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A LITERARY &
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SERIES



Program Book

I Love This Poem: A Celebrity Reading

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WORDS

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OUR

WORLD



You are cordially invited to

I Love This Poem: A Celebrity Reading

Join us on

May 20, 2021 at 7pm ET

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Literacy Partners is proud to present **I Love This Poem: A Celebrity Reading**, the latest installment in a series of literary and social justice events. The evening features intimate poetry readings from some of the most compelling voices in film, television, theater, and the world of books.

Hosted by:



Zibby Owens



Mira Jacob

WORDS

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Featuring:



Common



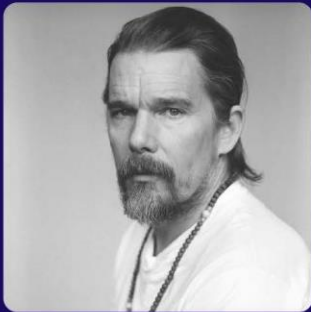
Julianne Moore



Liev Schreiber



Danai Gurira



Ethan Hawke



John Leguizamo



Tayari Jones



Cleo Wade



Keise Laymon



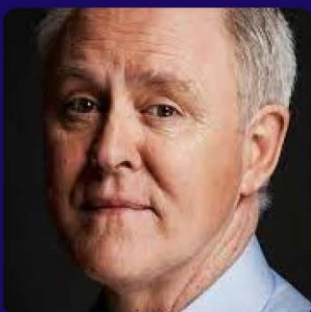
Tommy Orange



Dinaw Mengestu



Kevin Kline



John Lithgow



Megha Majumdar

Thank you for helping us
champion literacy and advance
racial and social justice.

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Poems

Readings in order by performance

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Common

reading

I, Too

by Langston Hughes

I, too, sing America.

I am the darker brother.
They send me to eat in the kitchen
When company comes,
But I laugh,
And eat well,
And grow strong.

Tomorrow,
I'll be at the table
When company comes.
Nobody'll dare
Say to me,
"Eat in the kitchen,"
Then.

Besides,
They'll see how beautiful I am
And be ashamed—

I, too, am America.



Tommy Orange
reading

It Was The Animals
by Natalie Diaz

Today my brother brought over a piece of the ark
wrapped in a white plastic grocery bag.

He set the bag on my dining table, unknotted it, peeled it
away, revealing a foot-long fracture of wood.
He took a step back and gestured toward it with his arms
and open palms —

*It's the ark, he said.
You mean Noah's ark? I asked.
What other ark is there? he answered.*

*Read the inscription, he told me, it tells what's
going to happen at the end.*

*What end? I wanted to know.
He laughed, What do you mean, "what end"?*

The end end.

Then he lifted it out. The plastic bag rattled.
His fingers were silkened by pipe blisters.
He held the jagged piece of wood so gently.
I had forgotten my brother could be gentle.

He set it on the table the way people on television
set things when they're afraid those things might blow-up
or go-off — he set it right next to my empty coffee cup.

It was no ark —
it was the broken end of a picture frame
with a floral design carved into its surface.

He put his head in his hands —





Tommy Orange

reading

It Was The Animals
by Natalie Diaz

*I shouldn't show you this —
God, why did I show her this?
It's ancient — O, God, this is so old.*

*Fine, I gave in, Where did you get it?
The girl, he said. O, the girl.
What girl? I asked.
You'll wish you never knew, he told me.*

I watched him drag his wrecked fingers
over the chipped flower-work of the wood —

*You should read it. But, O, you can't take it — no
matter how many books you've read.*

He was wrong. I could take the ark.
I could even take his marvelously fucked fingers.
The way they almost glittered.
It was the animals — the animals I could not take —

They came up the walkway into my house,
cracked the doorframe with their hooves and hips,
marched past me, into my kitchen, into my brother,

Tails snaking across my feet before disappearing
like retracting vacuum cords into the hollows
of my brother's clavicles, tusks scraping the walls,

Reaching out for him — wildebeests, pigs,
the oryxes with their black matching horns,
javelinas, jaguars, pumas, raptors. The ocelots
with their mathematical faces. So many kinds of goat.
So many kinds of creature.

I wanted to follow them, to get to the bottom of it,
but my brother stopped me —



Tommy Orange

reading

It Was The Animals
by Natalie Diaz

*This is serious, he said.
You have to understand.
It can save you.*

So I sat down, with my brother wrecked open like that, and two-by-two the fantastical beasts parading him. I sat, as the water fell against my ankles, built itself up around me, filled my coffee cup before floating it away from the table.

My brother — teeming with shadows — a hull of bones, lit only by tooth and tusk, lifting his ark high in the air.



Tayari Jones

reading

Here Rests

By Lucille Clifton

My sister Josephine
born July in '29
and dead these 15 years
who carried a book
on every stroll.

When daddy was dying
she left the streets
and moved back home
to tend him.

Her pimp came too
her Diamond Dick
and they would take turns
Reading a bible aloud through the house.

When you poem this
and you will she would say
remember the Book of Job.

Happy birthday and hope
to you Josephine
one of the easts
most wanted.

May heaven be filled
with literate men
may they bed you
with respect.





Kiese Laymon

reading

**Never Offer Your Heart
To Someone Who
Eats Hearts**
By Alice Walker

Never offer your heart
to someone who eats hearts
who finds heartmeat
delicious
but not rare
who sucks the juices
drop by drop
and bloody-chinned
grins
like a God.

Never offer your heart
to a heart gravy lover.
Your stewed, over seasoned
heart consumed
he will sop up your grief
with bread
and send it shuttling
from side to side
in his mouth
like bubblegum.

If you find yourself
in love
with a person
who eats hearts
these things
you must do:



Kiese Laymon

reading

**Never Offer Your Heart
To Someone Who
Eats Hearts**

By Alice Walker

Freeze your heart
immediately.
Let him—next time
he examines your chest—
find your heart cold
flinty and unappetizing.

Refrain from kissing
lest he in revenge
dampen the spark
in your soul.

Now,
sail away to Africa
where holy women
await you
on the shore—
long having practiced the art
of replacing hearts
with God
and Song.



Kevin Kline

reading

To My Favorite 17-Year-Old High School Girl

By Billy Collins

Do you realize that if you had started building the Parthenon on the day you were born, you would be all done in only one more year?

Of course, you couldn't have done that all alone. So never mind; you're fine just being yourself. You're loved for just being you.

But did you know that at your age Judy Garland was pulling down 150,000 dollars a picture,

Joan of Arc was leading the French army to victory and Blaise Pascal had cleaned up his room – no wait, I mean he had invented the calculator?

Of course, there will be time for all that later in your life, after you come out of your room and begin to blossom, or at least pick up all your socks.

For some reason I keep remembering that Lady Jane Grey was queen of England when she was only 15.

But then she was beheaded, so never mind her as a role model.



Kevin Kline

reading

**To My Favorite 17-Year-Old
High School Girl**
By Billy Collins

A few centuries later,
when he was your age,
Franz Schubert was doing the dishes for his
family,

But that did not keep him from composing two
symphonies, four operas
and two complete masses as a youngster.

But of course, that was in Austria
at the height of Romantic lyricism,
not here in the suburbs of Cleveland.

Frankly, who cares if Annie Oakley was a crack
shot at 15
or if Maria Callas debuted as Tosca at 17?

We think you're special just being you –
playing with your food and staring into space.

By the way, I lied about Schubert doing the
dishes, but that doesn't mean he never helped
out around the house.



Julianne Moore

reading

Dharma

by Billy Collins

The way the dog trots out the front door
every morning
without a hat or an umbrella,
without any money
or the keys to her dog house
never fails to fill the saucer of my heart
with milky admiration.

Who provides a finer example
of a life without encumbrance?
Thoreau in his curtainless hut
with a single plate, a single spoon?
Gandhi with his staff and his holy diapers?

Off she goes into the material world
with nothing but her brown coat
and her modest blue collar,
following only her wet nose,
the twin portals of her steady breathing,
followed only by the plume of her tail.

If only she did not shove the cat aside
every morning
and eat all his food
what a model of self-containment she would be,
what a paragon of earthly detachment.
If only she were not so eager
for a rub behind the ears,
so acrobatic in her welcomes,
if only I were not her god.



Megha Majumdar

reading

**I Cannot Remember
My Mother**

by Rabindranath Tagore

I cannot remember my mother
only sometimes in the midst of my play
a tune seems to hover over my playthings,
the tune of some song that she used to
hum while rocking my cradle.

I cannot remember my mother
but when in the early autumn morning
the smell of the shiuli flowers floats in the air
the scent of the morning service in the
temple
comes to me as the scent of my mother.

I cannot remember my mother
only when from my bedroom window I send
my eyes into the blue of the distant sky,
I feel that the stillness of
my mother's gaze on my face
has spread all over the sky.



John Lithgow

reading

To Autumn

By John Keats

Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness,
Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun;
Conspiring with him how to load and bless
With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eves run;
To bend with apples the moss'd cottage-trees,
And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core;
To swell the gourd, and plump the hazel shells
With a sweet kernel; to set budding more,
And still more, later flowers for the bees,
Until they think warm days will never cease,
For summer has o'er-brimm'd their clammy cells.

Who hath not seen thee oft amid thy store?
Sometimes whoever seeks abroad may find
Thee sitting careless on a granary floor,
Thy hair soft-lifted by the winnowing wind;
Or on a half-reap'd furrow sound asleep,
Drows'd with the fume of poppies, while thy hook
Spares the next swath and all its twined flowers:
And sometimes like a gleaner thou dost keep
Steady thy laden head across a brook;
Or by a cyder-press, with patient look,
Thou watchest the last oozy hours by hours.

Where are the songs of spring? Ay, Where are they?
Think not of them, thou hast thy music too,—
While barred clouds bloom the soft-dying day,
And touch the stubble-plains with rosy hue;
Then in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn
Among the river shallows, borne aloft
Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies;
And full-grown lambs loud bleat from hilly bourn;
Hedge-crickets sing; and now with treble soft
The red-breast whistles from a garden-croft;
And gathering swallows twitter in the skies.



Liev Schreiber

reading

Macbeth: Act 5, Scene 5

By: William Shakespeare

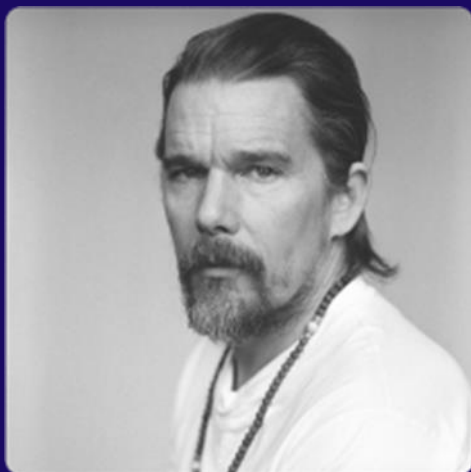
Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow,
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day,
To the last syllable of recorded time;

And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
The way to dusty death.

Out, out, brief candle!

Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player,
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
And then is heard no more.

It is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing.



Ethan Hawke

reading

For Desire

By Kim Addonizio

Give me the strongest cheese, the one that stinks best;
And I want the good wine, the swirl in crystal
Surrendering the bruised scent of blackberries
Or cherries, the rich spurt in the back
Of the throat, the holding it there before swallowing

Give me the lover who yanks open the door
Of his house and presses me to the wall
In the dim hallway, and keeps me there until I'm
drenched and shaking, whose kisses arrive by the
boatload and begin their delicious diaspora
Through the cities and small towns of my body

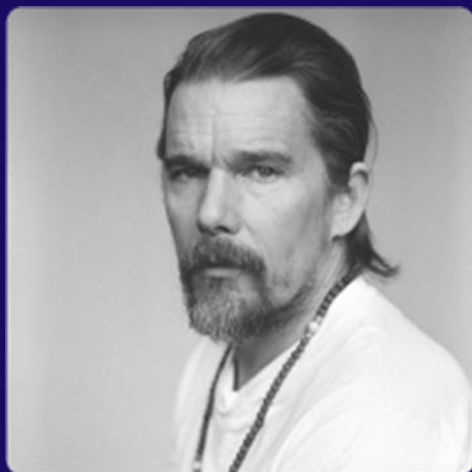
To hell with the saints, with martyrs
Of my childhood meant to instruct me
In the power of endurance and faith

To hell with the next world and its pallid angels
Swooning and sighing like Victorian girls

I want this world. I want to walk into
The ocean and feel it trying to drag me along
Like I'm nothing but a broken bit of scratched glass
And I want to resist it.

I want to go





Ethan Hawke

reading

For Desire

By Kim Addonizio

Staggering and flailing my way
Through the bars and back rooms
Through the gleaming hotels and weedy

Lots of abandoned sunflowers and the parks
Where dogs are let off their leashes

In spite of the signs, where they sniff each
Other and roll together in the grass,

I want to lie down somewhere and suffer for love
until it nearly kills me, and then I want to get up
again

And put on that little black dress and wait
For you, yes you, to come over here
And get down on your knees and tell me
Just how fucking good I look.



Angie Ventura

reading

The Unglam Mom
By Fion Lim

How many days
I feel so spent exhausted run down

Till I wonder if it's worth it all
There goes my work goals, routines,

Days of dressing up pretty and nice
Words like carefree, solo, single
Are yesterday vocabulary.

Shopping, gatherings, late night outs
Are yesterday past times.

Now look at me
Plain boring nondescript dressing

Gone with the high heels and makeup
In with flat pumps and BB cream

A quick haircut requires an arrangement
I do feel unglam and quite uncertain

Today I'm not slim or in trend as before



Angie Ventura

reading

The Unglam Mom

By Fion Lim

But you see
I have a baby to care for
He takes up my days and nights
He really is a 24/7 chore
He takes away order and creates mess
He awakens me to wonder and inner strength
He introduces me to minimalistic and
sacrifices

He tests me in patience, prayer and play
He brings with him laughter and joy
So now I see

My baby is transforming into a toddler
The initial months rolling by fast
Some days are much tougher and
I may have been weak and broken down
But there are many good days
Where it is beyond words to be a mom
I may not be a glam mom now
I may not be all chic and confident
But I am giving my best shot at "momdom"
And I do have my baby to love and care for
He truly fills up my days and nights!



Cleo Wade

reading

**The Time Has Always
Been Now**

By Cleo Wade

the time is always right
to begin
the time is always right
to stop waiting on you
the time is always right
to embrace your path
to accept what you had to walk through
yesterday
and what you must step away from now as
you move toward
tomorrow.

the time is always right
to pound your chest and let them know
that you are here.
to let them know that they will hear you
to let them know that they will see you.
the time is always right to
end your silence.

to look at the person next to you and tell
them to end their
silence too

the time is always right to reclaim your
narrative
to tell your story
to live with wild freedom



Cleo Wade

reading

**The Time Has Always
Been Now**

By Cleo Wade

in a place that asks you to
control not only the way you see the world
but also
the way you see yourself
the time is always right to say
I will not be a victim
I will be a survivor
I will be a savior
the time is always right
to remind yourself that you
are going to be okay
the time is always right to love somebody
especially if that somebody is you
the time is always right
to make today
the day
you proclaim that you deserve
your ideas, your dreams, and your hopes
the time is always right
to let waiting
be something
you just don't
do anymore
now is the time,
beloved,
now is the time.



Dinaw Mengestu
reading

**An Atlas
Of The Difficult World**
By Adrienne Rich

I know you are reading this poem
late, before leaving your office
of the one intense yellow lamp-spot and the
darkening window in the lassitude of a building
faded to quiet long after rush-hour.

I know you are reading this poem
standing up in a bookstore far from the ocean
on a grey day of early spring, faint flakes driven
across the plains' enormous spaces around you.

I know you are reading this poem
in a room where too much has happened for you
to bear where the bedclothes lie in stagnant coils
on the bed and the open valise speaks of flight but
you cannot leave yet.

I know you are reading this poem
as the underground train loses momentum and
before running up the stairs toward a new kind of
love your life has never allowed.



Dinaw Mengestu

reading

**An Atlas
Of The Difficult World
By Adrienne Rich**

I know you are reading this poem by the light
of the television screen where soundless images jerk
and slide while you wait for the newscast from the
intifada.

I know you are reading this poem in a waiting-room
of eyes met and unmeeting, of identity with strangers.

I know you are reading this poem by fluorescent light
in the boredom and fatigue of the young who are
counted out, count themselves out, at too early an age.

I know you are reading this poem through your failing
sight, the thicklens enlarging these letters beyond all
meaning yet you read on because even the alphabet is
precious.

I know you are reading this poem as you pace beside
the stove warming milk, a crying child on your shoulder,
a book in your hand because life is short and you too
are thirsty.

I know you are reading this poem which is not in your
language guessing at some words while others keep you
reading.



John Leguizamo

reading

**Yo Soy Joaquín /
I Am Joaquín**
By Rodolfo Gonzalez

Yo soy Joaquín.
I am Cuauhtémoc, proud and noble,
leader of men, king of an empire civilized
beyond the dreams of the gachupín Cortés,
who also is the blood, the image of myself.

I was part in blood and spirit of that
courageous village priest
Hidalgo who rang the bell of independence
and gave out that lasting cry--
El Grito de Dolores

"Que mueran los gachupines y que viva la
Virgen de Guadalupe..." I sentenced him who
was me I excommunicated him, my blood.

I am Joaquín.
I rode with Pancho Villa,
crude and warm, a tornado at full strength,
nourished and inspired by the passion and
the fire of all his earthy people.
I ride with revolutionists
against myself.



John Leguizamo

reading

**Yo Soy Joaquín /
I Am Joaquín**

By Rodolfo Gonzalez

I have been the bloody revolution,
The victor,
The vanquished.
I have killed And been killed.
I am the despots Díaz
And Huerta
And the apostle of democracy,
Francisco Madero.

I rode east and north
As far as the Rocky Mountains,
And All men feared the guns of
Joaquín Murrieta.
I killed those men who dared
To steal my mine,
Who raped and killed my love
My wife.
Then I killed to stay alive.



John Leguizamo

reading

**Yo Soy Joaquín /
I Am Joaquín**
By Rodolfo Gonzalez

I stand here looking back,
And now I see the present,
And still I am a campesino,
I am the fat political coyote—
I, Of the same name,
Joaquín.

In a country that has wiped out
All my history,
Stifled all my pride,
In a country that has placed a
Different weight of indignity upon my age-
old burdened back.
Inferiority is the new load . . .

I look at myself
And see part of me
Who rejects my father and my mother
And dissolves into the melting pot
To disappear in shame.



John Leguizamo

reading

**Yo Soy Joaquín /
I Am Joaquín**
By Rodolfo Gonzalez

La raza!
Méjicano!
Español!
Latino!
Chicano!
Or whatever I call myself,
I look the same
I feel the same
I cry
And
Sing the same.

I am the masses of my people and
I refuse to be absorbed.
I am Joaquín.
The odds are great
But my spirit is strong,
My faith unbreakable,
My blood is pure.
I SHALL ENDURE!
I WILL ENDURE!



Monica Bunay

reading

**Sonnet Seventeen
Last Stanza**

by Pablo Neruda

I love you without knowing how, or when, or
from where,

I love you directly without problems or pride:

I love you like this because I don't know any
other way to love,

Except in this form in which I am not nor are you,

So close that your hand upon my chest is mine,

So close that your eyes close with my dreams.



Danai Gurira

reading

Still I Rise

By Maya Angelou

You may write me down in history
With your bitter, twisted lies,
You may trod me in the very dirt
But still, like dust, I'll rise.


Does my sassiness upset you?
Why are you beset with gloom?
'Cause I walk like I've got oil wells
Pumping in my living room.

Just like moons and like suns,
With the certainty of tides,
Just like hopes springing high,
Still I'll rise.

Did you want to see me broken?
Bowed head and lowered eyes?
Shoulders falling down like teardrops,
Weakened by my soulful cries?

Does my haughtiness offend you?
Don't you take it awful hard
'Cause I laugh like I've got gold mines
Diggin' in my own backyard.

You may shoot me with your words,
You may cut me with your eyes,
You may kill me with your hatefulness,
But still, like air, I'll rise.





Danai Gurira

reading

Still I Rise

By Maya Angelou

Does my sexiness upset you?
Does it come as a surprise
That I dance like I've got diamonds
At the meeting of my thighs?

Out of the huts of history's shame
I rise
Up from a past that's rooted in pain
I rise
I'm a black ocean, leaping and wide,
Welling and swelling I bear in the tide.

Leaving behind nights of terror and fear
I rise
Into a daybreak that's wondrously clear
I rise
Bringing the gifts that my ancestors
gave,
I am the dream and the hope of the
slave.
I rise
I rise
I rise.



“ I learned that as parents we can achieve what we set out to do together with our children. I like that we can express ourselves without being judged.”

—YOVANA

About Literacy Partners

Literacy Partners is an adult literacy program for parents of young children. With our free classes and educational media, low-income and immigrant parents develop literacy and language skills they need to succeed in today's world.

Our research-based programs incorporate child development and parenting support to help parents and caregivers boost children's early reading, social emotional growth, and school readiness.

Empowering BIPOC parents with the tools for success is essential to break the cycle of poverty and advance racial equity.



PARENT EDUCATION FOR RACIAL JUSTICE & COVID-19 RECOVERY

Digital Learning Success

When the pandemic struck a year ago, we drew on many years of expertise in digital education to quickly and successfully pivot to remote learning on Zoom and WhatsApp. Our digital learning tools have earned us **2 Emmy Awards** for educational television geared toward immigrant families, and a **Webby Award** for online family reading promotion.

Because we were already using digital learning tools, we knew how to transition to meet families' needs with innovative and popular content

PARENTS

80% graduated to the next academic level

76% began reading more often with their children

Thriving Despite Covid-19

Despite the enormous financial and logistical challenges of the pandemic, we have **more than tripled the number of students** we serve in our core programs over the past two years from **232** to **735**. We accomplished this dramatic growth by using WhatsApp groups and Zoom break-out rooms to their fullest extent and by increasing the number of trained volunteers we use from **23** to **114**.

We have reinvented the traditional adult literacy classroom into a much more personalized digital learning experience to meet today's needs among low-income parents of color.

CHILDREN

Children of our students showed **64%** more growth on preschool assessments of language development compared to their peers



735 Students
enrolled in
classes and
workshops

1.4m Hispanic
television viewers
reached with
educational media

© Mark Gurevich

Serving Latinx Parents In Language & In Culture

Through a major partnership with Univision, we have created a Spanish-language parent engagement program called La Fuerza de Familias Latinas (“The Power of Latinx Families”) based on a popular telenovela mini-series. Using the power of narrative and the familiar form of a telenovela, this innovative program boosts the strengths of Latinx parents and caregivers, especially young moms, and backs them to implement family learning activities with their children at home. Experts agree that supporting parents is the key to addressing learning loss associated with the pandemic.

Our independent evaluator, Professor Susan Neuman of NYU, called our program **“uniquely effective”** among programs for Spanish-speaking families.

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