

Poems and plays are for everyone, not just a tiny minority

In the world of Twitter and YouTube and 200 TV channels, are poems and plays still important or a tiny minority interest? Actually, still the former! Poets and playwrights provide a depth and creativity of response to the world which is special — just as special as the kinds of creative response we also find in contemporary music (all forms), graphic arts, dance, and so on. But the forms built on language are of special interest to the **[English, Drama, and American and Canadian Studies \(EDACS\) School \(/schools/edacs/index.aspx\)](#)** of course.

These poets and writers cut through the jungle of information, distraction, noise, and daily obligations that surround us. They create intense encapsulations, literary performances, which offer original and inspiring commentaries on the way we live now, or at least some small part of it. Our contemporary writers are sense-makers of our complex chaotic world. And, despite the reputation of some poets, remarkably accessible!

The idea of performance is also important, both to the upcoming **[Creative Minds at Birmingham \(/schools/edacs/news/2013/creative-minds.aspx\)](#)** lecture series and to much of the research and teaching in the School. A poem or a play is not just words on a page: it has to be sounded out, performed, used to communicate with an attentive audience, to be properly appreciated. What better performer than its author? Sadly we can't invite Keats to read his *Ode to Autumn* to us (or, now, Seamus Heaney to read from *The Human Chain*—though we had hoped to). But in this series we welcome some of today's flourishing, creative, inspiring writers—each with a distinctly different voice and history and engagement with our society and culture.

Besides reading from their work, we expect the writers to talk freely about their themes, creative processes, and preoccupations. There are no restrictions on topic, but since two of the writers are Scotland-based and Scotland will have its referendum on independence in the autumn of 2014, I expect that we might ask many of the writers if they have any particular thoughts on nationhood and nationality.

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