

Poetry

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With April being [National Poetry Month](#), it is appropriate to recognize K-State's poets and poetry with a sampling of what has transpired in this area over the years! For example, in the first college catalog, 1863-1864, Homer's long narrative poem, Iliad, was listed as a required course for third year students and continued to be for several years (it is not known if they had an English version!). However, students soon created their own poetry that was more utilitarian in nature! One of the many poems included in the College Symposium, published in 1891, describes a student's feelings about agricultural chemistry. The last stanza reads:

We studied of drainage, of tillage, of composts.
Of everything horrid the author could say,
Till at last the term ended, and with it our sorrows,
But the memory will linger for many a day.

The early yearbooks often included class yells that were written in verse. In a "Jokes" section of the 1911 Royal Purple is the senior yell:

Boom a Rah! Boom a Rah!
Rip Rah, Raven,
K-S-A-C-
1911

Early publications printed at K-State containing the works of students include Quill Poems, 1929 and Two Arts: Poetry and Printing, 1934. A poem in the latter by Ellen Payne (Class of '36) was written "To describe a summer morning's sunrise as seen from a hill west of Anderson Hall"

Towers and spires
Are silhouetted against the
Blood red and burnt orange
Of a new dawn's sunrise.
Crimson and golden
Slowly and silently fade.
Towers and spires
Are silhouetted against the
Rosy pink and daffodil yellow
Of a blossoming day.

Kansas Magazine, a literary periodical published at K-State from 1933-1968, enjoyed a national reputation for the writers, artists, and poets, such as Langston Hughes, included in the issues. From

1968-1993 the periodical continued as *Kansas Quarterly* under the auspices of the English Department. The journal is now published as *Arkansas Review* by Arkansas State University.

The teaching of poetry on campus can be traced to the early 1900s when it began to appear in descriptions for English literature courses in the college catalogs. The first class devoted specifically to poetry is listed in the 1920-1921 catalog as “The New Poetry.” It is described as “...a brief study of the new poetry movement, and includes a reading and study of the leading poetic creations and representative writers of new poetry. The course also includes some practice in the writing of poetry.” Among the poets who were writing at the time and influenced this “new poetry” were [Carl Sandberg](#), [Emily Dickinson](#), [William Carlos Williams](#), and [Robert Frost](#). The class was taught by Nelson Antrim Crawford and Robert W. Conover.

Today, courses in the Department of English include “introduction to poetry writing,” “advanced creative writing: poetry,” and “creative writing workshop: poetry.” Since 1960 the department has sponsored the publication, [Touchstone](#), a journal that includes the poetry of many K-State students.

Over the years K-State has been home to a number of faculty who were accomplished poets. For example, [Jonathan Holden](#), a faculty member of the English department since 1978, was appointed by the governor as the first [poet laureate of Kansas](#) in 2005!

To allow students and others to experience poetry, numerous distinguished poets have been invited to speak on campus. Among those who have presented their works in recent years are the following:

[Dana Gioia](#)

[Yusef Komunyakaa](#)

[Ted Kooser](#) (13th poet laureate of the U.S.)

[Pattiann Rogers](#)

[Naomi Shihab Nye](#)

Kim Stafford (son of Kansan William Stafford)

[Ellen Byant Voigt](#)

T. S. Eliot once wrote, “[April is the cruelest month.](#)” Readers are encouraged to not let this poetic message describe your April, experience poetry and enable it to come to your senses!