

4-2023

National Poetry Month 2023: Featured Poems from the Rio Grande Valley

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Recommended Citation

Pensa, Shannon; Cadena, Adela; Corona, Guillermo; Huerta, Maria "Lisa"; Resendez, Millie; and Rodriguez, Manuel, "National Poetry Month 2023: Featured Poems from the Rio Grande Valley" (2023). *Library Display Posters*. 34.

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NATIONAL POETRY MONTH

April 2023

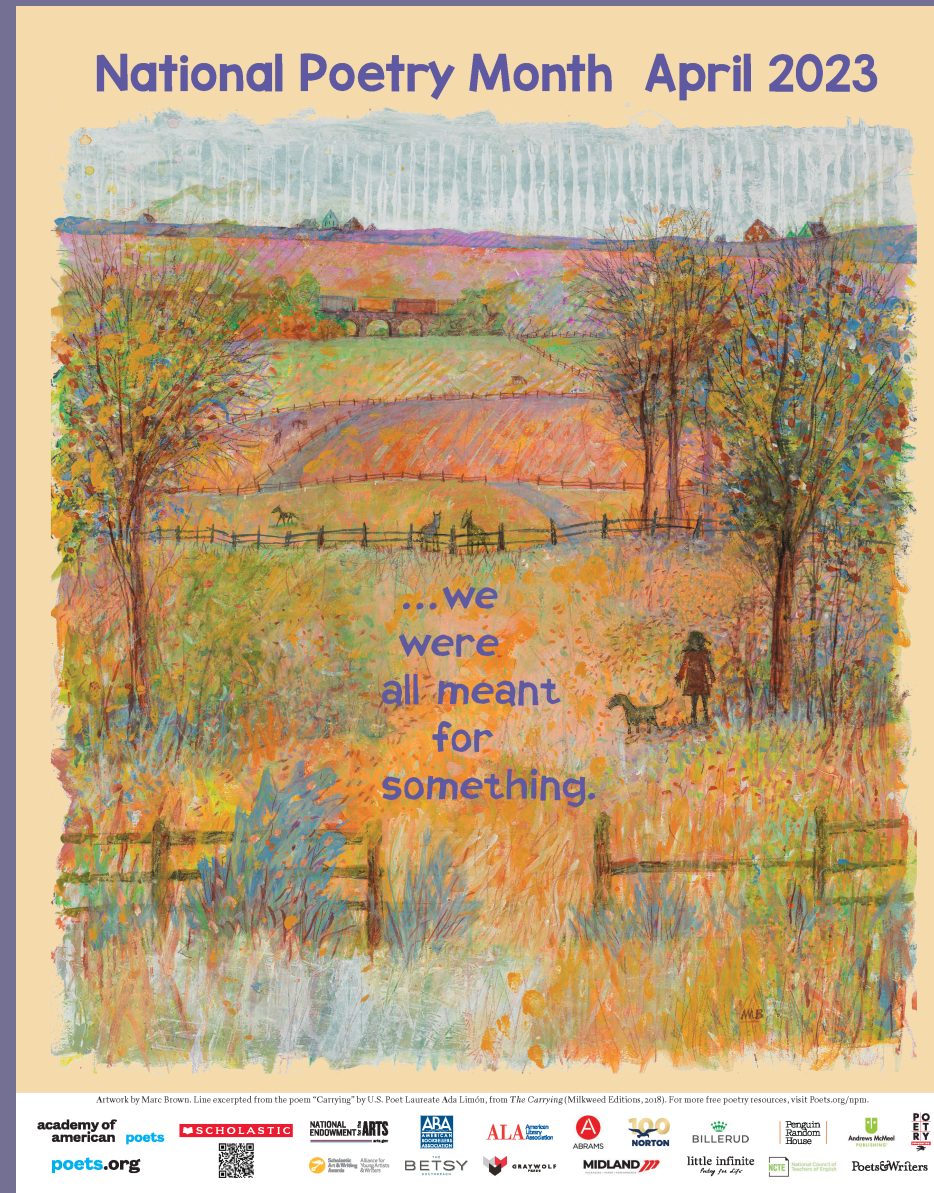
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*"...we were all meant
for something."*

"The Carrying" by U.S. Poet Laureate Ada Limón

FEATURED POEMS FROM THE RIO GRANDE VALLEY



Featured Poems

- The Carrying, by Ada Limón
- Shoulders, by Naomi Shihab Nye
- La Pulga Beauties, by Katherine Hoerth
- Summer, by Isaac Chavarria
- Rosas y Espinas, by Maria Luisa Vela R. De Gutierrez
- La Descendencia del Océano, by Marco Antonio Jiménez
- Embrace Me Written Embrace Me Painted, by Ire'ne Lara Silva
- Coupons, by José Antonio Rodríguez
- April, by Teresa Palomo Acosta
- Story of the Valley, by Chip Dameron
- The Trees Have Always Been Here, by Christopher Carmona
- Hazy Lazy Crazy, by Veronica Sandoval

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The Carrying

ADA LIMÓN

The sky's white with November's teeth,
and the air is ash and woodsmoke.
A flush of color from the dying tree,
a cargo train speeding through, and there,
that's me, standing in the wintering
grass watching the dog suffer the cold
leaves. I'm not large from this distance,
just a fence post, a hedge of holly.
Wider still, beyond the rumble of overpass,
mares look for what's left of green
in the pasture, a few weanlings kick
out, and theirs is the same sky, white
like a calm flag of surrender pulled taut.

A few farms over, there's our mare,
her belly barrel-round with foal, or idea
of foal. It's Kentucky, late fall, and any
mare worth her salt is carrying the next
potential stake's winner. Ours, her coat
thicker with the season's muck, leans against
the black fence and this image is heavy
within me. How my own body, empty,
clean of secrets, knows how to carry her,
knows we were all meant for something.

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Shoulders

NAOMI SHIHAB NYE

A man crosses the street in rain,
stepping gently, looking two times north and south,
because his son is asleep on his shoulder.

No car must splash him.
No car drive too near to his shadow.

This man carries the world's most sensitive cargo
but he's not marked.
Nowhere does his jacket say FRAGILE,
HANDLE WITH CARE.

His ear fills up with breathing.
He hears the hum of a boy's dream
deep inside him.

We're not going to be able
to live in this world
if we're not willing to do what he's doing
with one another.

The road will only be wide.
The rain will never stop falling.

La Pulga Beauties

KATHERINE HOERTH

I lay here with my sisters, naked skin to naked skin - we're on display
this Saturday at La Pulga, feeling the eyes of the hungry

sliding across our yellowing shine. They search me for bruise
and blemish, fingertips asking if the hands that bloomed me were rough,

or if I fell too soon and grew bitter inside. Fingers long to unbutton, to slit
open the rind, to touch. But until they reach into their pockets, pull out
the last of their coins, these men can only imagine the hues:

Yellow - she's been picked too soon. Too pink and she's already bitter.
The red flesh tastes the sweetest. But they won't know

until I'm opened up, my pith peeled away - tossed to the floor,
and the bare center of this Rio Red toronja blushes in the sunlight.



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Summer

ISAAC CHAVARRIA

Heat charge people.
We become brown,
darker than what we are.

And angry –
not souls,
just from the burn.

On our backs
we are imprinted
by our clothes
our burdens.

We are summer people.
We live here
in the heat.

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ROSAS Y ESPINAS

MARIA LUISA VELA R. DE GUTIERREZ

Cuando a solas me encuentro con frecuencia
Me pongo a meditar en muchas cosas
En las espinas, o bien en las rosas,
que de ambas ha probado mi existencia.
He vivido horas dulces y serenas
en una suave y apacible calma;
mas también han llegado a herir mi alma
las punzantes espinas de las penas.
Cual rosas son los momentos felices
que evocándolos dan placer y aliento,
y es el dardo fatal del sufrimiento
el que deja más hondas cicatrices.
Rosas y espinas por todo el camino
de nuestra vida siempre encontraremos;
pero Dios nos obliga que aceptemos
hasta el fin, el que sea nuestro destino.
Alegría y dolor; sonrisa y llanto,
en la amalgama humana de la vida
de la que nadie escapa; pues va unida
al mandato divino, sabio y santo.

La descendencia del océano

MARCO ANTONIO JIMÉNEZ

Con olas rompientes la belleza del mar
engendró a la historia,
de barca en barca fue prodigando
en los confines su digidad errante.
El mar arrojó a tierra a los dioses
en tormentas sucesivas:
quiso concede la fábula del tiempo
a las dóciles arenas.
Fue tan amargo el océano en los labios
de su descendencia,
que la metáfora del río,
otra orilla donde devolver al leaje
la perdida navegación del universo.

ARENA DE HÁBITO LUNAR (2006)

embrace me written embrace me painted

IRE'NE LARA SILVA

i want to hold your face in my hands
taste the salt lapping against the shores of your eyes
feel the heat of too-hot words writhing
between your skin, my lips
i want to soothe the hurt before it can be born
swallow it whole and fiery, leafed and thorned
your poems weeping in my belly
their limbs flinging ochre and turquoise-
cave paintings born in frenzied trances



cry me a poem
and i will cradle it and you
hold sorrow too large for my hands
the way i held the immense
ocean in my arms at night
surrendering horizons and gravity
the assurance of earth
solid beneath my feet

Coupons

JOSÉ ANTONIO RODRÍGUEZ

That was the year I wished
our sentences had no periods.
The year you said something meaningful
about a constellation. The year
I pretended to see it because
that was the one thing I was good at.
I smiled through all our arguments
and you reminded me that English
was not my first language.
I said let's go sit under
the old high school bleachers
because that's what people do in movies
when they want to see things from a distance.

But there was a concrete stadium instead
and under it only public restrooms.
That was the year I thought
a high school diploma could fill
the hole in my stomach. You grinned
when I wrote h. s. graduate
on my Burger King application.
We said nothing when we found out
the pay was minimum wage, how
I'd still need coupons to eat there,
the ones from the junk mail.

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April

TERESA PALOMO ACOSTA

Blooming with life,
Your name reminds me of fruit:
The mangos especially

April: I only need
The sweetness of your days
Beginning with:
A coffee
And a pan dulce
Savored by the edge of the water

Because
In the middle of the first day of April
I remember that it's once again time
to prepare the earth

And plant my seedlings.

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Story of the Valley

CHIP DAMERON

Once upon a time, as stories go,
In this land bounded by the big river
And the tides of an endless gulf,
People came and found enough
To want to stay; they gave birth
To new generations, got old, died.
But they told stories: how ancestors
survived the time of the long drought,
And who perished in the great storm.
Stories followed stories, as men
And women came up from south
and others arrived from the north,
the mix of languages and cultures
blending with native plants and animals
to give the Valley its tone and texture,
and the countless layers of these stories
became its history, in all the hope
and violence, progress, and loss,
happiness and pain that they embody.
The stories we now tell take it onward.

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a tree waits amongst red and white bricks
standing and growing and breathing
he stretches his limbs far into the sky
as the buzzing of chainsaws down out the soft wet whisper of
an autumn morning
this tree does not despair
he was born without ears
just leaves and roots so long they touch yesterday's soul
as he slumbers waiting for today to become topsoil.
at dusk, this tree sings its swaying song as the wind
dances around his limbs
for other trees long gone
but this tree does not know that he is all that is left of a once lush
forest
for this tree was born without eyes.

*the trees have
always been here*

CHRISTOPHER CARMONA

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Hazy Lazy Crazy

VERONICA SANDOVAL

Got this hazy, lazy, crazy
Feeling in my tummy
The kind of feeling that's got me
Scream
Scream
Screaming
Just another social junkie

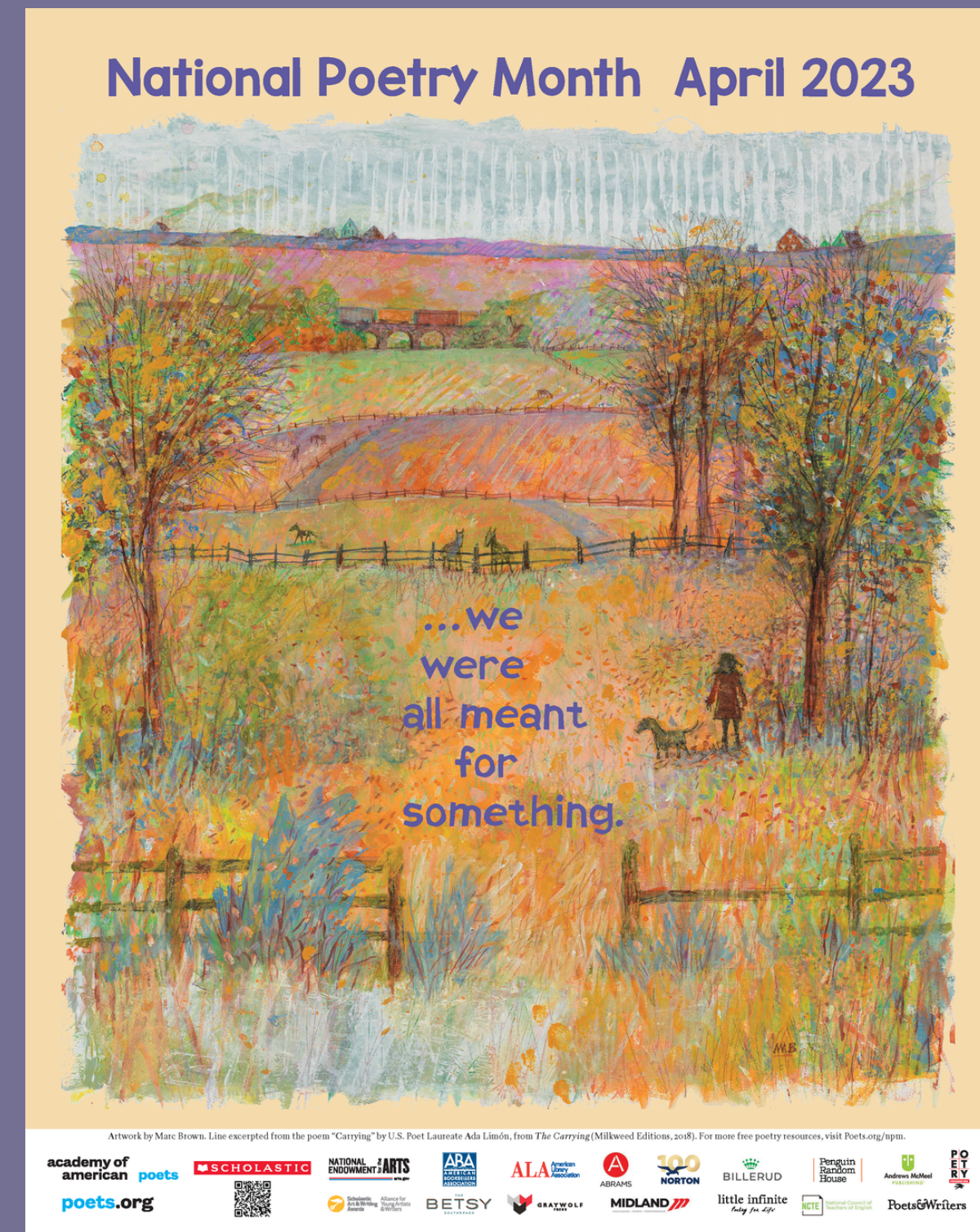
Running into walls
Running straight into walls
What walls?

Perfection is an addiction
Addiction is perfection
And there I go perfectly addicted to nothing

An empty hole
A black void
The place where all the left socks go

National Poetry Month

The 2023 poster was designed by Marc Brown, creator of the popular Arthur book and PBS television series. The artwork incorporates an excerpted line from the poem “The Carrying” by U.S. Poet Laureate Ada Limón. Brown was selected by Scholastic—the global children’s publishing, education, and media company—to create the artwork for this year’s poster as part of a new National Poetry Month initiative between the publisher and the Academy of American Poets.



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