Preparing a cadre of teachers who have strong background experience and positive dispositions for reading and writing poetry seems critical given downward trends in America’s poetry reading and writing. In this article, we argue that preservice teachers have limited experience reading and writing poetry, and that if they are to teach poetry in meaningful ways to their future students, they need to have compelling experiences with poetry in teacher education—ones that take into account their former experiences and incoming dispositions and that invite them to begin to live “the life of a poet.” We designed a poetry course for 25 junior and senior elementary, middle school, and secondary school English language arts majors to provide them with such a set of experiences. Although incoming preservice teachers reported limited, often negative, previous experiences with poetry, we found that using what we came to call an “aesthetic approach” improved both their experiences with and their dispositions toward reading, writing, and performing poetry. Using a qualitative research design, we drew on Boyer’s notion of the scholarship of teaching (1990) to address three research questions: (1) What are preservice teachers’ perceptions of past experiences with poetry? (2) What dispositions (that is, attitudes and habits) toward poetry reading, writing, and performance do preservice teachers have? (3) How can an aesthetic approach enhance preservice teachers’ experiences with and dispositions toward poetry? Based on this research, we recommend that teacher education not only include substantive coursework on the topic of poetry, but that the pedagogy of such a course approximate, to the extent possible, practicing poets’ engagement with the genre. This includes opportunities for preservice teachers to read and write a wide variety of poetry, to be exposed to a diversity of poets in and out of the classroom, to workshop their poems in small groups with peers, to read or perform their original poetry for an audience, and to engage in “poetic” living and observation.

In advocating an expanded role for poetry in society, former poet laureate Ted Kooser (2005) wrote, “I’d like a world, wouldn’t you, in which people actually took the time to think about what they were saying? It would be, I’m sure, a more peaceful, more reasonable place. I don’t think there could ever be too many poets” (p. 5). As university instructors, researchers, and poets ourselves, we support Kooser’s quote with a long-term commitment to prepare teachers to teach poetry in schools and to explore the place of poetry in their own lives, inviting them to live, as it were, the poet’s life.

The preservice teachers who are the focus of this study were enrolled in a three-credit undergraduate K–12 teacher education course titled Reading, Writing and Teaching Poetry. In this article, we argue that preservice teachers have limited experience reading and writing poetry, and that if they are to teach poetry in meaningful ways to their future students, preservice teachers need to have compelling experiences with poetry in teacher education—ones that take into account their former experiences and incoming dispositions, and that invite them to begin to live “the life of a poet.”

To facilitate this shift of perspectives, we designed a course that would provide students with a range of interactions with a variety of poets and poems intended to build on and enhance their previous experiences and provide them with a foundation for teaching poetry in the future. Although incoming preservice teachers reported limited, often negative, previous experiences with poetry, we found that using what we came to call an “aesthetic approach” improved their experiences with and their dispositions toward reading, writing, and performing poetry. Based on this research, we recommend that teacher education not only include substantive coursework on the topic of poetry, but that the pedagogy of such a course approximate, to the extent possible, practicing poets’ engagement with the genre. This includes opportunities for preservice teachers to read and write a wide variety of poetry, to be exposed to a diversity of poems and poets in and out of the classroom, to engage in “poetic” living and observation, and to read or perform their original poetry for an audience.

In this article, we begin by providing a rationale for the place of poetry in society and in schools. We then discuss how and why poetry is often forgotten in society or narrowly taught in schools. Next, we provide a theoretical and conceptual framework for our course and our research, then detail the specific type of course we created for preservice teachers (and our roles in it). We relate findings based on students’ incoming profiles and interview data at the start and end of the course, and conclude with implications for teacher education, including some preliminary recommendations for the effective inclusion of poetry in preservice teacher education.
Why Poetry?

When Janine and Laura were interviewed by a college magazine reporter about their poetry course, the reporter began with the question: Why poetry? As poets, teachers, and scholars, we often find ourselves confronted by genuinely curious colleagues, acquaintances and friends (and sometimes skeptics) who wonder why we spend our time engaging so deeply with poetry and what the affordances of such engagement are for society and schools. In one sense, the role of poetry in society should not need to be explained. In his famous essay, “Can Poetry Matter?” Dana Gioia (1992), former chair of the National Endowment of the Arts (NEA), pointed out that “aesthetic pleasure needs no justification, because a life without such pleasure is one not worth living” (p. 16). But beyond the purely aesthetic, we would argue that for a number of reasons poetry is both necessary and inspiring. Audre Lorde (1984) argued eloquently and passionately for the role of this genre in the lives of human beings, writing that “poetry is not a luxury. It is a vital necessity of our existence. It forms the light within which we predicate our hopes and dreams toward survival and change, first made into language, then into idea, then into tangible action” (p. 57). Poetry contains universal themes that concern, inspire, and comfort. Perhaps this is why so many people turn to this genre at the most emotionally powerful times in their lives: births, weddings, deaths, holidays, and numerous other occasions, whether traumas or celebrations.

Poetry is the art of using words, lines, and stanzas charged with their utmost meaning. Those concerned with language and intellectual life should be committed to keeping poetry in society’s literary repertoire. Whether written or performed, poetry’s themes are presented in ways that are often quite different from those expressed in narrative or exposition. Characteristically rich with literary devices, the language of poetry is compressed, playing with sound, image, and word to enhance meaning. It is language crystallized, language distilled, and it articulates and gives voice to the human experience in a way that often cannot be expressed any other way.

The reasons for including poetry in schools are not much different from those for having a place for poetry in society. In these times of accountability-based testing and narrowing curricula, it seems necessary to have more inspiration in schools, more aesthetic appreciation, and a broader and deeper sense of what it means to be human. Some may argue that with all the competing genres teachers must focus on in schools, why include poetry?

Scholars maintain that the reading and writing of poetry in the classroom can enhance students’ literary experiences and draw their attention to language (Elster & Hanauer, 2002). More broadly, successive, multiple, meaningful experiences with a variety of genres are central to becoming a reader and writer across contexts as well (Fowler, 1982; Rosmarin, 1985)—and, we would add, to becoming a teacher of readers and writers across contexts.

The State of Poetry in Society and Schools

Preparing a cadre of teachers who have background experience and the dispositions for teaching poetry reading and writing seems critical given trends in the reading and writing of poetry in America. In the National Endowment for the Arts’ report on adults’ literary reading (2002), adults surveyed were simply asked whether, in the last 12 months, they had read or listened to a live or recorded work of poetry. A comparison of poetry readers and listeners across time showed that the number of reported readers or listeners of poetry fell from 54 million in 1982 to under 30 million in 2002, a loss of 15 percent of the audience for poetry (p. 21). The later NEA report, Reading on the Rise (2009), noted encouraging news for literary prose, but not for poetry. While fiction climbed in popularity, poetry continued to decline.

We see this national neglect of poetry carried over to national standards. Fraught with problems in the way poetic linguistic features are conceptualized, the Common Core State Standards privilege the reading of poetry over the writing of poetry (virtually no mention of writing a poem can be found throughout the K–12 standards). At best, national organizations argue for a variety of genre experiences in school, with no specific address of poetry reading and writing. For example, in their Standards for the English Language Arts (1996), the National Council of Teachers of English and the International Reading Association advocate that students should use and learn about language structure and conventions, technology in the service of writing, and genre to compose and respond to print. Moreover, they should learn to be flexible with their language to communicate to different audiences and for different purposes. However, there is no specific mention of the genre of poetry or the role it might play in addressing these goals.

As teacher educators working with teacher candidates, we are convinced that poetry plays an important role in literacy education, and that school experiences with poetry deeply influence individual’s engagement with poetry later in life. In the Poetry in America report (Schwartz, Goble, English, & Bailey, 2006), the first national survey of adults’ attitudes toward and experiences with various poetry “activities,” the researchers...
differentiated poetry “users” from “nonusers,” and found that users were more likely to have been given previous access to the reading and writing of poetry in every grade level in school than were nonusers. Poetry users were also more likely to have experienced a range of poetry activities (reading, reciting, writing) in school than nonusers, and they reported more positive experiences in school than nonusers. Among other data from this report, it was clear that teachers were found to be influential in early poetry experiences—a finding that directly speaks to the importance of poetry in teacher education.

As teacher educators working with teacher candidates, we are painfully aware that poetry has been documented to be a neglected genre or a genre that is taught in schools in traditional (and sometimes pedagogically outdated) ways. It is underrepresented as a genre in elementary schools (e.g., Duke, 2000; Kamberelis, 1998), perhaps because command of this genre carries with it a special challenge, for as Jakobson (1987) theorized, poetry calls attention to itself and makes the text “strange.” Hanauer (2007) explained that the genre is often seen as difficult to comprehend and compose, and beyond the abilities of classroom students—especially primary-aged children.

Although poetry is more likely to be taught in secondary schools, it may often be done so in a highly limited way, privileging text over student experience and an elite literary canon over one that is globally diverse. There is often little attention to poems from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds and poets from different discourse communities. Too, scholars such as Duncan-Andrade and Morrell (2005) argue broadly for building a bridge to canonical texts by engaging in the critical teaching of popular culture as a strategy to address the literacy lives of urban youth. Without such a bridge, poetry curriculum may not always have the spaces for students to see or to voice their own interests and lives. Research by Dymoke (2000) concludes that if preservice teachers are to develop a poetry pedagogy that will sustain them throughout their teaching careers, they need to be given early experiences themselves with the genre, including poetry writing. But while poetry interpretation has long been a tradition in secondary settings, high school students may not have opportunities to write poetry. For example, Scherff and Piazza (2005) surveyed 2,000 high school students about their opportunities to write across several genres. The authors, finding that poetry (along with other expressive genres) was “never hardly ever” done at all, concluded that teachers are increasingly pressured to focus on test-driven instruction. Thus, a modern challenge in the teaching of poetry lies in the fact that genres taught tend to be those that are tested.

Certo, Apol, Wibbens, and Hawkins  Living the Poet’s Life

It is perplexing that poetry writing is neglected, for the most widely used “guide” to the teaching of high school English, English Journal, has published hundreds of articles in the past century that offer “a complex, inspiring array of options, including but certainly not limited to those that focus on creative writing and performance” (Faust & Dressman, 2009, p. 17). An example of an inspiring option was found in Jocson’s ethnographic case study of seven urban high school students who participated in June Jordan’s (1995) Poetry for the People (P4P)’s. Jocson (2005) found that human and material resources organized in collaboration between the university and urban youth could reshape secondary school poetry curriculum and pedagogy. In the project, one teacher, Ms. Tanner, was “not into hip hop,” but recognized P4P’s ability to make connections between poetry and rap and how essential that was for students. She found that adolescents in the project described poetry as a way to express feelings about race and gender, leading her to conclude that poetry writing can allow a creative space for cultural groups to imagine and rename their own experiences. Later, Jocson (2008), drawing on her own self-study with adults and teachers in a digital visual poetry course, invited teacher educators, in-service teachers, and staff developers to consider the power of digital visual poetry as a new literate genre that allows for the assembling of texts in complex ways.

It appears that historical rather than creative legacies still dominate today’s classrooms when it comes to poetry pedagogy, for as Elster and Hanauer (2002) observe,

> reading and writing poetry has been both privileged and excluded in modern U.S. language arts education. Classical education based on a classical canon included reading and studying poetry seriously in terms of meter, tropes, and meaning . . . but with the development of experiential, progressive educational approaches, reading and writing poetry has been overtaken by other genres of language arts and content area reading and writing. (p. 90)

Across the decades, university students’ reports support this focus on traditional presentations of poetry in the classroom. Painter (1970) surveyed university students and asked them to respond freely to the topic of poetry. Students criticized their former teachers’ dull presentation, poor oral reading, lack of enthusiasm, and focus on rhyme scheme and other poetic devices that students considered tedious and pointless. They also recalled being frequently required to memorize lines or entire poems, usually without purpose, and sometimes as punishment. As a result, they spoke of being discouraged by poetry in school, dreading it, and actually cringing at its mere mention.
In Legge and Rasberry’s (1995) study, preservice teachers, through poetry and prose, speech and writing, offered up “painful literacy narratives” that demonstrated negative past experiences with writing in schools. As a result, Rasberry (2001) reflected that attempts at writing instruction for preservice teachers would have “to focus more on unlearning than on learning” (p. 70). Studies of students’ experiences with poetry in schools show generational shifts (schooling has been structured differently since the 1950s), yet these negative experiences may be inadvertently perpetuated across generations as a function of the emphasis on New Critical approach of the 1920s and 1930s, with a focus on close reading of elite English literary texts. Students studying under such an approach are expected, and often required, to interpret a poem in conventionally “approved” ways, and there is a keen focus on upholding analysis of the linguistic features of poetry, particularly rhyme and meter. Within the New Critical approach, the poem under study is book-ended by biographical information about the poet. Above all, a poem is assumed to possess a certain singular meaning—one that is often predetermined by wiser and more educated literary critics. No wonder the frustrated speaker in the Billy Collins (1996) poem, “Introduction to Poetry,” observed that his students wanted to “tie the poem to a chair with rope / and torture a confession out of it.”

In an attempt to understand if a revision was in order for how teachers should teach poetry (and which poems should be taught), researchers Faust and Dressman (2009) took a historical perspective, hoping to help teachers “confront a certain fear and resistance to poetry” that the authors found “prevalent even among those who aspire to become teachers of English” (p. 2). They searched English Journal issues from 1912 to 2005, identifying 530 articles with a focus on poetry and concluding that an impressive 90 percent of the articles published by poets, school teachers, or college professors could be placed into one of two categories: formalist or populist. Faust and Dressman write that

formalists usually try to draw clear distinctions between what is “correct” and “incorrect” in terms of both interpretation and taste. By engaging poetic texts through rigorous and respectful studies of rhyme, meter, and literary allusion, students learn to acquire an appreciation of the cultural heritage of the English language and some of its power and range of expression. Poems are to be appreciated individually as timeless, self-contained, precious objects, and teaching students about the lives and achievements of great poets of the past and present is considered an essential part of an English teacher’s work. To meet these high goals English teachers are urged to select poems for careful teaching, only from “greatest” or “leading contemporary” poets, as judged by prominent experts of the day. (pp. 116–117)

In contrast to formalist approaches, Faust and Dressman found that poets and educators advocating populist approaches assert that poetry is a popular expression of culture that belongs to anyone who chooses to read it. Students are invited to collect poems and organize them in ways they find meaningful, to read them orally and chorally, to write their own poems, and to otherwise mug around with poetry and poetic language and in the process gain some skill in using the English language by taking pleasure as much in their own as in the poet’s cleverness. (p. 117)

In designing our own course for preservice teachers, we—as poets and educators—found ourselves most closely aligned with the populist view, given its emphasis on “a popular expression of culture” and students’ personal connections to reading, writing, and performing poetry. However, though we could not imagine a course without a focus on personal connection to poetry, student choice, and students writing original poetry, we still felt in the approach advocated in so many English Journal articles, as well as in other English language arts publications, that something was missing. The populist stance did not fully capture the approach or the environment we wished to establish with our students. In particular, it did not address a notion of authenticity in writing; it only touched on the complex interrelationship between reading and writing poems; it did not account for the multifaceted reading and writing work that poets do in their communities; and—particularly for students with negative or limited past experiences in poetry—this stance did not, to us, seem compelling or inspirational enough.

As we planned, taught, and conducted research in our course, we asked ourselves, “How can teacher educators (and educators in general) bring these principles to life? And how can they scaffold students’ experiences so the reading and writing activities are supportive but challenging and are, above all, meaningful?” These, then, were the questions we brought to our work as we initiated an aesthetic approach to poetry in our course.

In the next section, we discuss the theoretical underpinnings of our course and inquiry.

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework of the Course and the Inquiry

As mentioned previously, in the National Endowment for the Arts’ report on adults’ literary reading (2002), participants were asked if in the past 12 months they had read or listened to a work of poetry. In the Poetry in America report (Schwartz et al., 2006), respondents were surveyed on their attitudes toward and experiences with poetry activities. The results of these reports
convinced us that it was useful to understand preservice teachers' dispositions toward poetry, since those teachers will soon be in a position to affect the poetry experiences and dispositions of the next generation.

While dispositions take up multiple constructs in teacher education (see Dietz & Baths, 2007), the ones we chose to focus on in our study were two: attitudes toward poetry, and poetry habits, since Parr and Campbell (2006) write that "teachers' attitudes must be addressed and dispelled before they [teachers] can begin to recognize and come to appreciate the full value of a subject in the classroom, and effectively incorporate it into their daily practice [what we term 'habits']" (pp. 50–37). Thus, when preservice teachers report the extent (or not) to which they enjoy reading poetry, listening to poetry, or writing poetry, this is key evidence of the attitudes they hold. When teachers report the extent (or not) to which they read poetry, write poetry, or attend poetry readings, it offers examples of their evolving poetry reading and writing habits—habits that comprise and become their present and future daily practice.

Many of these attitudes and habits are developed or cultivated prior to students' arrival at the university. Preservice teachers come with experiences and perceptions about poetry, acquired throughout their years of immersion in an "apprenticeship of observation" within the institution of schooling (Lortie, 1975). We understand that individuals' reports of past experiences are never fully accurate as to what actually transpired, and that details of memory are often difficult to reconstruct. It may be that preservice teachers recall their secondary experiences with poetry more readily. There is also the phenomenon that students from one semester to another one year to another attest to "not have covered" some topics that may have been taught. Nonetheless, the students' reports do reveal perceptions of past events and experiences, and investigating these perceptions is still valuable since they lie at the heart of preservice teachers' understanding of what it means to read and to write poetry.

To further explore the existing poetry dispositions of preservice teachers and to examine the ways these attitudes and habits might be influenced in a university course, we were guided by three research questions: (1) What are preservice teachers' perceptions of past experiences with poetry? (2) What dispositions (that is, attitudes and habits) toward poetry reading, writing, and performance do preservice teachers have? (3) How can an aesthetic approach enhance preservice teachers' experiences with and dispositions toward poetry?

To enhance preservice teachers' experiences and dispositions, we constructed our course with an eye toward the aesthetic, which, in the everyday sense of the word, means of or pertaining to the "beautiful." Undergraduate students are characteristically busy, flitting through classes, work, and social life. We intended for the poetry experiences (inside and outside of the course) to help preservice teachers perhaps slow down. Similar to Dickson and Costigan (2011) who explored how novice teachers might engage aesthetically with literature and art, we asked them to engage with poetry inside and outside of the classroom, to transact with poetry and art, and, especially, "to slow down and pay attention." Aesthetic experiences, after all, ask students to feel—and even to surrender. As Dewey (1954/1980) explained,

in much of our intercourse with our surroundings we withdraw; sometimes from fear, if only expending unduly our store of energy; sometimes from preoccupations with other matters.... Perception is an act of the going-out of energy in order to receive, not a withholding of energy. When we are only passive to a scene, it overwhelms us and, for lack of answering activity, we do not perceive that which bears us down. We must summon energy and pitch it at a responsive key in order to take in. (p. 55)

To summon this energy, we used Rosenblatt's (1984) definition of aesthetic as any response to poetry through personal experience (Rosenblatt, 1978/1994, 1984). We provided occasions in our course for preservice teachers to first respond to poetry through their own experience or engagement with the poem. Second, we define aesthetic as any encounter with poetry that produces vivid experiences for the viewer (Baumgarten, 1956). To do this, our course was marked by including some encounters or invitational prompts (such as writing from art, artifacts, photographs, ordinary observations, and experiences) to lead preservice teachers into their own poetry writing. Art was not relegated solely to the museums; we invited students to be watchful for images and experiences in their everyday surroundings and life. After all, in the Deweyian (1954/1980) sense, the aesthetic begins with "the raw; in the events and scenes that hold the attentive eye and ear of man [sic], arousing his interest and affording him enjoyment as he looks and listens" (p. 3). The prompting and reminders we provided were intended to be scaffolds for preservice teachers to invest attention in a visual or experiential stimulus that was meaningful to them (Beardsley, 1982).

Third, our approach was aesthetic because there were strong performative dimensions throughout the 15-week journey, culminating with a poetry reading, Trillium, where preservice teachers would not only be audience
members but would also read, many for the first time, an original poem at a public reading. The "exhilaration" that our preservice teachers ultimately described experiencing is what Boal (1995) termed the aesthetic space—a space where the norms of "the stage" (performer) and "the auditorium" (audience) are mutually enacted by participants (p. 18). Our decision to include aesthetic responses, encounters, and spaces was consistent with our view of poetry as one that includes the textual, the artistic, and/or performative.

In addition to adopting an aesthetic approach (and central to "living the life of a poet"), we acknowledged literacy as a social practice (Street, 1995), immersing preservice teachers in the discourses, texts, and spaces in which poets find themselves. To support preservice teachers' immersion in the genre of poetry, we were careful in planning and teaching the course to cultivate genre knowledge according to Chapman's (1999) recommendations, considering "engagement, inquiry, exploration, personal connections and meaning-making, participation in a discourse community, apprenticeship and mentoring, collaboration, and talk about text" (p. 473). Our specific manifestations of these recommendations will be elaborated on in the next section.

In a macrosense, our methodology was informed first by Boyer's (1990) notion of the scholarship of teaching, which positioned us, as university educators, to engage in systematic study to assess what it is our students learn from various teaching and learning activities and environments. It was important to us that course and design methodology recognized learner-centered teaching (Weimer, 2002), which focuses attention on who the students are, where they are coming from, what and how they are learning, the conditions under which they are learning, and how current learning might position the student for future learning. This work also contained elements of self-study in that it was initiated by us as teacher educators with the goal of improving practice (Labsky, 2004). Consistent with most self-studies, we used a qualitative research design (Janesick, 2000) to understand preservice teachers' engagement with poetry relative to course-supported social practices and instruction (Bazerman, 1997; Cope & Kalantzis, 1995; Freedman & Medway, 1994). Such a design acknowledges a holistic search for understanding, a making public of our researcher role, an interest in the "personal, face-to-face, and immediate," and a quest for understanding the individual in a given social setting—in our case, preservice teachers in the setting of the course (Janesick, 2000, pp. 585–586). Our interview protocol contained six broad pre-course and nine post-course questions, with follow-up questions or probes (see Appendix A). Prior to the start of the course, and on the concluding day of the course, Erin and Lisa, along with seven other trained research team members, took each of our students to a private room for an individual interview, for a total of 46 interviews. Interviews were audiotaaped and lasted 25 to 45 minutes. Text files of interviews and assessment task responses were housed in Hyperresearch (Hesse-Biber, Kinder, Dupuis, Dupuis, & Tornabene, 2007) where we conducted a thematic content analysis (Miles & Huberman, 2002) and coded responses along the interview questions we asked. Although a textual and multimodal analysis of student work is beyond the scope of this article, we have elected to weave throughout the article lines of poetry that students both read and wrote in our course.

In the following sections, results are discussed in more detail, beginning first with the setting of the course—the assignments and our roles—continuing with the preservice teachers' incoming profile data, and followed by the post-course assessment data. Pseudonyms for preservice teachers are used throughout.

The Course Assignments and Instructors' Roles

Reading, Writing and Teaching Poetry was one of a series of courses (15 weeks long) that K–12 English language arts majors could take as an elective. We met from 5:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. on Thursdays in a relatively new classroom on the first floor of the College of Education building. Students sat at tables in pods of five or six. There was a podium and PowerPoint equipment (that we rarely used), although we invited students to bring laptops to class if they so chose (many did), as we knew the technology might support prewrites and revisions of poetry (Roberts, 2002). Large floor-to-ceiling, wall-to-wall windows revealed oaks and maples, a river, and the campus beyond.

Students were required to bring course texts to class each week for reference. Required course texts included Polonsky's (2001) The Poetry Reader's Toolkit: A Guide to Reading and Understanding Poetry and Kooser's (2005) The Poetry Home Repair Manual. Although reading and writing poetry are not mutually exclusive activities, we wanted a touchstone text that would address both how to connect with poetry as readers and how to apply various craft elements to one's own writing. Drawing on poets from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds enriches readers' understanding of the poetic function of language across cultures and helps readers see notions of universality in poetry (e.g., Damico & Carpenter, 2005; Kuhlman & Bradley, 1999). With the exception of Mary Oliver's (1979) collection Twelve Moons, all poetry books were anthologies, so we could expose preservice teachers to the widest range of diverse poetry that we could in 15 weeks. We were intentional in selecting anthologies that would showcase poems with diverse themes, moods, and
forms. First, we included Poulin and Waters’s (2005) *Contemporary American Poetry* (eighth edition) since many preservice teachers are typically familiar with canonical poets, such as Dickinson, Poe, or Shakespeare, but less so with the works of contemporary poets such as Rita Dove, Li-Young Lee, or Yusef Komunyakaa. We chose to include Naomi Shihab Nye’s (1996) *This Same Sky: A Collection of Poems from Around the World* as it featured translated poems from around the world. Jan Greenberg’s (2010) *Heart to Heart: New Poems Inspired by Twentieth Century Art* was required for its aesthetic beauty alone, but also as a springboard for students’ trying on creating a multimodal ensemble, such as writing alongside image or art (their own or others’). Also required was Lori Carlson’s (2005) *Red Hot Salsa: Bilingual Poems on Being Young and Latino in the United States*, featuring poets with their works in Spanish and English (some well-known poets such as Martín Espada and Gary Soto, but also some poets by students in the New York City public schools).

The poetic voices in Carlson’s volume share how and where the poets live, their families, and their dreams for the future—many themes, actually, that we prompted our preservice teachers to write about. Betsy Franco’s (2001) provocative *You Hear Me? Poems and Writing by Teenage Boys* showcases poetic forms of free-verse, rap, and hip-hop of the hopes, fears, and dreams of adolescents and young men from different cultures and backgrounds. We specifically included Franco’s text because the voices contain carnivalesque, raw language, though voices that are tender and vulnerable at times. The Franco inclusion was one way to provide an avenue for talking about what many teachers fear: what students will actually write.

Overall, we felt that our required texts offered preservice teachers instruction in reading and writing poetry, along with providing our students with an introduction to new poets to add to their repertoire, and diverse poetry that included a range of poets/voices, cultures, forms, and themes. In addition to course texts, we also brought in many additional copies of poems, too, with an eye to diverse poems by diverse poets—from Tennyson to Tupac, if you will. Because we wanted to encourage preservice teachers’ everyday poetry reading habits (recall that not one preservice teacher read poetry in his or her spare time), we also required students to subscribe to the online resource *The Writer’s Almanac* (http://writersalmanac.publicradio.org/), where they received through email a daily poem that we sometimes referenced or discussed in class.

As part of our goal of enhancing preservice teachers’ poetry experiences and dispositions, we required three major assignments. First, each week we asked students to submit a 750-word (roughly one page) *Writing Out the Session* response reflecting on the previous class session. This was an opportunity for students to share what they learned in class or what they were still struggling with or had questions about. Students were required in this response to draw on text readings, course content, class discussions, or experiences outside the class. The purpose of these postings was to help the students (and us) understand how they were evolving in their understanding of what it means to read and write poetry.

The second assignment was the *Anthology Project*, a compilation of poetry by different poets, collected by each student, organized around a particular theme and presented with care and attention to detail. Each student’s anthology had to contain between 20 and 25 poems from a variety of sources that were arranged in a way that had a demonstrable internal consistency. Our rationale for requiring the anthology was to support preservice teachers’ journeys as wider readers—they had to find, select, choose, arrange, create, and present a range of poems in their anthology. We also hoped that, in the process, they would discover new “favorite” poets.

The third required assignment was a *Poetry Portfolio*, which contained the original poems that each student wrote over the course of the semester. Many weeks we wrote together in class, and some weeks we gave explicit assignments for writing outside class, which meant that over the course of the semester most students had completed about 10 individual pieces for class, along with any writing they did on their own. The portfolio had to contain six of those pieces, with drafts; four of those pieces were designated their “best” work. Students were required to include a “Writer’s Memo” in their portfolio reflecting on the journey that they took with each of their four “best” pieces, from original draft versions to finished poem. Two of those pieces were included in our class anthology—a collection of our work that we put together at the end of the semester.

In addition to the three major assignments, we also required that each student take a turn at the start of class reading aloud and sharing a poem they had discovered that “spoke” to them, and explaining for the class what it was that attracted their poetic notice. As well, we required that students attend one poetry reading in the community and submit a written reaction to us. Each of these assignments was intended to socialize students into the public world of poetry—the ways poems are discovered and shared among friends and acquaintances, as well as the ways poetry is made public and appreciated in performance venues.

To that end, there was a final (ungraded) assignment in the course. Without question, it was the one that elicited the strongest reactions from students, and brought forward trepidation and anticipation from the moment it was first presented in class. As a “final step” in becoming part of a
community of writers, students were required to read one of their own original poems at *Thilium*, the annual College of Education poetry reading. The tradition of the College conducting a poetry reading each semester dates back to 1998; when the first and second authors launched the Reading, Writing and Teaching Poetry course, they decided to integrate their students into the event, inviting them to help plan and host the evening—and requiring that they each perform an original poem during the open mic time.

The nervousness that accompanies the idea of reading original poetry in front of a live audience is a result of multiple concerns. First, individuals are faced with *writing* a poem—a poem they are pleased with (and perhaps one that they feel would please an audience). Then they are involved in *performing* that poem in public, with their own voice and self on a stage. In that moment, the body itself is involved as the vehicle for taking the poem off the page, for in a place apart from and exposed to the audience, the body has to speak and breathe with the poem, and perhaps even move with it. The dual acts of writing and performing place any newcomer to poetry in a vulnerable position—particularly if they are (as our preservice teachers were) largely non-poetry writers.

To ease students’ anxiety, as well as to heighten their confidence and anticipation, we scaffolded student performances in several ways. As mentioned before, from the first weeks of class we asked students to read aloud and to share poems (published by others) with the class. We regularly modeled reading and performing our own work, and we frequently invited students to read drafts of their own poetry for the class. In addition to requiring them to attend a poetry reading outside the course, to help them become familiar with the “scene” and range of poetry performance, we invited a panel of guest poets from the community to share their work during one class session. We sensed that witnessing the performative aspect of a range of poets would be particularly motivating and inspiring to our students, and we wanted them to witness not just the instructors but also a panel of poets (who varied by gender, cultural background, and performance style) reading or performing their work. We believed this opportunity would not only increase the likelihood of the preservice teachers connecting with or relating to one or more poets; we also thought it would give them broader exposure to a variety of poets that, in turn, could help preservice teachers see expanded possibilities for the topics of their poems and how they might be shared with an audience. Like the late poet and university educator June Jordan (1995), we wanted the guest poets (poets of our community) to help us “name, reinvent, and reclaim literary and cultural traditions” of our time (p. 74). The poetry panel was an important component in helping our students

“*live the poet’s life*,” for we encouraged students to engage in conversation with the guest poets. Questions such as “What first got you writing poetry?” “*How do you get your ideas?”* or “*Do you have any poets that inspired you?”* helped preservice teachers understand the real reasons human beings might be moved to write poetry, as well their processes for revising their poems and sharing them with others.

Each course session contained some predictable structure, including opening each class with the reading of, discussion about, and response to poetry—anywhere from two to four poems, selected by the instructors and (on a rotating basis) by students in the class. We particularly noticed in reviewing the empirical and anecdotal literature on teacher practice that the teaching of poetry writing almost always occurred within the context of reading poetry (*e.g.*, Apol & Harris, 1999; Apol, 2002; Certo, 2004; Koch, 1990; Kucan, 2007), and because we agree with Wilson (2007), who argued that the linguistic and cognitive demands of poetry writing are substantial and that writers therefore “*need to have some idea of what a poem might look like or sound like first*” (p. 443), we gave preservice teachers access to a broad range of poetry. This was intended to expand students’ own repertoire and the poetic craft elements they might use to achieve their rhetorical goals. Poems were read aloud twice (sometimes by instructors, often by students who were assigned or who volunteered). Sometimes, when we read poetry, we simply let the sound of poetry fill the room, without responding to or interpreting the poem; often, though, we asked students to make personal connections or share their reactions to the poem. We also asked them what poetic elements they noticed in the poem, requiring them to observe how linguistic features contribute to the poem as a whole. This is very much in the spirit of a genre approach to teaching poetry (Cope & Kalantzis, 1993), where successive poems are shared with students and discussed. Our questions allowed for multiple answers and personal responses, but they also pushed preservice teachers to articulate some of the linguistic features they were noticing in the poem. Over time, the class community was socialized into ways of talking about and supporting interpretations of a poem.

We closed the last 45 minutes of class scaffolding students’ poetry writing by referring back to one or more poems discussed at the beginning of class and providing a broad prompt as an invitation (not a requirement) for preservice teachers to write a poem of their own. For example, in the spirit of Koch’s work (1990), after reading William Carlos Williams’s “The Red Wheelbarrow,” students had the option of writing a poem based on Williams’s line, “so much depends.” Students also wrote a poem while viewing the art or artifacts of their choosing. Because our goal of providing real-life
opportunities included extending the boundaries of our course beyond the walls of the university classroom, we often sent preservice teachers out to the campus and the community to draft poetry. For example, one evening we shared contemporary and canonical poetry that contained quotations (such as in Rita Dove’s “Primer” and the rhymed William Butler Yeats’s “The Old Men in the Water”), then asked students to go on assignment (to sit at a café, on a park bench, ride the bus) and listen for quotes or a turn of phrase that they might appropriate for their own poetry. We tried to be thoughtful, too, in the sequencing the poems and prompts to scaffold preservice teachers into the reading and writing of poetry. For example, we began with shorter imagery and object poems by William Carlos Williams or list poems that we discussed and used as inspirations for our own writing. Then, later in the course, we introduced more complex poems and poetry writing tasks, such as reading or writing multimodal ensembles (poems paired with art to create an integrated whole) or poems for two voices (e.g., Fleischman, 2004).

Kammer (2002) has noted the importance of providing spaces for writers to receive feedback on their writing from peers. We knew we wanted course activities to approximate those that we as poets engaged in when we provided and received feedback in writing groups, so part of our class time was devoted to the writing “workshop.” On four occasions during the course, preservice teachers moved into groups of five to workshop their original poems with peers. In this social setting, each student distributed a copy of an original poem. The poet read the poem, then listened (without commenting) to the feedback of their group members. At the end of the peer workshop, the poet had the opportunity to respond and ask questions of the group. Because novice writers and those new to the workshop setting often limit their responses to “positive feedback” (particularly in a College of Education, where preservice teachers are often encouraged to affirm the writing of their students) Janine and Laura modeled authentic (helpful) feedback by doing a “fishbowl,” where the class observed the two in a feedback session with one of Janine’s poems. In preservice teachers’ Writing Out the Session reflections, many students shared that, at first, it seemed that Laura was being “too harsh” in her feedback, but that when they saw Janine’s post-workshop draft, they were convinced of the value of providing “real” and “helpful” feedback rather than limiting their responses only to praise.

We planned and conducted the course not only as teachers but also as poets, reading and writing poetry along with our students.

The award-winning poet, regularly invited to give readings and workshops in the community and around the country. She shared many of the authentic practices of her work—for example, showing students the stages and artifacts from a poetry anthology she edited and published. As a published poet, she brought expertise and poetic experience to the course. Janine, although she identified as a poet, was not published at the time of this course nor had she read her work at a public reading before. Students were easily able to relate to someone entering and exploring the world of poetry.

These poet roles profoundly influenced our roles as teacher educators. We not only shared our own poetry in class but made public our own processes, struggles, questions, and vulnerabilities. We asked our students to take risks in the course, but we took them, too. Laura was working on two new poetry collections at the time and shared with the class her writing process and her version of poems. With a group of preservice teachers in the audience, Janine read her own poetry, for the first time, at two different community poetry venues. Both Janine and Laura shared early drafts of their poems, invited preservice teachers to provide feedback, then shared later drafts.

Consistent with our roles as poets, we regularly encouraged students to lead a “poetic life” by sharing small stories, observations, or experiences with them, and inviting them to do so as well. As co-instructors, we naturally engaged in witty repartee and banter with each other, thus fueling the attention to lines and to language. We invited preservice teachers to notice poetic language in everyday life, from the alliteration, onomatopoeia, imagery, and rhyming couplets of advertisements to the clever wordplay of Facebook status updates. After all, learning about poetry should not be divorced from daily living, and good poets know that part of the art is learning to pay attention to language and to life. We would often share stories about the way the sky looked in the evening, a meal we shared after class, how we felt in an interaction with someone, a fear we had, or a funny moment that had happened in the past week—anecdotes and images that caught our attention and sometimes showed up in our poems as well.

The Preservice Teachers: Pre-Course Profile Data

Our course was made up of 23 undergraduate (junior and senior) elementary, middle, school, and secondary school English language arts majors, all of whom participated voluntarily in this study. Students varied by their targeted certification areas, with nine qualified to teach in K–8 settings, 11 qualified to teach K–12 special education, and two qualified to teach English
that high school study of poetry centered on memorizing or “correctly” interpreting poetry line by line. For example, Bethany, a junior elementary education major, shared, “in high school we had language arts–type books where there were pages and pages of poems. We would read Robert Frost or something like that, and we would have to sit there and interpret it. Why did he use this word? Or why does he say it like that? I wasn’t into it. You just felt like there was one right answer.” The overall experiences of this group demonstrate a New Critical or formalist approach to poetry, and a tone expressed by Hopkins (1987), who alleged that poetry in schools has an overreliance on “dissecting, analyzing, and meaningless memorizing poetry to death . . . . [Poetry is] not something to be enjoyed—it [is] a test of endurance and memorization” (pp. 11–12).

Approximately half of the preservice teachers reported that in addition to— or sometimes instead of—studying poetry in school, they occasionally picked up poetry to read outside of school—often selecting poems on their own or with the help of a parent, and frequently reaching for poems by Shel Silverstein or Jack Prelutsky. Gillian, a junior special education major whose favorite high school subject was English, explained, “I sort of just picked it [poetry] up on my own. I don’t remember someone teaching me how to understand or connect with it.” While Wendy, a senior elementary education major, added, “I know I read poetry at home, because my mom was an elementary teacher, and she had me reading Jack Prelutsky, but I don’t remember doing it in school at all.” It appears that on occasion, adults in the home had brought poetry into the lives of our students—poetry that was recognizable, popular, and featured in book and retail stores.

When asked how they learned to write poetry, approximately 75 percent of the preservice teachers spoke of having had limited or no formal poetry writing instruction. The other 25 percent recalled being asked to write poetry in a particular form or in a formulaic manner. Although in our interview protocol we never asked about nor used the word rule, we noted the variations of the word in preservice teachers’ reports. Ursula, a senior special education major, shared how poetry was “really scripted in school, and you had to follow an exact format or rules for writing it.” Continuing along the line of “poetry rules,” many participants’ reports suggest that their prior writing experiences followed traditional conceptions of genre, focusing on form rather than purpose (Chapman, 1999). Andrea, a junior secondary English major, explained, “in high school, we had to write like one limerick, one ode, one sonnet, one haiku, and we had to memorize all the different rules that make each poem a different kind of thing. It was explicit, . . . just a follow-the-rules sort of thing.” And Cathy recalled, “In junior
high we were given all different type of examples. Like write a diamonte, a
couplet, and write different types of poems like that.” These poetry writing
experiences were about “rules” of form and consisted overwhelmingly of
haikus, limericks, diamontes, and rhyme scheme, likely because formulaic
approaches are easier to teach.

Poetry Reading
Preservice teachers were asked the simple question, “Do you have any favorite
poets?” In some ways, this is a difficult question. As regular readers of poetry,
we know that there are many different poets that readers can be drawn to for
different reasons, and at different times of their lives. Certainly, too, readers
may be drawn to one poem by one poet and another poem by a completely
different poet. We were surprised, given the majors and interest in English
language arts, that seven of the preservice teachers could not think of, and
did not name, a single poet. Most of their reports expressed regret that this
was the case. As Tess commented, “I don’t really have one, which is kind of
sad.” Two preservice teachers identified as their favorite poet Emily Dickin-
son, two cited Robert Frost, two favored Edgar Allan Poe, and there was one
report of Sylvia Plath. Only two preservice teachers had two favorite poets,
and only one preservice teacher, Monae, had three favorite poets: Langston
Hughes, Nikki Giovanni, and Maya Angelou. Nine preservice teachers, seven
of whom were elementary education majors, mentioned Shel Silverstein as
their favorite poet, and most participants who mentioned owning a poetry
book, anthology, or collection listed Silverstein’s publications: Where the
preservice teachers were probed as to what made Silverstein’s poems so
attractive, many reported that the poems were funny and easy to understand,
or that they had never been exposed to much beyond Silverstein. This finding
with preservice teachers provides an interesting parallel to Terry’s (1974)
study on children’s poetry preferences that found that elementary students
rated poems higher if they were funny or about familiar topics, and Kutiper
and Wilson’s (1993) later study that found that elementary students’ most
popular poets were Jack Prelutsky or Shel Silverstein.

We have found in our work as K–12 teacher educators that few
elementary teachers are familiar with poetry for children beyond Prelutsky
and Silverstein, and as a result they do not bring other poets to their own
students (who may grow up to be teachers), thus perpetuating the cycle
of admiration, along with its inherent limitations. As well, these findings
seem to confirm that in most elementary school environments, poetry is
often read and taught in a highly limited and circumscribed way, and with
a limited range of texts.

Mirroring their responses to questions about prior schooling experi-
ences, when asked about their poetry reading preferences, preservice teach-
ers spoke of familiarity with highly structured forms of poetry—reporting
haikus, limericks, sonnets, and “rhyming poems” as dominating the menu
for poetry. Further, because many participants were introduced in their
school days to rhymed poetry, two-thirds believed this to be a defining char-
acteristic of poetry.

Poetry Attitudes

Parr and Campbell (2006) share that “teachers’ attitudes must be addressed
and dispelled before they can begin to recognize and come to appreciate
the full value of a subject in the classroom, and effectively incorporate it into
their daily practice” (pp. 56–57). This was a source of great concern to us,
given that less than one-third of the preservice teachers interviewed admitted
to enjoying poetry in their K–12 schooling or having a positive attitude.
The remaining two-thirds reported overall negative past experiences with
poetry, which often led to negative attitudes. Several confessed that they
detested poetry in school or that they were indifferent about their prior
poetry experiences. For example, Doreen reported, “I used to hate poetry in
school, never understood it, didn’t want to learn about it, so . . . for me
the experience of, now, wanting to know about poetry is a new one and back
then I didn’t understand why poetry was taught in schools. I just thought
it was, you know, so what? I don’t understand half the time why people are
writing this, or this just doesn’t make sense.”

We were encouraged that in spite of reported past negative experiences,
our students were motivated to want to learn more now that they would soon
be entering the teaching profession. Victoria explained, “I’m not sure how
I feel about poetry yet. I’m kind of approaching this course knowing that I
don’t know very much. I think it’s important, since it’s not taught. Hardly
anyone teaches it. It’s like its own sort of mystery. It wasn’t memorable to
me, so I want to be able to make it more memorable for my students.”

Even if they did not enter our course with a love of poetry, the disposi-
tion to want to learn more (but also to want to provide their students with
more compelling poetry experiences than they had had) was key for us in
terms of their receptivity to our approach.
Poetry Habits

For the majority of our students, poetry reading and writing habits were nearly nonexistent. Not one student read poetry in his or her spare time, though one (Monae) had performed a poem once at a community poetry reading. Four of our incoming students identified themselves as writers of poetry. Interestingly, all four of these preservice teachers reported that English was their favorite high school subject. Helen, a senior, commented that she used poetry “as an emotional release.” Rachel, also a senior, reported, “Sometimes I just feel like I need to write things down. Like when I’m having a rough day, or something crazy happens—when I just want to express myself, I write poetry.” Overall, these four participants tended to enjoy poetry in their K-12 schooling and formed the small group who reported they had a more comprehensive poetry unit or poetry class during their elementary, middle school, or high school years. Five preservice teachers, although they did not identify themselves as poets, engaged in hybrid creative writing (which included poetry, song lyrics, personal narratives) in their spare time outside school at some point during their lives.

Fifteen preservice teachers (or 65 percent of our total participants) identified themselves as non-writers of poetry. Andrea, a secondary English major whose favorite high school subject was English, stated, “I’m not very good at writing poetry; I don’t do it as a hobby.” Victoria, an elementary education major, who also favored English, adamantly insisted, “I don’t write poetry, I’m horrible.” These participants reported that they retreated from poetry, and only wrote poems when assigned to do so. Students who fell into this group admitted to disliking their past experiences with poetry.

What our preservice teachers’ reports tell us here is that the quality of past experiences is clearly a strong factor in whether one engages with or retreats from poetry writing. Many of the students reported having had poetry reading experiences that seemed rooted in a traditional or formalist pedagogy. Although some had previous poetry writing experiences, it was largely through imitation of poetic forms. And though 4 of the 23 preservice teachers identified as writers of poetry, not one preservice teacher read poetry in his or her spare time—a finding that seems surprising given many of the students’ interest in the English language arts.

Preservice Teachers: Post-Course Assessment

In the previous section, we discussed the results of our first two research questions: What are preservice teachers’ perceptions of past experiences with poetry? What dispositions (that is, attitudes and habits) toward poetry reading, writing and performance do preservice teachers have? In this next section, we discuss preservice teachers’ experiences and resulting dispositions at the end of the course. We address the question: How can an aesthetic approach enhance preservice teachers’ dispositions toward poetry?

Poetry Dispositions

While earlier in this work we defined dispositions as attitudes and habits, for this third research question we focused on our students’ experiences with poetry and their corresponding change of attitude, given that it was too soon for habits (outside those developed specifically for the course) to appear.

The changes in student attitudes were many, grounded in their experiences in the course and cutting across students’ poetry reading, poetry writing, and poetry performance. Following the course, every preservice teacher reported throughout the post-interviews that they “enjoyed,” were “excited about,” or “liked” their poetry experiences in the course. Comments included, “This is, by far, the most enjoyable class I have taken. I learned so much about poetry and ways to teach it to ensure students learn. I feel every English Language Arts major should take this course.” Other comments suggest that the course was transformative in helping them to learn more about the genre, to be more “excited” to teach it, and to think of a variety of ways to teach it in the future students.

Jessica reported, “Coming into this class, I was kind of skeptical that I was going to enjoy it or learn anything, but it was a really enjoyable class. I had a lot of classes that required a lot of work, and I was really stressed out this semester, but I really liked coming to this class and I thought I learned a lot about poetry. And I think I’m definitely more, just like, excited to teach poetry in my classroom. More willing to incorporate it in a lot of different ways.” And Candice, who reported she “only knew Shel Silverstein” before the class, shared, “I really enjoyed this class, and it made me enjoy poetry. My mom’s a teacher and I call her all the time, and I’m like, ‘I can’t believe I learned this and this, and I went to a poetry reading and I loved it!’ And I’m being cultured and all this stuff. And then I have another friend who’s a fourth grade teacher, and I was sharing some of the poems we shared in this class . . . and she’s like, ‘I, uh, just do not like poetry. I do not understand it.’ I’m like . . . ‘That’s what I thought before coming to class.’ One of my goals is to persuade her into liking poetry.”

Poetry Reading

In the course, preservice teachers had the opportunity to read poetry by an array of poets including Billy Collins, William Stafford, Yusef Komunyacka, Martin Espada, Lorie Marie Carlson, Ted Kooser, Naomi Shihab Nye, Mary
Oliver, William Butler Yeats, in addition to the required texts for the course. They also had the opportunity to see and hear a variety of local poets read or perform their work. Preservice teachers reported an appreciation for this sort of exposure to a wide variety of poetry. With few exceptions, their reports of favorite poets at the end of the course had expanded or changed, and they seemed elated to have access to a variety of poems. What seemed to make the difference was the variety of ways in which we introduced new poetry into their lives—the poems shared in class, the Anthology Project, and the guest poets.

"Relating" to the poets seemed to matter to our students, as did encountering poets that were emotive and performative. For example, Candice, who prior to the course reported that Shel Silverstein was "the only poet she really knew," shared, "I'm excited I own all of the ones [anthologies and collections] that were required for the class. And... then I've also picked up three or four on my own. And then I have a bunch of copies from extra, from the anthology that I created. I have piles and piles of copies I can go to."

The Anthology Project each student created was pivotal in helping them find new favorite poets. For example, Cathy explained that her new "favorite" poets were "Maya Angelou and definitely Joy Harjo. After doing my anthology, I've become in love with Harjo's poems. She is a woman, and she's very real, and it's a different way of looking at things and putting them in a perspective that you can identify with. It's like very real women issues that you deal with, like love and your family and your kids and your husband."

As poets, we know that favorite poets come and go based on readers' current repertoires, interests, and experiences. Perhaps favorite poets for our preservice teachers are the ones they could most readily recall, ones they were currently reading or studying at the moment. Ursula, who prior to the course shared that she did "not know any poets at all" reported, "I really liked Red Hot Salsa, cause it was all about Latino kids coming to America, and whether or not they felt like they were American, and they didn't want to, like, desert their Latino culture. So they described what their lifestyle was now that they came to America, and how it felt and everything." Finding poets they could "relate to" seemed to provide the impetus for finding new favorite poets. Recall Monae who reported prior to the course that Maya Angelou, Langston Hughes, and Nikki Giovanni were her favorite poets. After assembling an anthology of female African American poetry in the course, she reported, "Um, I have two now. One is Maya Angelou, and the other is Nikki Giovanni. They write a lot of poetry that I can relate to as an African American female. I think it's very important for you to be able to relate to the form or to be able to understand what they're talking about because you experience what they're writing about, so I can really relate to the majority of their poems."

Based on their reports of previous poetry experiences, this exposure to a variety of contemporary poets was completely new to our students. Our findings lead us to believe that introducing contemporary poetry early in the course has clear benefits for engagement and for personal responses, especially for non-poetry readers and writers. Contemporary poetry is, characteristically, more rooted in the themes, events, language, and histories that current readers can relate to. It may often be the case that the opportunity for aesthetic responses, at least for relative newcomers to poetry, is greater with contemporary than with canonical poetry. Although we believe the most meaningful discussions around poetry are those that begin with an aesthetic personal response, we also believe part of the pleasure in the poem is how language works to create an image and to honor the subject of the poem. At the same time, attention to aesthetic response does not mean that discussions of linguistic features and poetic elements are left behind. Bethany demonstrated this when she said, "I really liked this poet that we learned about named Mary Oliver. We looked at specifically a poem called The Black Snake, and I just liked that one. There was just one line that like really got my attention: he [the black snake] was as beautiful and quiet as a dead brother. It just made me stop, and it kind of gave me chills, and I just remember I had to go back and read it a couple of times."

Five preservice teachers reported that peers in the class or poets in the community were among their new favorite poets. David, an elementary education major, recalled experiences listening to peers' poems and a guest spoken-word poet: "Even when I was taking this class a lot of people were writing different poems, and I got to hear a lot of theirs, and I really enjoyed theirs. Some of them may be my favorite poems or poets now. And I know one guy I can't think of his name right now, Joseph Smith [Joseph Harris], or something, but um he came into our class, and he was great. He was an awesome poet." And Sam, who did not have a favorite poet at the beginning of the course, stated at the end of the course, "Probably my favorite poet is a guy that came to our class actually, and his name's Joseph, and he's really good. He performed for our class and he performed at Spitfire Poetry. And I really like his poems 'cause they have a ton of, like, emotion, and he gets really into them when he performs them, so I really liked it." Tess, in response to "Do you have any favorite poets?" asked, "Can I say the instructors? Everything that they had presented to us, I could relate to them. You know it was just very fresh and just very comforting, their openness about it. I mean, hopefully I'd still feel the same way if I were to read it, and not know them."
While the majority of preservice teachers were able to name one or more new favorite poets, two of our preservice teachers (although they were still in search of more favorite poets) remained loyal to the poets of their childhood. As Andrea commented in the interview, “I don’t care, I still like Shel Silverstein! He’s still my favorite kids’ poet. But I’m starting to look at more adult poets. I don’t really have a favorite yet.” When asked why Silverstein was still her favorite poet, she commented, “He’s like the first thing that I ever really knew. Like I have a couple of books from when I was younger of him. I always thought they were really fun poems that are fun to do with kids.” Silverstein likely saturated the preservice teachers’ own childhoods, so they would naturally have an ongoing affinity for his poems. Andrea’s comments made us consider if it was not also the case that preservice teachers often hold a view of poetry that is strongly linked to what they believe will be entertaining (and teachable) to children and adolescents. While we did not oppose the use of Silverstein and Prelutsky in classrooms (including our own), we encouraged preservice teachers to develop more sophisticated articulations of their reasons for connecting to humor, word play, and alternative reads in the poetry of Silverstein and Prelutsky. In hindsight, we wish we had provided more explicit pedagogical space for this in our course, including performing Silverstein’s and Prelutsky’s poems as an effective method to practice oral expression (Reiser, 1989). In our preoccupation to offer preservice teachers new poets, we missed an opportunity for preservice teachers to engage more deeply with their favorite poets from childhood.

Every preservice teacher alluded in their post-interview that there are multiple ways to respond to a poem. Comments included that “poetry can mean more than one thing,” “interpretations of poems depend on the readers’ experiences,” and there are “many different interpretations of a poem.” After the course, Doreen offered this advice about reading a poem: “Start reading it and then, you know, if you don’t like it, stop. If you finish the poem, and kind of look through it, there’s always something in it that you can appreciate about it or look at differently than when you first read it.” Doreen’s response indicates that she has internalized the notion that poetry asks the reader to slow down—that it is a special kind of discourse where, because of the linguistic and cognitive demands of the text, the reader must have strategies for engaging with a poem (Wilson, 2007). Her experience confirms what Peskin and Olson (2004) articulate about poetry—that is, that poetry often tends to compress ideas, thus pushing the reader to look for more meaning than may be apparent in the mere lexical definitions of the words . . . poetry requires that the reader resolve any ambiguity in the text by creatively adding meaning to it. Poetry, more than any other genre, tends
Destinations vary
5th floor cubicles house
Blue collars of unimportance
Those who work the hardest
10th floor executive offices
Prestigious CEO's giving delegations
Those who simply point the finger and it's done
They say the word
And fifth floor tenants run
With hopes of that tight space will one day take them
Higher

An interesting finding is that an overwhelming majority (22) of our preservice teachers commented that poetry helped them share their experiences and express their feelings, but that they would have been “lost” without a prompt, poem, or idea to get them started. Similar to the preservice teachers in Rosnen’s (2003) study who were supported by the popular “Where I’m From” pattern (Christensen, 2000), but who were still able to make the poem their own, our students appreciated some sort of scaffold—an idea for beginning the process of composing poems. Victoria, who reported in a September interview, “I don’t write poetry. I’m horrible,” particularly appreciated having such scaffolds. In her post-class interview, she said, “I know, before this class I’ve never written poetry before, and so it was nice to have a couple examples, and then have the prompts of, like, write an object poem, write a list poem, write from viewing art, go out and find poetry in your life. And if it didn’t work, then it didn’t work. But it was something to try.”

One prompt given to students was to write in response to any piece of artwork—their own or a piece that was created by another, supplementing the genre of written poetry with another art form (Denzin, 1987). Bethany, whose favorite high school subject was Art, chose to write about a portrait she had done of her friends and elected to perform her poem (and display her artwork) at Trillium.

**PORTRAITS**

The brilliance of her red hair,
Crayola could not replicate in a pencil.

A secret in her eyes,
Botanically protected by her very name:

It was only coy laughter,
Behind a bored deck of cards,

The silly smile she hid that day;
My Lilan is camera shy.

His color is red: Bright and Aware,
Deep, Passionate, and Brave.

In the shadows of this hue,
He is a revolutionary.

Cartooned and captioned,
“Hasta El Paz Siempre,”

It’s true: he is a lover, not a fighter,
But there is something off about Kevin’s nose.

I’ve found it is difficult to capture them,
Perfectly unique, on a canvas, or a page.

When the portraits are done and colors are blended,
My best friends turn out to be rather shady after all.

Later, Bethany wrote in her writer’s memo that her relationship with art made it “much easier” to write a poem that she cared about and that she could feature in her final portfolio. She wrote, “I absolutely love art, and even though I do not study it, nor think I have even neared mastering any mode of art, my deep connection with artwork made it much easier to write a poem I was really passionate about. [In the poem] I explore the difficulty of drawing or painting my best friends. When I read it at Trillium, I chose to put the work on an easel.”

![Figure 1. Bethany’s Artwork](image)
Jessica, a junior elementary education major, was the only preservice teacher who was not adamant about having prompts. She reported, "The prompts were nice to have, but my best poems really came to me when I was out of class." Similar to Bethany's connection with art, she engaged with a home movie as the aesthetic encounter (Beardsley, 1982) that led her into writing a poem. What is interesting about Jessica is that she shared at the beginning of the course that she didn’t write poetry. She reported, flatly, "No. I always got frustrated.” In her writer’s memo and poem, below, she explains how she has used her writing to help experience emotional release and gain understanding of family tragedy.

Jessica wrote, “My favorite poem that I wrote this semester was ‘Mitchell.’ The idea for the poem came while I was transferring my home movies from VHS to DVD. While I was fast forwarding, I noticed Mitchell. He was killed when he was very young, around the age of eight. My family has pictures of him in all of their homes, but I haven’t heard his name mentioned since his death so by writing this I was able to deal with these suppressed emotions and try to understand the situation.”

Mitchell
Rewind.
I watch your face blur by.
I watch you, a 4-year-old, unwrapping presents.
How excited you are,
Smiling into the camera with your thick blond hair.
So young, so much energy
I remember you running through the damp yard on Easter.
I remember picking you up, your legs flailing about.
I remember pushing you on the old swing in grandma’s backyard.
How did I forget about you?
or did I?
Play.
Our family gathers.
You are no where to be seen.
How old would you be now?
Food is served,
people laugh,
family.
Our family.
Then I see you.
In the background,
on the wall,
still,
framed,
captured.
You are here
but no one mentions your name.
So I will.

In addition to responding positively to the writing prompts (all but one preservice teacher recommended providing prompts, and three preservice teachers reported that the prompts were the most helpful aspect of the course in helping them to write poetry), students found the writing workshops to be especially important in strengthening their poetry writing. In fact, 20 of the 23 preservice teachers commented that the most helpful aspect in learning to write and improve their poetry over the course of the semester was getting feedback from their peers. They learned and participated, all for the first time, in the literacy social practice (Street, 1993) of a workshop—a practice that mirrors what poets often do to improve their own texts. In the post-course interview, Beth, a secondary English major, shared: “Workshopping and revision really worked well for me and a lot of other students in our class because a lot of us were new to poetry, and we weren’t experienced in it a lot. It was a lot more comfortable than just sitting down with one person and having this awkward revision go on between the two.”

The workshop makes public the evolving drafts of a piece of writing and also provides an opportunity for discourse (including exploring aesthetic responses and linguistic features) surrounding a poem. In her interview, Bethany reminds educators of the power of a writing community, even if it is in the intimate social setting of a workshop. She also reminds educators that participating in a workshop is likely to be a new experience for preservice teachers, and thus, they need considerable scaffolding and support. She said, “You see how other people are putting a lot of effort into it, and they’re making a lot of progress, and you can see how their poems change as the year goes on. And that was kind of cool, I liked that a lot. I remember the day when we went into workshop poems, and we watched [the instructors] do their fishbowl workshop. It really helped, because I’m not always the best at being able to critique something that’s someone’s—like a personal poem.”

Poetry Performance
Throughout the course, we provided a broad range of poetry reading and writing activities, with the intention of enriching preservice teachers’ experiences and dispositions. The culminating activity was the public performance
of poetry at *Trillium*, a standing-room-only event. We noticed how our students even looked different for their debut public reading. The usual campus logo cottonwear was gone, hair had different styles, many donned scarves. One even shared that she had on her “poetry outfit.” Weinstein (2010) and Fisher (2005) found in their research into spoken-word poetry settings that such programs can offer adolescents increased feelings of self-confidence and therapeutic experiences. Similarly, our preservice teachers described their own poetry reading experiences as bringing forth feelings of pride and accomplishment. They also described the event as vacillating between “nerve wracking” and “freeing,” “intense” and “enjoyable.” As Tess put it, “It was fun. I felt really proud reading something that I wrote. I liked it a lot. It was very intense. So it was cool, exhilarating!” And Daphne explained, “I thought at the beginning of the semester when they [the instructors] said that we were supposed to do that [the reading], I was a little nervous cause I’m not extremely comfortable being in front of a lot of people, but it was really relaxing and comfortable, and I was comfortable with the poem that I’d written, so it was a lot of fun and I really enjoyed it.”

Ursula summed up the responses of many of our students when she said, “Um, it was really nerve wracking, because I’ve never done it before. But it was fun, and I guess it gave me a sense of like accomplishment that I actually completed it [my poem], and then shared it with others, because I’ve never done that before.”

All but one of the preservice teachers (Monae) had never read their own poetry aloud in public. Since public speaking, let alone performing an original poem, is a source of tremendous anxiety for adults, it is not surprising that preservice teachers experienced trepidation throughout the course in anticipating this performance. But at the close of the *Trillium* evening, we as instructors could see how our students were invigorated by, and expressed satisfaction with, their readings. We believe the role that *Trillium* played in changing students’ attitudes toward poetry was critical. Their favorable attitudes were expressed both as performers and audience members. As Kate recalled, “There was a poem that a woman performed, she was from Nairobi, and it was just amazing. It was in her native language, and I didn’t understand it, but I did. And that was cool. I loved it. So it was really freeing. I performed a lot in high school. I was in various plays and choirs and stuff, and since then I haven’t really done a lot of any kind of performance or public speaking or anything. It was a nice feeling being up in front of an audience again.”

The “exhilaration” and reactions that so many of our students experienced are what Boal (1995) calls the aesthetic space—any place where the norms of “the stage” (performer) and “the auditorium” (audience) are mutually enacted by participants (p. 18). As poets, we know that it is a gift to be listened to, understood, and appreciated. The build-up to such a performance played an unmistakable role in socializing our students to poetry. As David reported, “I got excited about doing it [Trillium] especially after seeing a lot of others [poets] they [the instructors] brought in, because they had a day where they brought in like three or four different poets, and they just, you know, did some of theirs [their poems] and performed some of theirs in front of us, um, so . . . I was really excited to perform after I saw that, and the experience was definitely something I would love to do again.”

Participating in this type of aesthetic space was a transformative aspect to our course, in terms of students’ responses to the readings, but also in terms of fueling their own poetry writing. Wendy gave this advice at the close of the course: “The only thing I would change in this class is I would try to have students come to more poetry events than just one and the *Trillium*. I went to the Creole Gallery, and I brought a friend with me that had never been interested in poetry at all, and after that night, she’s been writing like crazy, and I’ve been writing like crazy, and it’s just really inspirational to go hear spoken poetry, and I really think that we should have more, you know, be responsible for going to more than one event throughout the semester.”

After teaching the course, we, too, agree that in the future we will require students to attend more than one poetry event. Besides increasing comfort and familiarity with poetry performance events, attending more than one reading offers a point of contrast or comparison for the discourse surrounding poetry in different venues.

**Implications for the Inclusion of Poetry in Teacher Education**

Our preservice teachers entered a teacher education course on poetry with limited past experiences. This cohort of students (though initially largely non-poetry readers and writers) was a group that was perhaps self-selected and predisposed—based on their future career path as teachers—to learn more about a genre that they knew was often neglected or narrowly taught in schools. Too, these preservice teachers were all juniors and seniors, eight of whom would be entering a year-long internship the following year. It is possible that they were attuned in the course for instruction that would be meaningful and motivating for their future students.

Our findings are significant for teacher education as we learn about the poetic experiences and dispositions (attitudes and habits) of preservice teachers, which can inform both content and pedagogical decisions. This
self-study was significant for us as well, for it spurred conversations and about how to improve practice through both programmatic and course efforts. Initially, we had planned to divide the course into thirds around the topics of reading poetry, writing poetry, and teaching poetry (knowing that these topics are not mutually exclusive and weaving them together in an intentional way). Early in the semester, however, we realized that preservice teachers needed much more immersion in reading and writing poetry and a broadening of their conception of poetry’s purpose before they would be prepared to think about teaching poetry. As a result, the teaching of poetry received only about 25 percent of course time. In the future, we are considering focusing solely on the reading and writing of poetry in the undergraduate years, and either (1) offering a one- to two-credit follow-up course targeted more toward teaching poetry, which would support more directly our students’ development as teachers of poetry in K–12 schools, or (2) waiting until students are practicing teachers to include the teaching component in the course (we currently offer a three-credit poetry reading, writing, and teaching course at the master’s level that includes a stronger “teaching poetry” component with assignments that bring poetry to elementary and secondary classrooms and students).

Within the course itself, we will continue to experiment with providing a variety of open-ended prompts for poetry writing. We will make two related changes, however. We will be clearer about presenting the prompts as invitational. Although we told students the prompts were jumping-off points (and that they could take their poem in whichever direction they wanted), most students stayed tied to the prompt. In addition, we will provide those prompts as initial scaffolds, limiting their use to about the first half of the course and gradually removing them as the course goes along. Doreen told us that she grew the most when she was “uncomfortable,” and we want to push students to be more uncomfortable as they find their own ideas for writing poems, independent even of prompts that are open-ended. After all, as potential lifelong readers and writers of poetry, our students will not always have professors available to them to provide prompts and scaffolds. As Kooser (2005) wrote in one of our course texts, “A good teacher may be able to nudge you along, may assign exercises like the how-to poem or the poem-in-answer to a question, but eventually you’ll get tired of doing literary sit ups and knee bends and grow impatient to write the poems you really want to write, poems you feel inside you, poems like those you find in the books of writers you admire.” (p. xi).

Any three-credit course can only begin to tap into the field of poetry, and our course had limitations as well. We did not, for example, spend considerable time discussing historical forms of poetry such as sonnets or epics, though we certainly mentioned them and discussed some forms (including odes, haiku, and rhymed poems). We also encouraged inclusion of canonical poetry in students’ Anthology Projects, and we knew historical forms would be featured on Writer’s Almanac for in-class discussion. In the future, we would like to be more intentional about peppering the course with canonical poetry and/or close the course with a few sessions that more fully address historical forms of poetry. This would occur perhaps after students have engaged with and experienced appreciation for contemporary poetry.

Particularly for new experiences with poetry, we suggest using an aesthetic approach to teaching poetry that draws preservice teachers in as active meaning-makers in interpreting, writing, and performing poetry. We conclude with seven recommendations for English language arts, literacy, literature, and poetry teacher educators—ones that can help move preservice teachers closer to living the life of a poet.

Get to Know Preservice Teachers’ Incoming Experiences and Dispositions with Poetry

If they view poetry reading as largely finding a single meaning in a poem, it would be critical to model and to encourage personal connections and multiple interpretations. If students’ poetry experiences settle around only a few poets, it would be important not to dismiss their preferences but to also introduce them to a broader range of poetry (diverse in authorship, form, subject, and mood or tone). Knowing perceptions of past experiences can provide the pedagogical clay for designing new, compelling experiences. If preservice teachers are largely non-poetry readers and writers (and performers), it may be the case that considerable additional scaffolding and support are necessary to improve attitudes and begin to cultivate new habits. This may extend to decisions about the kind of poetry read (contemporary vs. canonical) and written (fixed forms vs. a rhetorical-functional approach) in the course.

Read and Listen to Diverse Poetry in Authorship, Form, Subject, and Mood or Tone

Poetry is a dynamic genre that differs according to social, cultural, and historical forces. It may be advantageous to begin with contemporary poetry rather than focusing exclusively on canonical poems. Intentionality is essential, too, when selecting poems from around the world—poems that are varied in terms of form, topic, theme, and presentation. When reading poetry,
encourage aesthetic responses (Rosenblatt, 1984, 1978) before going on to analyzing craft elements. With every course session, the class community should read multiple poems (some even simply shared without response and discussion). When there is talk around a poem, personal connections should be sought first, followed by a discussion of what the group notices about structure, texture, and register as it relates to the meaning of the poem. With each course session, with each successive poem, it is important to discuss as a classroom community what constitutes poetry. Such an approach retains the emotive and pleasurable aspects of poetry while instilling a sense of curiosity about genre. Such an approach does not privilege language study over personal connections, but it also does not neglect the importance of formal study of poetic linguistic features. Additionally, strongly consider tapping the social spaces of poetry in your own community in planning the course. There are often university- or community-based poets who can be invited into the course. Conversely, there are often university- or community-based poetry groups that can be a required venue for preservice teachers to visit. It is generative to invite and include the widest variety of poets/venues in your community, including poets and discourse communities that embrace page poetry, spoken-word poetry, performance poetry, and slam competitions. Expanding the repertoire of live poets provides more voices to support preservice teachers' own explorations.

Invite Students to Find and Collect Poems They Like

Some of the poetry read and discussed should be selected by preservice teachers themselves. An Anthology Project is, perhaps, part of our course that most resembled a populist perspective toward teaching poetry, since students were “invited to collect poems and organize them in ways they [found] meaningful” (Faust & Dressman, 2009, p. 117). Not only should preservice teachers bring in copies of a favorite poem, but a formalized project (such as the Anthology Project) sets up preservice teachers to read many more poems and poems (for their theme) than they ultimately would include in their collection. An Anthology Project has the potential to help students engage in repeated and careful readings of poetry that is new to them, mirroring the way published anthologists find poems to fit a particular theme.

Encourage Opportunities for Aesthetic Encounters to Fuel Students’ Poetry Writing In and Out of the Classroom

A poetry course should encourage poetry writing that is fueled by personal encounters. It may be the case that this has to be scaffolded first in class with

invitational prompts (such as writing from personal photographs, observations, experiences, artifacts, or art). It is important to model (and/or discuss) how poets get ideas from stimuli and events around them, then to invite students to be watchful for these encounters in their everyday life. Send preservice teachers outside the walls of the university classroom, observing life around them, and, especially, attending community poetry events. Invite students to take notebooks out on park benches, to visit favorite outdoor spots and sit quietly, to observe the news and daily life around them, to take in the sensory images around them as clay for poems. Send preservice teachers out, too, to local poetry readings. Before returning to class, they should write and discuss further how the experience influenced the way they are thinking about reading, writing, and performing poetry.

Have Preservice Teachers Meet to Workshop and Provide Feedback on Each Other’s Poems

This collaborative space allows preservice teachers to see over time what poetry is and what language can do. At the recent U.K. Poetry Matters Seminar, there was some discussion about how to develop students’ metalinguistic knowledge about poetry in an engaging way, without resorting to the New Critical approach. Poet Cliff Yates responded that students should write their own poetry and get feedback on it from others, for, in the process, they develop the lexicon and language of poetry in an authentic, motivating way, since it is rooted in moving their own and their peers’ poetry forward.

Make Performance a Cornerstone of the Course

With an aesthetic approach to poetry, original works should not only be shared in textual form but also in the performative mode. This performance space provides a new experience, one where the poem is seen and heard through the body for a completely fresh interpretative event. Performances should extend to outside the classroom, rising to the status of a community public performance as in the example of Trillium.

Consider Writing with Your Students

Although this is not our strongest recommendation (we know other poet-professors who feel it is not appropriate to share their own poetry with their students), in our case, writing with our students enhanced their experiences and added to their sense of enjoyment with the course. We were not just professors assigning writing, but we were engaging in reading, writing, and performing right along with them.
Conclusion

As teacher educators, researchers, and poets, this course was an opportunity to engage in the recursive process of researching and teaching, all the while participating in the reading and writing of poetry with preservice teachers. As instructors, we shared a passion for poetry; thus, similar to our students’ anticipation of reading their poems at *Trillium*, we were both nervous and exhilarated by the possibilities that creating and teaching a poetry course in teacher education might provide. What we learned from our students was that their reading and writing growth was facilitated most strongly when we provided them with diverse poetry, a variety of prompts, the opportunity to workshop poems with peers, and occasions to witness and take part in performances. Creating a course where authenticity thrives means asking our students (any students) to do what poets do—that is, to read poetry, write poetry, join writing groups, and attend and read at public poetry events.

We understand that many institutions may not have the luxury of a course devoted solely to poetry, but many of the above recommendations could still be intentionally infused across children’s and adolescent literature courses, literacy methods, and secondary English language arts courses. The Anthology Project, for example, would be an ideal authentic assessment to be woven into a children’s or adolescent literature course. When poetry is covered in any course, invite guest poets into the course and/or have preservice teachers visit YouTube performances of a variety of poets (during our outside of class). Although preservice teachers may not have the time to generate a large poetry portfolio, some poetry writing should be encouraged—perhaps two or three poems and hybrid writings that contain some poetry. While meeting regularly in small groups to “workshop” poems may not be possible, participation in a scaffolded poetry wiki as suggested by Dymoke and Hughes (2009) can potentially provide a supportive space for preservice teachers to draft and to share multimodal poetry. Although our culminating performance was connected to our course, all professors of literacy, language, and literature (along with students) could cosponsor an annual poetry reading at their college or school. Preservice teachers and the entire college or school community can then have the opportunity to experience the performer and the audience dimensions of Boal’s (1995) aesthetic space, as it can fuel their own writing, as well as produce exhilaration, excitement, and feelings of accomplishment at having one’s literal and metaphorical voice heard.

Parr and Campbell (2006) argue that teachers bring “negative experiences” that are translated from “one generation of teacher to the next and, as a result, from one generation of students to the next” (pp. 56–57). Our preservice teachers were given access to new poetry experiences that they reported were positive in helping them develop as readers and writers. Creating a course in which preservice teachers can explore the poets they might like—poems that resonate deeply in their lives—and can use poetry writing to express their thoughts and feelings (through text and performance) seems an important part of moving them toward positive experiences and a corresponding perception of the educative possibilities of poetry.

We can make claims that an aesthetic approach in a poetry course can enhance the experiences and dispositions of preservice teachers regarding reading and writing poetry—including allowing students to live the life of a poet. It now follows that we need further research on these participants’ sense of how to develop themselves as better teachers of poetry. We look forward to following these preservice teachers into their early years of teaching to investigate if and how they have translated their experiences with and their dispositions toward poetry to their own students and classrooms.

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Appendix A: Interview

Instructions to Interviewee: Please respond as thoughtfully and thoroughly as you can to my questions.

1. Do you remember reading poems in school? Tell me about what you remember.

2. Do you remember writing poems in school? Tell me about what you remember.

3. Please tell me your favorite, if any, poets. Why do you like these poets? Do you know any poets that you think would be good to share with children and/or adolescents? Tell me about that. About how many poetry books or anthologies do you think you own? Can you tell me the names of books or anthologies that you have that come to mind?

4. Do you read poetry in your spare time?

5. Do you write poetry? If so, what is a poem you wrote that you particularly liked? What was it about? Do you write about different topics or find yourself returning to the same topic? If not, have you ever in your life written a poem, even as a requirement? Tell me about that. What leads you to writing poems, that is, why do you write them at all?
8. Tell us about the ways you learned to read poetry (post-interview only).
9. What was it like to read your poem at Prisma (post-interview only)?
10. Lastly, is there anything else you’d like to share about poetry, something we haven’t talked about or that you think we should know?

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NCTE Literacy Education Advocacy Day 2012: April 19

Join NCTE members from across the nation for NCTE’s Literacy Education Advocacy Day on Thursday, April 19, 2012. NCTE members attending Advocacy Day will learn the latest about literacy education issues at the federal level and have a chance to interact with people highly involved with these issues. See [http://www.ncte.org/action/advocacyday](http://www.ncte.org/action/advocacyday) for details.