



Herbert

THE ZBIGNIEW HERBERT FOUNDATION

**Invitation to participate in the “Gift a Poem” initiative as part of the celebration of the UNESCO Associated Schools Network 70th anniversary on World Poetry Day March 21<sup>st</sup>**

As part of the celebration of the UNESCO Associated Schools Network 70th anniversary, the Polish National Commission for UNESCO and the Zbigniew Herbert Foundation, in cooperation with the ASPnet International Coordination Unit, wish to invite all ASPnet member schools around the world to take part in the “Gift a Poem” initiative, as a form of commemorating World Poetry Day March 21st (established by UNESCO in 1999).

We invite all schools to participate in a simple, yet meaningful activity, which can be summed up in four simple steps:

1. Choose any book of poetry (at home or at school)
2. Select a poem
3. Copy the chosen poem by hand onto a stationery card specially prepared by us (a ready-to-print pdf is available)
4. Gift the copied poem to someone specific

The Polish poet Zbigniew Herbert wrote Poem Letters to his friends, artists, and people important to him. That writer’s gesture – of giving someone a handwritten poem – is what inspires our initiative.

We believe that the act of offering someone words of poetry is a thoroughly human one: 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 that person a poem. Not only to people in their closest circle (family, friends, neighbors and acquaintances), but also in places where a good word is so often needed – in nursing homes, retirement homes, orphanages, community centers, homeless shelters, hospitals, etc.

Thus participating in 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. In short, to build peace, which is one of the main goals of UNESCO.

ASPnet students participating in our campaign are invited to choose and gift to others **any poems written in their language**.

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 (in English), which should be sent to the ASPnet National Coordinator, who will prepare a summary of the reports according to our guidelines, and send it to us. We will post reports from National Coordinators on the “Gift a Poem” campaign website [giftapoem.pl](http://giftapoem.pl) to share the results with all the ASPnet world community. There will also be a map where all the countries participating in the “Gift a Poem” initiative will be marked.

We invite all ASPnet teachers to visit the “Gift a Poem” campaign website [giftapoem.pl](http://giftapoem.pl) where they will find all information about the project.

Moreover, here is a [link](#) to the webinar from February 23<sup>rd</sup> during which the organizers of the action explained the idea of the campaign, organizational details and presented the “Gift a Poem” website and relevant materials.

We trust that ASPnet in your country will wish to become a part of the “Gift a Poem” initiative and together we will celebrate 70 years of UNESCO ASPnet with poetic words – words that are truly significant, supportive and compassionate, full of meaning and hope.

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