

Poetry Moments: The Heart of the World

Produced by Students of the Seattle World School,
Jack Straw Productions, and the Vietnamese Friendship Association

Tuong Dinh

Nhat Do

Son Duong

Vu Duong

Tay Ho

Nam Hoang

Hue Le

Tinh Le

Khoi Luu

Bao Nguyen

Huy Nguyen

Hoa Phan

Bao Ta

Hung Ta

Hao Thoi

Loc Tran

Tam Tran

Xuan Tran

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Spring 2012

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Introduction

Welcome to Poetry Moments, produced by Seattle World School students, Jack Straw Productions, and the Vietnamese Friendship Association. The Seattle World School is a Seattle public school for newcomers to the United States. In this project, Vietnamese high school students worked with Jack Straw's professional writers, vocal coaches, and audio engineers to write, perform, and record their own poetry.

Kim Thao Hua, classroom teacher

These students have been in the U.S. for about 1 month to a year. It has not been easy for them to blend into a new culture and learn a new language at age 17 and older, but they are trying their best as they know that it's the key to their future success. I can't say thank you enough to Jack Straw's wonderful team for all of the valuable opportunities that they have brought to our school and our highly in need students. The vocal trainings with their coaches Gin and Christine have helped the students to become better readers. The poetry sessions with Jack Straw's wonderful, experienced writers Kathleen and Laura have exposed them to different styles of writing and helped them to express themselves freely, creatively. Thank you for everything, Jack Straw!

Kathleen Flenniken, teaching artist

These wonderful students gave their visiting teacher the benefit of the doubt, listened patiently through long explanations (and questions) and sometime translations, and were game to try something new. One of our sessions together included selecting one from a collection of art postcards and writing a "cubist" style poem. I was delighted with their sustained attention and with the quality of their poems. Their blackout/collage poems the following week let them exercise their visual art talents as well as their

poetic ones, and again, they applied themselves and filled the time with concentrated effort. We had some good laughs over their intriguing creations. Even in their first “I Am” poems in our initial session together, I noticed generally a “slow and steady wins the race” quality to the students’ work, which I deeply admire. Kim’s class has the determination that I sometimes miss in other classrooms and which inspires me personally. I felt rejuvenated by this group and went home after each meeting with more energy and a lovely, free-floating optimism about the future.

Laura Gamache, teaching artist

I am impressed and humbled by how deeply these writers, so new to the English language, have been able to connect with and move us.

To say, “I am looking for the grocery store,”
in a language you are barely entering is a step.
To step in front of a microphone and say:
“the trees are the heart of the world,” like Hung Ta,
“the future is invisible as the truth,” like Tay Ho,
“Injustice feels like swallowing broken glass,” like Loc
Tran,
“Happiness carries fun in his backpack,
and I, myself, carry fun in mine,” like Nhat Do;
to ask “Who will open the dark door of my heart?”
like Son Duong:
these are brave and impressive leaps into
deeper communication
that these students made at Jack Straw this spring.

Nhat Do

Happiness

Happiness plays with everyone, and he is funny. He brings joy to those that are married, and to those that are celebrating their birthdays. He carries fun in his backpack, and I, myself, carry fun in mine. Happiness gives you a smile every day, and he can turn sadness into joy. He is the haven of the people, and everybody needs him to be here.

Son Duong

I Am

I am a lazy pig on my bed.
I am a lazy pig, even when the sun shines.
I am a pencil, skinny and useful.
I am a bat in the night, hungrily.
I am a music note that follows a river softly.
I am a person who is falling in love.
I am a stupid love gift that is put aside.
I am a lonely tear, useless.
I am the tear in the rain, invisible.
I am a stupid lover, careless.
I am a gloomy day, am I?
I am a happy person because of what I have.
I am the surface of water gleaming under the sunshine.
I am a field full of children under the sunset.
I am the light in the night.
I am the biggest star in the sky.
I am a leaf in the air, freely.
I am myself.

Untitled

Stunned, the grass-snake falls in love.
Can moonlight show its unknown pain to the sun?
Lightly, I lift the poor caterpillar
to avoid the desolation of deep sadness.
Who will open the dark door of my heart
and bring me out?

Darkness, behind that door is only the desolation
or the deep black holes.
He looks at a boy who lifts the caterpillar under the
moonlight,
pain and grief.
Stunned, he watches the free grass-snake. What a life!

I Don't Understand

I don't understand what the rain says.
Why don't they just cry?
It's hard to believe anyone when they hated you.
Poverty smells like a dropping leaf without wind.
Wanting what I can't have tastes like eating with a numb
tongue.
The future is invisible, impossible as holding the rain in
your hands.
Injustice feels unrequited love.
Believing in yourself is as hard as reading an upside
down book.
Disappointment breathes like the last turn of a fan.
Hatred destroys like the big waves.
Fear creeps into the room like a "strange bomb."
If you would only listen to me, we could be together.

Vu Duong

I Am

I am singing my blues
I am the blue sky surrounding the earth
I am the fish in a blue pond
I am the blue tie around the gift
I am the blue ice on the mountain
I am the blue book inside the bag
I am the blue curtain beside the window
I am Vu, a person who loves blue

Untitled

The scenes of spring are beautiful.
The wings of the bird are lush growing.
The kids are sliding over the flowers.
In a smooth atmosphere, mayflies fly quietly.

Bao Nguyen

I Don't Understand

I don't understand what you are thinking about.
Why don't they just make me feel happy?
It's hard to believe anyone when they have secrets.
Poverty smells like people have not showered for months.
Wanting what I can't have tastes like bitter medicine.
The future is invisible as my breath.
Injustice feels I lost \$1,000.
Believing in yourself is as hard as moving a mountain.
Disappointment breathes like I lost the game.
Hatred destroys like a bomb exploding.
Fear creeps into the room like a gas bomb filling up the
room.
If you would only listen to me we could put an end to
poverty.

Tuong Dinh

I Am

I am a basketball trying to jump.
I am a kite flying with the wind.
I am my mother cooking soup for dinner.
I am a shiny sun rising in the morning.
I am a little bird flying everywhere.
I am the blue wave when the winds come.
I am a school bus that takes students to school.
I am the pencil writing many good memories.
I am the moon shadow on a shiny river.
I am a student learning every day.

I Don't Understand

I don't understand why people want to fight with each other.
Why don't they just stop it?
It's hard to believe anyone when they said that they like peace.
Poverty smells like a death rat.
Wanting what I can't have tastes like the best food that I never tasted.
The future is invisible as a rock under the ocean.
Injustice feels like a sticky thing in your mind.
Believing in yourself is as hard as believing other people.
Disappointment breathes like the dead leaves falling down.
Hatred destroys like a volcano is erupting.
Fear creeps into the room like a wind blowing through your backbone.
If you would only listen to me I would give you a whole bag of candy.

Teaching

I am the bee that shows the bamboo how to make honey.
I am the salmon that shows the cloud how to swim.
I am the mountain that shows the eagle how to grow
trees.
I am the dolphin that shows the Amazon River how to
jump.

Tranquil River

The farm is too quiet.
Trees sleep surrounding the small hill.
The horse runs through a yellow field.
My eyes fall into the tranquil river.

The horse sleeps in the tranquil river.
My eyes run through the small hill.
Trees fall surrounding the farm.
The farm sleeps in the yellow field.

The trees run through the river.
My eyes sleep in the farm.
The horse falls in the yellow field.
The farm surrounds the small hill.

Courage

Courage never stops when he thinks he cannot do it. He
is not afraid to stand against bullies. Courage does not let
bullying grow up. He always encourages people to push off
war for peace and justice. He never steps back if he has a
thing that he wants to do. Courage and everyone won't let
wars sneak up.

Huy Nguyen

Untitled

I felt desolate when I departed from Vietnam.
The gnarled tree has tiny birds with still-fragile wings in
their nest.

I made a poem about joys,
I passed a canopy that was so vast.
The landscape was like early spring.

Freedom

Freedom lives in a house with his family. The house has a bright white color. People have hope and choices for their dreams when he talks to them. He can say what he wishes to. He wants to go wherever he likes. He never goes to jail. He hates strict police officers. He has many friends.

Bao Ta

Wisdom

He has experience.
He is smart.
He has a good job.
He is old.
He is hardship.
He is small and goes to work every day.
He goes to school and studies.
He teaches his children.

Earth onto Paper

Whoever knows my friend's name.
He sketched the earth onto the paper.
He was praised today by the teacher.
The water from the river swoops down.

Hue Le

Stopping the Time

I am the wind, blowing through the field.
I am a bird, flying freely in the sky.
I am the snow, playing with everyone.
I am humor, making everyone laugh,
I am the dawn, beginning a new day.
I am a small fairy, stopping the time.
I am an artist, creating many songs.
I am the spring, bringing luck to life.
I am a photo album containing many memories.
I am a strong girl, being confident in life.
I am a baby, not worrying about anything.
I am a picture, letting everyone look at me.
I am a drop, symbolizing precious things.

Hung Ta

Heart of the World

It is raining, it looks like tears.
The trees are the heart of the world.
I like the color white because it is truly beautiful.
There's moonlight. I want to open the door to see it.
I'm stunned, I don't even know my name.

Khoi Luu

I Don't Understand

I don't understand mathematics.
Why don't they just get out of my mind?
It's hard to believe anyone when they talk less.
Poverty smells like a stinky mouse.
Wanting what I can't have tastes like biting a rock.
The future is invisible as a ghost.
Injustice feels like unfairness.
Believing in yourself is as hard as a fly in the sky.
Disappointment breathes like grief.
Hatred destroys like a tornado passing through a village.
Fear creeps into the room like a cold wing.
If you would only listen to me we can be successful.

I Am

I am the hungry wolf at night.
I am a lonely guy in a busy city.
I am a piece of Butterfinger candy.
I am the strings on the guitar.
I am the lyrics of a love song.
I am the eagle that flies in the sky.
I am the reflection of the light.
I am the highest mountain in the world.
I am the shadow of a big tree.
I am the king of a country.
I am used to my own tears.
I am myself, funny and active.

Teaching

UFO teaches tuna how to fly.
The bat teaches the lion how to hunt at night.
The lion teaches the hill how to run.

Tay Ho

I Don't Understand

I don't understand what you are talking about.
Why don't they just talk less?
It's hard to believe anyone when you're just talking a lot.
Poverty smells like a dead mouse.
Wanting what I can't have tastes like sweat.
The future is invisible as the truth.
Injustice feels stupid.
Believing in yourself is as hard as believing a liar.
Disappointment breathes like poison to somebody near
you.
Hatred destroys like a strong storm.
Fear creeps into the room like filling the room in with
water.
If you would only listen to me that would be helpful.

Untitled

The people desolate the environment of animals: no
compassion.
A girl's lush age is in bloom.
He gets stunned from a swoop.
The swimmer breathing with compassion.
Landscape metamorphosing as a trading card game.

Teaching

Mount Everest teaches the eagle to fly higher.
The grapes teach salmon to jump higher above the river's
surface.
The god teaches the ant to work hard to make its home
better.
Indus River teaches the donkey how to get water to
drink.

Xuan Tran

Hide and Seek

after a painting by William Merritt Chase

Inside the dark
the girl is running
She passes the chair
She passes the door
Toward the curtain
Unknown to her
a pair of eyes
keep staring at her

The dark running chair
The door passes the girl
Inside the curtain
The unknown eyes
staring toward the room

A dark girl
stares at the door
Unknown to the curtain
The room passes the eyes
Towards the chair

The running curtain
Keeps passing the chair
The girl stares
at the unknown eyes
A pair of darkness

Passing the door
A pair of eyes
The room stares
toward the dark
The girl inside the chair

Day After Day

On a leaf of a gnarled tree, a butterfly waves
Its fragile wings. The moonlight of the spring season is
shining through
The desolated blooms. Behind the canopies, the bamboo
gradually
Grows up day after day. The beauty of landscape mixes
with
The feeling of compassion.

I Am

I am the sky, high and blue
I am the wind, stroking the rocks
I am the cloud, round and soft
I am the sun, shining every day
I am the snow, slow and white
I am the fog covering the dawn
I am the light, kind and bright
I am the dark, large and black
I am a girl who loves the sky

Loc Tran

I Don't Understand

I don't understand what you said.
Why don't they just believe me?
It's hard to believe anyone when they play a trick.
Poverty smells like suffering.
Wanting what I can't have tastes like a sweet candy.
The future is invisible as darkness in my eyes.
Injustice feels like swallowing broken glass.
Believing in yourself is as hard as pushing a block of
stone.
Disappointment breathes like a man who lost a soccer
game.
Hatred destroys like an earthquake.
Fear creeps into the room like a ghost.
If you would only listen to me you could study well.

Untitled

Leaves are like jewels in the sunny day.
Moonlight is a hope of the great soul.
The most beautiful landscape in the world is the oceans.
The sadness and disappointment is the desolation of the
heart.
I am stunned before the happy people.

Hoa Phan

Untitled

Many people wanted to desolate the forest to make wood
but the politburo forbade them.
The bed is smooth. The refugee is sleeping on it.
The fish is breathing before the merchant kills it.
People metamorphose from monkeys.
On the river, many caterpillars have died.

Untitled

LOVE

Sometimes, the people think love is a happiness. Love is
the children and always smiles. They never ask how old
you are, they never fight.

HAPPINESS

Happiness is the girl who finishes her homework. She goes
to school and talks with her friends. She walks with a smile
and dances.

ANGRY

Angry is the people who don't finish homework. They
feel sad, they think they are not smart when they do the
homework.

Nam Hoang

Invisible River

I don't understand why the world is round.
Why don't they just disappear?
It's hard to believe anyone when they trick me.
Poverty smells like a cat.
Wanting what I can't have tastes like a strawberry
The future is invisible as a river.
Injustice feels angry.
Believing in yourself is as hard as taking ten goals.
Disappointment breathes like giving up.
Hatred destroys like unhappiness.
Fear creeps into the room like a thief.
If you would only listen to me I'd thank you.

Tinh Le

I Don't Understand

I don't understand why people have wars.
Why don't they just help the poor?
It's hard to believe anyone when everyone tricks me.
Poverty smells like the lone baby buffaloes on the large savannah.
Wanting what I can't have tastes like sour of the lemon.
The future is invisible as a diamond inside the ground.
Injustice feels like an angry person who can't say.
Believing in yourself is as hard as a bird that can't sing.
Hatred destroys like a horrible storm coming to a small village.
Fear creeps into the room like a man who saw a ghost.
If you would only listen to me you will catch my mind.

I Am

I am the cool water that I swim in.
I am the fun soul when I fish.
I am the highest person when I am an eagle.
I am the shadow of the moon on the pool.
I am the good taste when I eat.
I am the wild lion in the savanna.
I am bright when I am a diamond.
I am faster when I am a cheetah.
I am a wonderful person who is famous.
I am strong when I am a superman.
I am a nice person when I obey my parents.
I am a ball rolling in the grass field.
I am a secret person to everyone who discovers me.
I am a good book that is in your backpack.
I am cute when I am a baby.

The Power of a Roar

I am an eagle that shows the valley how to become
an assassin in the sky.

I am a bee that shows the mango tree
the danger of toxics.

I am a lion that shows the Mekong River
the power of a roar.

I am a salmon that shows the wind
how to lay eggs.

Tam Tran

I Am

I am a cloud on the blue sky
I am a bird flying around the world
I am the sand on a long beach
I am a tree in a green field.
I am a bee landing on the rose.
I am a river that flows through the lands.
I am the wind that blows gently.
I am the star in the night sky.
I am lonely in the peaceful world.

Hao Thoi

I Am

I am the coldness of the iced coffee in Vietnam

I am the hotness of the latte in Seattle

I am an eagle in the sky

I am an ant in a big world

I am the hope of my loved ones

I am the star in the sky.

I am the wind on the field.

I am the moon at night.

I am the sand in the desert.

Acknowledgments and Credits

Poetry Moments was produced by Seattle World School students, Jack Straw Productions, and the Vietnamese Friendship Association with the generous support of the City of Seattle Department of Information Technology, the Washington State Arts Commission, the Harvest Foundation, and individual contributors.

The Jack Straw production team included writers Laura Gamache and Kathleen Flenniken, vocal coaches Christine Marie Brown and Gin Hammond, audio engineers Moe Provencher and CJ Lazenby, program assistant Bob Perry, designer Levi Fuller, and Executive Director Joan Rabinowitz. Special thanks to Seattle World school students, teacher Kim Thao Hua, and VFA assistants Tram Dinh and Peter Hong, and Principal Martin O'Callaghan, who all helped make this book and CD possible.

Jack Straw Productions is the Northwest's non-profit audio arts center, dedicated to the creation, production and presentation of all forms of audio art. To find out more about this and other Jack Straw programs, email us at education@jackstraw.org or visit us at www.jackstraw.org.

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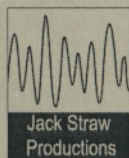
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Jack Straw Productions is a non-profit multidisciplinary arts organization dedicated to the creation, production, and presentation of all forms of audio art.

Jack Straw Productions' history began in 1962, when a group of artists, educators, and journalists formed the Jack Straw Foundation, which founded KRAB-FM, one of the first community radio stations in the United States. Building on its rich history of community access and support, Jack Straw continues to assist artists, educational institutions, and community organizations that are interested in working creatively with sound through our professional audio production facility, artist residency programs, educational programs, and community partnerships.

Poetry Moments was produced by Seattle World School students, Jack Straw Productions, and the Vietnamese Friendship Association with the generous support of the City of Seattle Department of Information Technology, the Washington State Arts Commission, the Harvest Foundation, and individual contributors.



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