

poetic justice

Presenting poetry to increase and improve engagement

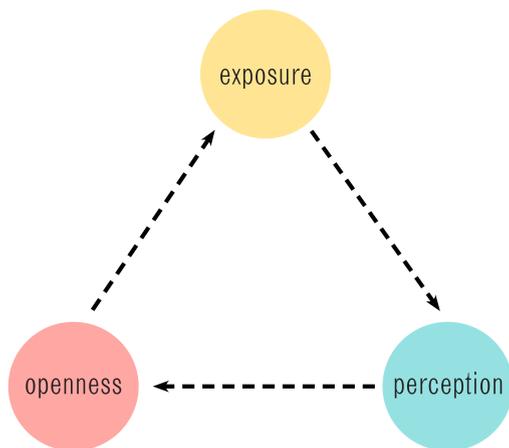
Poetry. The word itself elicits joy, derision, frustration, fear and most often, shrugs. Poetry is often presented and shared in ways that make people shy away from it, either from intimidation or boredom. Over the past year, I have been leveraging design to reconsider how poetry is presented physically and digitally to give readers, in order to improve the quality of their exposure to poetry. With a new lens through which to see poetry, my hope is that their perception of it improves and their openness to engaging with it increases.

8.3% of adults who read for pleasure report having read a poem in the last year (NEA Report)

Young adults 18-24 are more likely to identify as poetry users than non-users, the older people get the less likely they are to read poetry. (NEA Report)

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Attitudes about poetry are determined by:



My research over the last two semesters has shown that a platform promoting poetry would work best with the following design guidelines:

Poetry should be presented in engaging ways, both loudly and quietly.

Poetry is best understood when presented in context.

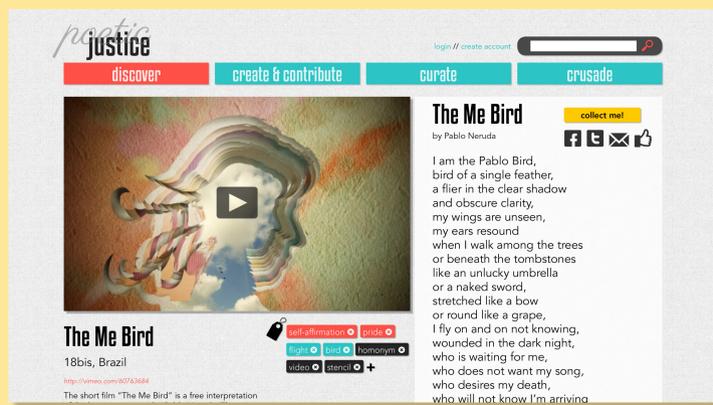
The burden of search should be lessened for readers, especially online, where possible.

Poetry should be brought out of isolation and related to other arts.

Poetry should be taken off its pedestal and judged by its readers.

Enabling people to engage with poetry in creative ways increases interest and learning.

The poetic should be celebrated, even if it's found in unintentional poetry.



In the Poetic Justice system, poetry is curated and displayed to give insight into the various media, styles, and forms that encompass poetry and the poetic. The system is designed to engage readers on several levels.

#1: Encounter "Poetic Justice" presentations of poetry in physical (or digital) space

Throughout the last few months, I used several research methods to gauge the reactions people had to poetry in their space. Overall, the response was positive. Even when negative, the poetry made enough of a statement to elicit reactions, which in itself is an accomplishment. To leverage the level of engagement that can be reached when poetry confronts people in their environment, having a physical component to the system is essential. While there is still a lot of noise, it's easier to reach out to new readers when poetry is presented in clever or loud ways.

#2: Follow a link to the Poetic Justice platform and navigate discover page to view curated selections of poetry in a variety of media

Generally, on any platform meant exclusively to share poetry, the content presented appears to be overly academic or stuck in 1995-style web design. Whether on a professional website, personal blog, or social media, poetry is often presented in a very text-heavy, beige setting. While there are interesting experiments and projects happening with poetry, there is no one-stop shop to learn about them and finding them can be difficult.

#3: Engage further with individual works of poetry by rating, tagging, collecting, curating, and reinterpreting them

While part of Poetic Justice will be curated by "experts", a significant portion will also be user generated and curated. Because a major purpose and concern of the system is creating an interesting collection of poetry and its interpretations, it's important to keep some level of control within the system, so that it maintains a certain amount of integrity and quality. However, it's also important to allow users a level of autonomy and control, so that they can more actively read and interpret what they're consuming.

#4: Participate in challenges and activities

Existing platforms for poetry offer some activities and interactive features, but most often they are meant to be taken offline or they last only a short time (usually the month of April, which is National Poetry Month). Very few platforms invite user response or feedback, which is vital for engagement. The Poetic Justice system will enable more direct digital engagement in challenges and activities relating to visualizing, finding, and sharing poetry.

#5: Help classify poetry for more meaningful metadata and personalization in future databases and systems

Through the various activities on the platform, especially collecting, curating, and tagging, it will be possible to collect meta data to more accurately capture the way poetry is read and interpreted by different audiences. It seems likely that traditional forms of meta data are insufficient and inaccurate ways to categorize poetic data, which can be incredibly subjective and metaphorical. With better meta data, come more possibilities for personalized selections of poetry, which could vastly improve the speed and accuracy with which readers can search for relevant poems based on theme, content, mood, and style.

