

From: "jeffrey E." <jeevacation@gmail.com>
To: Lisa New <[REDACTED]>
Subject: Re: Poetry Update and Thank You
Date: Wed, 02 Dec 2015 15:31:35 +0000

I'm in Cambridge sat?

On Wednesday, 2 December 2015, Lisa New <[REDACTED]> wrote:

Dear Jeffrey,

May I drop by before the New Year (perhaps on the 9th, or on the 17th or 18th?) to get your advice about my renewal of the Templeton campaign, and also my needs in the coming year for Poetry in America? Below is the letter I'm sending out to my friends and supporters, and at the bottom a message just for you....

-Lisa

That you are receiving this letter means that you are among a special community of friends whose support— financial, moral, intellectual, logistical— has allowed my initiative, *Poetry in America*, to realize what seemed, a year ago, almost certainly too ambitious a vision. **That vision was to produce the highest quality educational video on American poetry, creating a body of humanities content capable of reaching a broad community of learners: formal and informal, online and residential, young and old, American and international. And it was to begin— rapidly— to disseminate and distribute our work.**

Whether you donated to *Poetry in America* through Filmmaker's Collaborative (our 501c3 fiscal sponsor), through Harvard, or through WGBH; whether you appeared on camera or talked an elusive friend into appearing on camera to discuss a poem; whether you lent us your film crew, or provided overnight use of your hotel suite or apartment or of your whole skyscraper; whether you highlighted our work on your stage, or talked your colleagues into becoming corporate sponsors; whether you flew to Boston to install state-of-the-art editing and video storage equipment, or asked your children's school to let us film there; whether you encouraged your family foundation to take an interest in the project, or gave us a lesson in IP, in licensing, in the rudiments of finance, or of distribution; whether you praised, or gave timely, much-needed criticism— you enabled what we have done.

Here's what we have to report, and to show, a year later, thanks to your help. Links offer sneak peeks of works -in-progress across the full portfolio of *Poetry in America* projects.

- The first **eight-episode season of the public television series *Poetry in America*** (a co-production between WGBH, Emmy Award-winning filmmaker David Grubin, and my own new production company, Verse Video), is now fully funded and in production, with [episodes featuring Bill Clinton, Herbie Hancock and Sonia Sanchez on Langston Hughes](#), Frank Gehry on Carl Sandburg, [Katie Couric on Elizabeth Bishop](#), [Nas on Whitman](#), and many more scheduled for nationwide launch in 2017.
- ***Poetry in America's* many initiatives to reach Middle and High School teachers and their students are taking root.** Our first online course for Middle and High School Teachers, [Poetry of the City](#), will launch this Spring with the Harvard Graduate School of Education. Companion materials to this course will be made available for free on [PBS LearningMedia](#). This course is designed to meet the needs of English Language Arts and Social Studies teachers in the US and internationally.
- We are eager to begin production of **The Poetry of Earth, Sea, and Sky**. Designed, too, for Middle and High School teachers, The Poetry of Earth, Sea, and Sky will draw English Language Arts instruction into dialogue with science, and will include [extraordinary footage of the natural world](#), [conversations with poets, scholars, and scientists](#) as well as footage shot in class and in the field with great teachers.

- A recent partnership with Greenwich Country Day School and the Success Academy Network of charter schools will provide a base for the production of a new collection of classroom-ready educational material on ***The Poetry of Art, Sport, and Play***. This collection will include discussions on poems filmed everywhere from sports fields to Broadway theaters, and will feature dancers, athletes, fashion designers, and more.
- With a growing archive of footage capturing teachers and students reading American poems, **we are eager to expand our reach and move into America's schools, disseminating, testing, and learning from teachers and students** using our materials. We hope to be able to begin work evaluating the impact of poetry on literacy levels and [character development](#) and, eventually, to produce a full suite of materials that foster character development along with intellectual growth.

Working closely with such partners as The Nantucket Project, Nautilus Magazine, The Aspen Ideas Festival, and The Big Think, and, of course, **HarvardX**, Harvard's provider of free open online courses, we are continuing to **create rich educational media on poetry for adult learners and lifelong learners**. These materials include short form videos such as [this one on Robert Pinsky's "Shirt"](#) (as featured in *The New Yorker*), and, this spring, the **sixth module of the free seven-part *Poetry in America* MOOC, which has registrants in over 150 countries.**

Growing rapidly, and outpacing our current staff and infrastructure, *Poetry in America* has a fundraising goal this year of 2.5 million dollars to fund its expanding group of projects. We've taken a big step, hiring the design agency [Threespot](#) to help us develop our web presence. Our website— to launch early 2016— will eventually serve as an online hub for our TV show and educational projects. We hope you'll join us then for a virtual launch!

Finally, Jeffrey, you have been such a wonderful supporter of my Poetry in America project. The Leon Black gift changed everything for me last year. It paid salaries for staff I desperately needed to complete projects (detail below), but first and foremost, it gave me leverage, enabling me to set down a solid Harvard base for my activities by giving the school something to point to: this public humanities project among the list of projects the Dean supports. The money did it: as soon as they heard about the gift, they took my project more seriously. Because of that gift, the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, which is space-stingy, found and rewired a studio space for me to house my video production operation and team. That gift woke up the Deans to the importance of Harvard's role in producing the highest quality humanities content for the WORLD, and not just for Harvard students. My main employee has half of her salary paid with these funds, and the foundation of our collection for PBS LearningMedia is being made with this support. This gift represented one of the most consequential shifts of the last year, allowing me create content and launch projects this year that make future projects that much more likely. If I can keep this base sturdy at Harvard, refilling these coffers, I will be that much more able to keep working.

I am also so grateful for the help you gave me in defining my project for Templeton, and, what help you have offered to give in bringing them around. I have, since Templeton turned me down, gotten funding to produce video on two of the poems I'd proposed to Templeton and to create, and test, that video in schools as I proposed. One of my partners in that project is Success Academy, where I could also expand my work with Templeton. And there are still other poems that may satisfy their character criteria more fully, including the third of the poems I'd originally proposed and that Joe Biden had agreed to discuss with me (on parenthood and humility). At this point, I'm gaining the platform and the name recognition to be an effective spokesperson for the foundation on building literacy and character in the schools.

It really means a lot to me, all financial help aside, Jeffrey, that you are rooting for me and thinking about me. You push back a lot (as Larry does), and it's always annoying but I always learn.

With abundant gratitude,
Lisa

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please note

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