

**A new year:  
At the frontier of past and future**

**HOSTS:**

*Ashleigh A. Allen &  
Ben Gallagher*

**Workshop description:**

Inspired by yesterday's start of the lunar new year, this 90-minute creative writing workshop unpacks the creative possibilities of reading and writing through poems that speak to crossing the threshold, of exiting an old year and entering into a new year.

As always in our monthly writing workshop, we look at a range of contemporary poets to think about the possibilities they offer us for our own writing and thinking. The purposes of this workshop are: to share in the reading of contemporary poetry, experience the act of writing poetry in community, and think about the possibilities for contemporary and modern poetry in our lives and classrooms as writer educators. We aim to consider not only the content but also the sonic and structural choices poets make as a way to consider the possibilities that a creative writing practice has to offer us as writers and educators.

We are grateful to be a part of a community that values engagement with writing and reading.

**Workshop outline:**

*(5 minutes)*

**Welcome participants & introductions/check-ins**

Names, pronouns, a word or two to describe how each person is feeling today

*(5 minutes)*

**Share the purpose of this workshop**

*(10-15 minutes)*

**Participants volunteer to read through all the poems at least once (Quaker style)****POEMS & PROMPTS:****“Chinese New Year” By Song Dynasty Poet Wang Anshi**

<https://pickmeuppoetry.org/chinese-new-year-by-song-dynasty-poet-wang-anshi/>

- Fill in the blanks: “the old \_\_\_\_\_ symbols are removed and replaced with new \_\_\_\_\_ symbols.

**“Ode to Chinese Superstitions, Haircuts, and Being a Girl” BY DOROTHY CHAN**

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/poems/154237/ode-to-chinese-superstitions-haircuts-and-being-a-girl>

- Include at least three superstitions you know of, and comment on how they've come to influence moments of or ways you live your life. Feel free to make some up!

- Finish the phrase “I’ve been told I sound like...”

**“New Year's Eve 1989” by Bill Zavatsky**

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/148305/new-years39-eve-1989>

- Tell a detailed story from this recent New Year’s Eve or a memorable New Year’s Eve of recent memory. Include who was there, transportation, what you drank, what you were thinking of, who was there, what you/ others wore, decorations of where you were, the weather that night, etc....
- Cheers yourself in the poem

**“Letter to GC” by Dana Levin**

<https://poets.org/poem/letter-gc>

- Write a happy new year letter to a friend. Feel free to write it in point form. A formal narrative is optional.

**“The New Decade” by Hieu Minh Nguyen**

<https://poets.org/poem/new-decade>

- Use the refrain “I keep thinking...” as many times as necessary
- Include a description of whom you pray to (this can be a regular human, a deity is optional!) and what you pray for

**“Counting, This New Year’s Morning, What Powers Yet Remain To Me” by Jane Hirshfield**

<https://poets.org/poem/counting-new-years-morning-what-powers-yet-remain-me>

- Take stock of your life à la Hirshfield
- If “the day” could speak to you and offer a philosophical word of advice, what would that be?

**“Resolution” by Lia Purpura**

<https://poets.org/poem/resolution>

- Make a list of word pairs with a short word, and a longer word that begins with the sound of that shorter word (as in “more/morning”)
- Hinge a line, or a poem, on an “and yet”

**“Elegy for a Year” by Joseph Fasano**

<https://poets.org/poem/elegy-year>

- Use a word as a noun and then a verb (as in “winter/wintering”)
- Describe this past year as an animal

**“Burning the Old Year” by Naomi Shihab Nye**

<https://poets.org/poem/burning-old-year>

- Describe the sound an absence makes, to you

**“New Year” by Bei Dao (Trans. by David Hinton)**

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/50070/new-year-56d22cd057a50>

- Write using three line stanzas, where each stanza bears only a loose connection to the preceding one
- Where would you follow a shortcut to?

**“To the new year” by WS Merwin**

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/54327/to-the-new-year>

- Write without using any punctuation marks

**“I am running into a new year” by Lucille Clifton**

<https://wordsoftheyear.com/2015/01/04/i-am-running-into-a-new-year-by-lucille-clifton/>

- Reflect on things you said about yourself in the past
- Use three similes in a row (eg “like a wind/ like strong fingers/ like all my old promises”)

*(5 minutes)*

**Ideas for exit conversation. Participants are invited to discuss and reflect on the experience.**