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## Hello, Friends!

This is – no joke – a love letter.

To you.

Because if you're on this list, you've been a listener, a reader, an inspiration, a friend. Somewhere, somehow, our stories have intertwined.

And isn't that the point of it all?

Thank you for being out there in the world, for being you, and for sharing your talents – and your heart! You inspire me to write more and more and more words... I think [AGNES](#) would approve. :)

## Happy National Poetry Month!

Join me for [ARTSPEAK: Happy!](#), this year's installment of my poem-a-day project -- which I could have called "ARTSPEAK! Yellow," because most of the art pieces I've selected feature sunny yellow palettes. I'll be writing short, happy poems. [Read/view on Padlet](#), my [Live Your Poem](#) blog, or (new this year!) [my Youtube channel](#).

### Other Ways to Celebrate

Spend some quality time online, starting with a visit to [Jama's Alphabet Soup](#), which includes links to all kinds of inspiring festivities, including the 8th annual [Kidlitosphere Progressive Poem](#). Who knows where our poem will go? Click here to read the anything-is-possible [first line](#).

Watch the [Poetry in America](#) tv series.

Give yourself -- or a friend -- an anthology. I love anthologies because the variety of voices generally means there's something for everyone, and I have one to recommend: [THE PROPER WAY TO MEET A HEDGEHOG AND OTHER HOW-TO POEMS](#), selected by the late (brilliant, kind) Paul B. Janeczko, illus. by Richard Jones. Learn how to scare monsters, how to read Braille, how to pay attention... and full disclosure: I'm proud and honored to have three of my own poems included, about how to walk on Mars, how to be a tree in winter, and how to catch a poem.

Print some favorite poems and tuck them in your pocket to give away during Poem in

Your Pocket Day (April 18). To make it extra easy, here are 3 printable files:  
[Poetry in the Halls](#), compiled by Tabatha Yeatts - includes poems for kids by some fabulous poets

[19 ARTSPEAK! Portraits poems](#) by moi

[32 family-friendly \(short\) public domain poems](#). Enjoy!

Get your free poster at [poets.org](https://www.poets.org).

For adult readers, check out these new poetry books by Alabama poets: [Known by Salt](#) by Tina Mozelle Braziel, [Borrowed Light](#) by Jennifer Horne, [dark//thing](#) by Ashley M. Jones, and [Dusting for Prints](#) by Bonnie Roberts (please email [bonnierpoet@gmail.com](mailto:bonnierpoet@gmail.com) to order this beautiful book!).

Attend a local poetry event in your area. Alabama friends, might I suggest [Magic City Poetry Festival](#) featuring [Sonia Sanchez](#)?

## Some highlights of my "Happy" Year so far:

Learning our new puppy [Rosie](#) love hedgehogs.

Getting my picture taken with a [life-size Miss Fancy](#). ([MEET MISS FANCY](#) is now in its 2nd printing, named a [SIBA Fresh Okra Pick](#) and as one of [Booklist's Top 10 Historical Fiction Books for Youth](#))



Riding a sea plane across turquoise waters to [Dry Tortugas National Park](#).

[The Butterfly Hours](#) memoir project. Inspired by [the book Patty Dann](#), I've written on 33 prompts so far, like [cake](#), [divorce](#), and [eyebrows](#). By the end of the year I'll have written about 120 of these. I welcome you to join me as a reader and/or writer!

Participating in a cello ensemble workshop. (We played Brahms' "[Hungarian Dance](#)")

Making a [diaper cake](#) for a friend's baby shower.

Feasting with my family on red velvet donuts from [Donut Hole](#) in Destin, FL.

Meeting a [3 banded armadillo](#). (One of my 2020 releases features a 9 banded armadillo!) Thank you, [Shelby County Schools](#)!

Visiting [Springville Elementary School](#), where Principal Moore gifted a copy of [MEET MISS FANCY](#) for each 4th grade student. (150!)

Learning [CAN I TOUCH YOUR HAIR?](#) Is going to be [published in the UK](#) in time for their National Poetry Month and Black History Month (October). [Charles Waters](#) and I will also be recording the audio version later this month!

What's been the highlight of *your* year so far? I'd love to hear about it.

## Happy Birthday, Alabama!

I've had so much fun showcasing my Alabama books this year, and thanks in part to funding from the [Alabama Bicentennial Commission](#), I'll be sharing with more folks at the following events:

April

2 Oneonta Middle School (Oneonta, AL)

17 Underwood School (Florence, AL)

24 Our Lady of Sorrows (Homewood, AL)

May

9 Green Valley Elementary (Hoover, AL)

June

11 Prattville Public Library (Prattville, AL)

July

2 Oneonta Public Library, 10 am (Oneonta, AL)

11 Clay Public Library, 6 pm (Clay, AL)

August

27 Auburn Public Library, 4 pm (Auburn, AL)

I also look forward to meeting readers and to seeing friends at these upcoming April events:

3-5 [Fay B. Kaigler](#), Southern Authors panel (Hattiesburg, MS)

12-13 [Alabama Book Festival](#) (Montgomery, AL)

25 [Birmingham Arts Journal](#) reception

And now... because this is a love letter, and it's April...please accept this offering of a newly discovered (by me) public-domain poem:

### April Love

by Ernest Dowson (1867-1900)

We have walked in Love's land a little way,

We have learnt his lesson a little while,

And shall we not part at the end of day,

With a sigh, a smile?

A little while in the shine of the sun,

We were twined together, joined lips, forgot  
How the shadows fall when the day is done,  
And when Love is not.  
We have made no vows--there will none be broke,  
Our love was free as the wind on the hill,  
There was no word said we need wish unspoken,  
We have wrought no ill.  
So shall we not part at the end of day,  
Who have loved and lingered a little while,  
Join lips for the last time, go our way,  
With a sigh, a smile?

Thinking of you with a sigh and a smile!  
Love,  
Irene

p.s. thank you for reading!

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