

## WHAT'S INSIDE

IT CAN BE HARD TO TELL but the first stirrings of spring are already upon us, hidden inside these cold, grey days of late winter. The light is pushing back against the long nights, and soon, very soon we hope, we'll be flinging off our coats to step out blinking into the new green world. To help us sing its praises, April brings us National Poetry Month, the American Academy of Poets' annual paean to all things poetic, and we've filled this issue with a mix of interviews, articles, and hands-on ideas to inspire your own celebrations of poetry, in and out of the classroom.

Former Poet Laureate Rita Dove, in a wide-ranging interview by Christian McEwen, talks of how she became a poet, a childhood filled with books, the importance of getting outside, her love of research and revision, her advice for students, and the superiority of Bic pens. We follow the interview with a trio of poetry writing exercises from experienced teaching artists, each offering a compelling poem and a writing prompt to inspire the burgeoning poets in elementary-, middle-, and high school classrooms. In this issue's Teaching Artist Snapshot, we feature Jena Kirkpatrick, a poet and teacher from Austin, Texas, who sidelines as a "poet for hire" at her local farmers' market, sharing her love of the form by typing up poems on the spot on her portable typewriter. Melanie Maria Goodreaux shows us how poetry—specifically a form called the lune—can help students generate ideas and images to jump-start their essays. And poet and writing teacher Norman Minnick extols the joys of memorizing and reading poems aloud.

We hope that you find inspiration in these pages so that you might, this spring, experience a taste of what poet James Wright describes in the close of his poem "A Blessing:" *Suddenly I realize / That if I stepped out of my body I would break / Into blossom.*

— Susan Karwoska

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