonquin Books, 2009)
- 2009:** *My Jim* by Nancy Rawles (Three Rivers Press, 2005)
- 2008:** *The Beautiful Things That Heaven Bears* by Dinaw Mengestu (Riverhead Books, 2007)
- 2007:** *The Namesake* by Jhumpa Lahiri (Mariner Books, 2003)
- 2006:** *Persepolis* by Marjane Satrapi (Pantheon Books, 2003)
- 2005:** *When the Emperor Was Divine* by Julie Otsuka (Anchor Books, 2002)
- 2004:** *Seattle Reads* Isabel Allende
- 2003:** *A Gesture Life* by Chang-rae Lee (Riverhead Books, 1999)
- 2002:** *Wild Life* by Molly Gloss (Mariner Books, 2001)
- 2001:** *Fooling with Words: A Celebration of Poets and Their Craft* by Bill Moyers (Morrow, 1999)
- 1999:** *A Lesson Before Dying* by Ernest Gaines (Vintage Books, 1994)
- 1998:** *The Sweet Hereafter* by Russell Banks (HarperCollins, 1991)

Seattle Reads
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