

# THE ABC'S OF YOUR POETRY

Age Range: Elementary School (Grades 2-5)

Activity Time: 45 minutes



## ASHLEY BRYAN'S ABC OF AFRICAN AMERICAN POETRY

By Ashley Bryan and published by Simon & Schuster

### THE FESTIVAL

Welcome to the Beautiful Blackbird Children's Book Festival! Where is the festival happening? Right here in your space, in your hands. By writing a piece of your own inspired by Ashley Bryan's *ABC of African American Poetry*, you are taking part in a celebration of books and book creators from across the African Diaspora. Your writing joins theirs in creating poems and stories built on roots, identity, and resilience.

### THE BOOK

Look for the reading from Ashley Bryan's *ABC of African American Poetry* on BeautifulBlackbird.com. This festival honors the legacy of author and artist Ashley Bryan and the book itself honors the legacy of Black poets. In the luminously illustrated book, Ashley offers a stanza from 26 individual poems, each highlighting a letter of the alphabet. Ashley once said, "I love poetry. It's at the heart of everything I do...I get spun around by what happens in words. When that occurs, it inspires images that seem so original to me as an artist, even though I'm following what the poem has offered."

### THE WRITING ACTIVITY

We are going to write short poems inspired by Ashley Bryan's *ABCs of African American Poetry*. In this book, each letter is accompanied by a short excerpt from a poem from an African American poet. You will use the words of these writers and Ashley Bryan's illustrations as a starting off point from your own poem.

Here are a few tips to keep in mind as you write your poem:

- It doesn't have to rhyme!
- It can be any length!
- Words and phrases can be playful!
- There is no right or wrong way to do it!
- Have fun!

Follow the steps to lead to your own poem:

1. **PICK** a letter - perhaps the first letter of your name, or last name, or simply a letter you love!
2. **LOOK** at that page in Ashley Bryan's book for inspiration for your own poem. What colors, words, or ideas pop out at you? Make a list of all of them.
3. **WRITE** each word from your list on a small piece of paper. You can use post it notes, note cards, scraps of paper - whatever you have will work.
4. **PLAY** with the order of your words. Take a big piece of paper and arrange and rearrange your little slips in different ways until you find an order you like. Use tape or glue to stick your words down. Feel free to add new words, repeat some, fill in the blanks as you go along.
5. **REWRITE** your poem on a new piece of paper. If you have time, you can illustrate it as well!

Like Ashley Bryan, we hope you are "spun around by what happens in words."

**Share your Experience!** If your family, guardian, or teacher agrees and if you can protect your privacy, share your poem and images with us online with the hashtag #BeautifulBlackbirdFestival.

Thank you to Telling Room for designing this writing activity as part of their support of the Beautiful Blackbird Children's Book Festival!