

Herbert

THE ZBIGNIEW HERBERT FOUNDATION

Warsaw, March 1st 2021

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Zbigniew Herbert Foundation wishes to invite your school to take part in **“Gift a Poem”**, an educational and social campaign, as part of World Poetry Day – organised by UNESCO and celebrated each year on **March 21st**.

Our Foundation’s mission is to preserve and disseminate creative legacy of Zbigniew Herbert, one of the greatest Polish poets of the 20th century, as well as to promote poetry reading among wider audience, especially among young people.

“Gift a Poem” initiative has received the patronage of The Polish National Commission for UNESCO.

The activity we invite you and your pupils to join can be summed up in four simple steps:

1. Choose a book of poetry (at home or school);
2. Select a poem;
3. Copy the chosen poem, by hand, onto a stationary card specially prepared by us (ready to print *pdf* text document attached);
4. Gift it to someone who may well find it valuable.

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.

We believe that the act of offering someone 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. That is why we wish to encourage students participating in this initiative to find someone and gift them a poem. Not only to people in their closest circle (family, friends, neighbours, acquaintances near and far), but also where a good word is so often in such short supply – in nursing homes, retirement homes, orphanages, community centres, etc.

Thus organised the **“Gift a Poem”** initiative could become a **“lesson in compassion”**, as well as an opportunity to build intergenerational relationships, to show selfless empathy towards the needy, abandoned, lonely.

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We also suggest that selected ASPnet Schools in Poland and the United Kingdom initiate collaboration through their National Coordinators, so Polish and English students from given classes/schools could gift poems to each other.

If sanitary restrictions – due to the pandemic – make gifting the stationery card with the poems copied by pupils, in person, impossible, then sending a scan or photograph of their poem electronically will be the obvious alternative.

Teachers coordinating “Gift a poem” campaign in their schools are encouraged to prepare a short photo or video presentation and written summary of the event, which we will publish on Facebook at: @Herbert.Pan.Cogito. Please send your presentations in either *jpg* or *png* format (photo), or/and *mp4* or *mov* format (video), as soon as possible, though no later than two weeks after the event to: podarujwiersz@fundacjaherberta.com.

We trust that your school will wish to become a part of this “Gift a Poem” campaign. We hope that thanks to your help and involvement, poetry words – words truly significant, full of meaning and hope, supportive and compassionate – will above all reach those people who need such words the most.

With best wishes

Maria Dzieduszycka

President/Executive Director

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