



Herbert

THE ZBIGNIEW HERBERT FOUNDATION

Gift a Poem: Idea

Gift a Poem...

Is the Zbigniew Herbert Foundation social & educational campaign to promote reading poetry and sharing it with others.

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

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

Thus, participating in the Gift a Poem initiative could become a “lesson in compassion” as well as an opportunity to show selfless empathy towards the needy, abandoned, and lonely. In short, to build peace, which is one of the main UNESCO goals.

Stationary

Specially prepared by the Zbigniew Herbert Foundation the “Gift a Poem” stationary cards are available as a PDF document at giftapoem.pl. Cards can be easily downloaded and printed on any standard printer.

Report

Teachers coordinating this initiative in their schools are encouraged to prepare a short photo or video presentation as well as a written description of the event, which should be sent to the ASPnet National Coordinator, who will prepare summary of the photo-reports according to our guidelines and send it to us ([see submit a report page](#)). We will post reports from National Coordinators on the [Gift a Poem website](#) to share the results with all the ASPnet world community. There will also be an interactive [map](#) where all the countries participating in the “Gift a Poem” initiative will be marked.

Maria Dzieduszycka

President/Executive Director

The Zbigniew Herbert Foundation

Małgorzata Herbich

Polish ASPnet National Coordinator

Polish National Commission for UNESCO

e-mail: m.herbich@unesco.pl