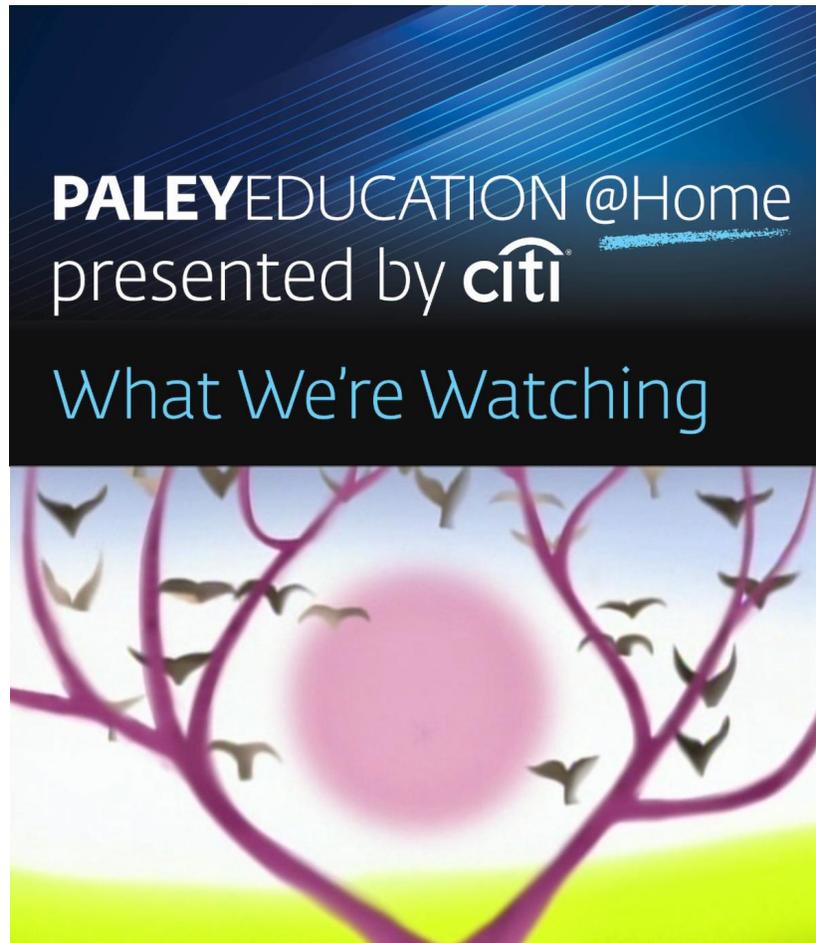


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**THE PALEY** CENTER FOR MEDIA



## **Greetings from The Paley Center for Media's Education Department!**

Welcome to the latest installment of "What We're Watching." Twice a month the education department reaches out to the community with tips and ideas for consuming media with kids by highlighting different themes that connect to two selected programs, one for younger viewers and one for older viewers, each with related activities and resources.

Watching media alongside your kids is a perfect jumping-off point to making media literacy a part of your everyday lives. Familiarizing yourself with the basics is a great first step. You can [view our first newsletter about media literacy best practices archived here](#). We also recommend the [National](#)

[Association for Media Literacy Education's Parents Guide](#)—it's a terrific introduction!

## What We're Watching: Word Is Bond

In celebration of National Poetry month, we continue our look at media that values knowledge and the personal journey that education fosters. The power of words to sculpt meaning, to embody the spirit of the subjects they illuminate is a practical skill that can be tested and standardized but words also have a magical power to assemble worlds, inflame passions, and uncover hidden truths. Whether through lyrical verse or non-rhythmic prose, literacy is a muscle made forceful with each use. For this edition of our newsletter, we look at the expressive power of poetry. From a garden of childhood verse personifying hope to a teen drama whose heroine wields literacy to radically redefine social norms, the potency of language can be as clear as a sonnet and as fierce as a haiku.

## This Week's Recommendations for Younger Viewers

### **A Child's Garden of Poetry: "Hope is the thing with feathers" (2011)**

*Recommended for Grades K+*

*Available at [The Poetry Foundation](#) and [the Paley Archive](#)*

In this second collaboration between HBO and the Poetry Foundation, young children voice their love of poetry, share favorite poets, and reveal how with poetry, as eight-year-old Mia says, "you can find something that will stay with you forever." These remarkable interviews play alongside rich and vibrant animation that breathe new life into poems of the American canon read by well-known actors of stage and screen along with eminent poets, whose voices are preserved through archival recordings. Highlights from this marvelous program include Edna St. Vincent Millay reciting her poem "Recuerdo" from a 1942 recording; Liam Neeson reading "When You Are Old" by William Butler Yeats; and nine-year-old Rachel Morrow signing as Claire Danes reads "Hope is the thing with feathers." This last poem, by the inscrutable and bold nineteenth century poet Emily Dickinson, vividly demonstrates how the verse and rhythm of spoken words can find a rhyme and meter that some can hear when using their eyes. Three of the animated poems are available on the Poetry Foundation website, including "Hope" by Dickinson.

"Hope" is the thing with feathers -  
That perches in the soul -  
And sings the tune without the words -  
And never stops - at all -

And sweetest - in the Gale - is heard -  
And sore must be the storm -  
That could abash the little Bird  
That kept so many warm -

I've heard it in the chillest land -

And on the strangest Sea -  
Yet - never - in Extremity,  
It asked a crumb - of me.

### Viewing Questions

- Are there American Sign Language (ASL) words that you could understand because the gestures or facial expressions seemed to “look” like the spoken word? Do you remember which words they were?
- What do you think the poet thinks Hope is? What made you say that?
- Why might a bird be a good symbol for Hope?
- If you were to pick a different symbol for Hope, what would it be? It could be an animal, person, place, or any noun that symbolically represents Hope to you.

Hope (noun): the feeling that you can get what you want or that things will turn out for the best.

## Additional Resources

### Read

[Where the Sidewalk Ends](#) by Shel Silverstein

[My Thoughts Are Clouds: Poems for Mindfulness](#) by Georgie Heard, illustrated by Isabel Roxas

[Poetry for Kids: Emily Dickinson](#), edited by Susan Snively

[Drum Dream Girl](#) by Margarita Engle, illustrated by Rafael López



## This Week's Recommendations for Older Viewers

## **Dickinson: "Because I could not stop" (2019)**

*Recommended for Grades 9+*

*Available on Apple TV+*

The whimsical, offbeat, and highly entertaining HBO series *Dickinson* imagines the brilliant, radical poet upending social norms of the mid-1800s through her writing and brazen defiance of binary gender roles. Like many teen dramas, contemporary music is used to comment on the narrative. However, in the case of *Dickinson*, the music, and some of the dialogue is non-contemporaneous giving the series a modern slant. An era distanced by sepia-toned photography and handwritten letters is reinvented by the alchemy of a spunky soundtrack and waves of feminist movements that have influenced the program's writing. In the pilot episode, Emily rails against her social position as a female in a male-centered world. Her mother, consumed by her desire to be a good housewife, tries unsuccessfully to find a husband for her eldest daughter, but to Emily a husband will hamper her goal of being a great writer. A goal antithetical to her father's ideological convictions, and the cause of great friction throughout the series. Two primary subjects of Dickinson's poetry, love and death, propel this first episode as Emily reconciles with an unattainable love at the same time she is charmed by the liberation of death. Entering Death's horse-drawn carriage, she finds comfort knowing her path to immortality lies not in being well-behaved and following the rules but in being true to herself and breaking them.

### **Viewing Questions**

- What does Emily's mother believe to be the role of women in society? Does Emily feel the same way? How are they similar or different?
- What do you think Emily means when she tells her friend/suitor, George, "I'm in love with Death."
- Why does Sue marry Emily's brother Austin?
- What can we understand about a woman's position in the mid-1800s when marriage was seen as a financial arrangement rather than a union of two people in love? Do you think this still pertains to women today?
- Why does Austin want to marry Sue even though he could marry any woman he wants?
- Why do you think Emily's father does not "approve of a woman seeking to build herself a literary reputation?"
- After her father's angry outburst, how does Emily find reassurance in Death's carriage? What does she learn about herself and her life from the personified Death?
- How does the music reflect or reinforce the story line? For example, when Emily fetches water because it's a woman's job, the song is "Off the Radar" by Noga Erez with the lyrics, "Hear me, No one, Sees me, No one, Hear me, No one, Sees me, No one, I'm off the Radar." How do these words underscore the scene? Are there other examples when the music mirrors or accentuates the action of the story?

## **Additional Resources**

[Urban Word](#)

[The Nuyorican Poets Café](#)

[New York City Poetry Festival](#)

**Read**

[Quiet Fire: Emily Dickinson's Life and Poetry](#) by Carol Dommermuth-Costa and Anna Landsverk

[The Poet X](#) by Elizabeth Acevedo

[Brown Girl Dreaming](#) by Jacqueline Woodson

**Watch**

[Dead Poets Society](#)

[Bright Star](#)

[SlamNation](#)

[Slam](#) (for students 17+)

[Poetic Justice](#) (for students 17+)

As always, if you have any questions, thoughts, or ideas, don't hesitate to reach out to us at [eduny@paleycenter.org](mailto:eduny@paleycenter.org).

Happy viewing,

**Rebekah Fisk**  
**Director of Education**

**Carlos Pareja**  
**Manager of Education**

Photos—*A Child's Garden of Poetry*: HBO; *Dickinson*: Apple TV+

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