

**Event title:****Poetry Alive! Why teaching living poets to children and youth matters**

**Event Description:** Contemporary poetry is vibrant, exciting, inclusive, and relevant. But how do you go about including it in K-12 settings? How do you use it to prompt student writing? How do you deal with its often complex and mature themes? And why does teaching living poets matter? Writers teaching youth in diverse regions and contexts (including the founders of #teachlivingpoets and Seattle's own Frog Hollow School) speak about how they break past the expected canon and share contemporary poetry with youth.

**Event Category: Pedagogy****Moderator:**

**Becca Rose Hall** founded and directs Frog Hollow School, a children's writing program in Seattle. She writes the Substack newsletter *A Few Crooked Words* to inspire kids' writing. Her work has been supported by ArtsOmi, Zvona i Nari, Writers' Lighthouse, and Community of Writers, and has recently appeared in *Third Coast*, *Pacifica Literary Review*, and *Orion*.

**Participants:**

**Melissa Alter Smith** is the creator of the #TeachLivingPoets movement. She is co-author of *The Norton Guide to AP Literature* and co-author of *Teach Living Poets*. A National Board Certified high school English teacher & 2017 District Teacher of the Year, Smith's best work happens in the classroom.

**Outspoken Bean** is Houston's 5th Poet Laureate. He has spent countless hours mentoring Houston's youth, performing his original poems, and implementing community outreach projects that help raise awareness around diversity.

**Joshua Gottlieb-Miller** has been a Fellow at MacDowell and the Tent Writing Conference at the Yiddish Book Center. He teaches at San Jacinto College and lives in Houston with his wife and son. His debut poetry collection, *"The Art of Bagging,"* won Conduit's Marystina Santiestevan First Book Prize.

**Donna Vorreyer** is the author of *To Everything There Is* (2020) and two other poetry collections from Sundress Publications, as well as eight chapbooks. She is an associate editor at Rhino Poetry and the host of the online reading series *A Hundred Pitchers of Honey*.

**Introductions and favorite living poet prompts:**

Each panelist will speak for a minute or two about the context in which they have taught contemporary poetry to young people. Then each panelist will briefly share a poem by a living poet that they love to use in their work with students, and the lesson or writing prompt they do with it. This will illustrate the way they work with students, highlight some of the possibilities of teaching living poets in K-12 education, and give audience members something concrete to try in their own work as educators.

### **Moderator's Questions:**

- Why teach living poets? (What is exciting about sharing contemporary poetry with students? How does it connect with them differently than the older canon? Why is it exciting to you?)
- Who are some favorite contemporary poets you teach, who haven't been mentioned? (Outspoken Bean)
- How do we make contemporary poetry, with its often complex and mature themes, accessible in the classroom? Can you speak to some challenges of teaching living poets to middle school level students? (Donna)
- What's a time a poem/lesson fell flat and what did you do to make up for it? (Josh)
- How do you make teaching contemporary poetry hands-on and student centered? (Melissa)
- How does teaching this poetry feed the larger learning experience for children (Donna)
- In my work I mostly use contemporary poetry to prompt student writing. I introduce a poem, draw an idea from it, like writing about colors, or writing in couplets, and have the students write a poem using that idea. How else do you use it in other aspects of your classes?
- Have you ever taught a full poetry collection? How did that go? (Melissa)

Q and A