

# Herbert

THE ZBIGNIEW HERBERT FOUNDATION

## Gift a Poem...

The Zbigniew Herbert Foundation educational campaign to promote poetry reading.

## Inspiration

Zbigniew Herbert wrote Poem Letters to friends, artists important to him, to people he valued (some of these letters were later included in the poet's books and number among his most insightful and moving works). This writer's gesture – a gesture of giving someone a handwritten poem – is what inspires this initiative.

## Choose, copy, gift

Students participating in this initiative are invited to select a poem for a specific person, to copy the poem by hand, on a foundation stationery card, and present it to that chosen person. We thereby try to encourage initiative participants to **perceive the poem as a gift**. At the same time, this simple activity invites participants to a deeper and more engaging read, as well as induces the reader to choose poems with greater care and appreciation, as well as to take responsibility for their choice.

If sanitary restrictions, due to the pandemic, make gifting the stationery card with the copied poem impossible, participants are encouraged to send a scan or photograph of the poem electronically.

## Gift a Poem: Reasoning

We believe that the gesture of offering words of poetry is a thoroughly human one. Potentially a form of friendly co-presence, spiritual support, of consolation as well as a means of sustaining hope. We therefore encourage campaign participants, wanting to gift a poem, to not only look for people in their closest circle (family, friends, neighbours, acquaintances close and distant), but also where a good word is so often in such short supply – in nursing homes, retirement homes, orphanages, community centres, night shelters for the homeless, etc. We also believe that a properly prepared gift of poetry can be offered to charges of institutions under strict sanitary restrictions, which we consider especially useful and valuable today. Our intention is that the "Gift a Poem" campaign builds a network of interpersonal (intergenerational) relationships based on words – consequential, carrying meaning, and providing support. An initiative conceived in this way has a deeply human dimension, an act of a deeper and more responsible

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read, a gesture of offering something of value), but it is in human terms simple – like reaching out to someone, offering a hand.

## **Stationary**

Specially prepared by the Zbigniew Herbert Foundation the “Gift a Poem” stationary cards are available as a *pdf* document at [www.podarujwiersz.pl](http://www.podarujwiersz.pl). Cards can be easily downloaded and printed on any standard printer.

## **Partners / Ambassadors**

The Warsaw based National Library (*Biblioteka Narodowa*) is a partner of the “Gift a Poem” campaign. The Polish National Commission for UNESCO is the campaign Honorary Patron. The idea of gifting poems has also won the support and involvement of many people in the arts and culture world. However we believe that the main – and most important – ambassadors of this initiative will be teachers, librarians and culture animators, as well as people associated with social help and welfare institutions.

## **Promotion**

Teachers coordinating “Gift a Poem” campaign in their schools are encouraged to prepare a short photo or video presentation and written event summary, which we will publish on Facebook at: @Herbert.Pan.Cogito and on the Foundation website. Please send your presentations in either *jpg* or *png* (photo), or/and *mp4* or *mov* (video) to “Gift a Poem” Polish coordinators Ms Magdalena Szymczyk-Bliniuk and Ms Monika Czapka, at their email address: [podarujwiersz@fundacjaherberta.com](mailto:podarujwiersz@fundacjaherberta.com).

*Maria Dzieduszycka*

President/Executive Director  
The Zbigniew Herbert Foundation