



ARIZONA POETRY OUT LOUD

THE UNSAID: A POETRY OUT LOUD RESPONSE PROJECT

Overview:

The Poetry Out Loud anthology often brings us into the **past**—older poems, classic voices, different eras. But you belong to the **future**. These prompts invite you to **bridge that gap**: to write alongside the original poems, to question them, and to imagine what they might say if they were written from your own hopes, dreams, and contradictions.

Student work from this project will be published in a digital anthology featured on the University of Arizona Poetry Center's blog and shared with fellow student contributors, Poetry Out Loud participants, and program partners.

Prompt 1: Write Beside the Poem – Your Voice Next to Theirs

Choose a POL poem and read it as if you're standing right next to it, not underneath it. You are not just a reader—you're a co-creator in this conversation.

Ask yourself:

- ▶ What is this poem not saying that you wish it would?
- ▶ Whose experiences, identities, or questions feel left out?
- ▶ How does the past (as told by the poem) compare to the future (as you experience it)?
- ▶ If the poem went into your life, your community, your generation, what would it say?

Now write a new piece **beside** the original poem. Let your piece:

- ▶ Answer back, question, remix, or deepen the poem
- ▶ Add what's missing, or say what the original stays silent about
- ▶ Show the tension between the poem's world and your own—let that generative contradiction create something new

You're not trying to "fix" the original. You're using your agency to extend it, challenge it, or rewrite the conversation.

Prompt 2: Poetry as the Language of Change: Future Speaking Back to History

Choose a POL poem that makes you feel something—grief, love, anger, confusion, hope, or even annoyance. Your reaction is part of the poem's story.

Ask yourself:

ARIZONA POETRY OUT LOUD

THE UNSAID: A POETRY OUT LOUD RESPONSE PROJECT

- ▶ If poetry is the **language of change**, what change is this poem reaching for—or avoiding?
- ▶ What does this poem say about the world it came from?
- ▶ What do you want a poem like this to say about **your** world, your future, your hopes and dreams?
- ▶ How would this poem sound if it were written **from your future self, speaking back to its history**?

Now write a **response poem** (or letter, list, monologue—your choice) that:

- ▶ “Translates” the original piece into your own time, place, and language
- ▶ Names truths, feelings, and questions you wish the poem said out loud
- ▶ Uses the tension between **then** (the poem’s world) and **now/next** (your world and future) to create something new

You have full permission to let your voice lead. The anthology brings you to the past—but **you** decide how the story moves forward.

Submission Guidelines:

1. Who Can Submit

- ▶ Open to students participating in Arizona Poetry Out Loud 2025–26.
- ▶ Each student may submit 1 response piece.

2. Connection to a POL Poem

Each piece **must** be in conversation with a poem from the [25-26 national Poetry Out Loud anthology](#).

Please include, at the top of your submission:

- ▶ **Title of the response poem**
- ▶ **Name of the original poet and poem title**
- ▶ **Link to poem** from the POL anthology (Please **do not** paste the full original poem text.)

3. Length

We suggest poem submissions be **10-25 lines**, or roughly **100-250 words**. Shorter is okay; please try not to go much longer.



ARIZONA POETRY OUT LOUD

THE UNSAID: A POETRY OUT LOUD RESPONSE PROJECT

Submission Guidelines (continued)

4. Form & Language

- ▶ Your piece can be a **poem, letter, list, monologue, or hybrid form**—as long as it clearly responds to the POL poem.
- ▶ You may write in **any language** or in a mix of languages.
- ▶ All work must be **the student's original writing** (no AI-generated or previously published pieces).
- ▶ **Language and imagery:** Strong emotions, complex topics, and honest expression are welcome. At the same time, we ask that language and imagery remain **respectful and considerate of others**, avoiding hate speech, explicit personal attacks, or needlessly graphic content.

5. Format & File Name

- ▶ Accepted formats: **.doc, .docx, .pdf, or typed directly into a provided form** (if using a digital submission form).
- ▶ File name format: *LastName_FirstName_School_POLResponse*

6. How to Submit

- ▶ Students submit through their **teacher**, who will send all class submissions together to POL State Coordinator, Gema Ornelas at gornelas@arizona.edu.
OR
- ▶ Submit individually via the online submission form: <https://forms.gle/CFRvLx3DCCyLoudo7>

7. Deadline

All submissions due by: **February 16, 2026**. (Teachers may set earlier internal class deadlines.)

8. Permissions

Only students with a **completed [media release form](#)** on file will be eligible for publication in the digital anthology.

Please submit your completed form either through your classroom teacher or individually via the online submission form.