

Poetry Group Report for April 2026 by Terry Whitfield.

Six of us met to look at poetry by American writers.

We started with a poem by Langston Hughes called 'Daybreak in Alabama'. This was published in 1940 and envisages the poet composing music which will bring together people of all races in harmony:

'In that dawn of music when I  
Get to be a colored composer  
And write about  
Daybreak in Alabama.'

In 'Hay for the Horses' Gary Snyder describes an older man who has worked delivering hay all his life:

'I first bucked hay when I was seventeen.  
I thought, that day I started,  
I sure would hate to do this all my life.  
And dammit, that's just what  
I've gone and done.'

Elizabeth Bishop describes the coldness of water in 'At the Fishhouses':

'Cold dark deep and absolutely clear,  
Element bearable to no mortal'.

Not surprisingly this was chosen by the wild swimmer in the group.

'Poem in Praise of my Husband' by Diane de Prima was something we could all recognise:

'I suppose it hasn't been easy living with me either  
With my piques, my ups and downs, my need for privacy,  
Leo pride and weeping in bed when you are trying to sleep  
And you, interrupting me in the middle of a thousand poems'

Finally, we received sound guidance from Wendell Berry in 'The Peace of Wild Things':

'I go and lie down where the wood drake  
rests in his beauty on the water, and the great heron feeds.  
I come into the peace of wild things  
who do not tax their lives with forethought  
of grief.'

It was good to remind ourselves of some of the positive things which have come out of the USA.