

POET LAUREATES OF THE UNITED STATES

Coordinators: Mark Fischweicher and Carol Schoen

The study group reviews the poets who have been named Laureates since the inauguration of the post in 1934. We discuss the poets' contributions, their relation to the cultural events at the time they were writing and the changes that have occurred in poetic fashion. Among the poets we consider are Billy Collins and the current laureate, Juan Felipe Herrera. We strive for enjoyment of the poems and some understanding of the author's intent and influence, as well as an appreciation for the evolution of fashion in poetry. See syllabus for other poets to be discussed.

Readings and other Materials/Online Services:

The Poets Laureate Anthology edited by Elizabeth Hun Schmidt {Norton & Co., N.Y., 2010} contains the works of all but the most recent Laureates.

The Library of Congress website contains the most recent Laureates' works, as well as other pertinent material. <http://loc.gov/poetry/>

Mark Fischweicher is a retired high school teacher with an MFA in creative writing. He is poetry editor of IRP's *Voices*. He has been scratching out poems since junior high school and still hopes it may become a regular thing. **Carol Schoen** taught for many years at Lehman College (CUNY). She has led more than 20 study groups at IRP, mostly in literature.

* * * * * **Syllabus – A Work in Progress** * * * * *

Week 1: Introduction to the concept of Poet Laureate, origin of present role and rationale, relation to time period in which the poet was writing.

Week 2: and subsequent weeks.

Discussion of one or more of the poets and their works. Discussion follows a reverse chronological order, from the most recent to the earliest (1934). Among the poets to be discussed are: Philip Levine,

Charles Wright, Rita Dove, Stanley Kunitz, Robert Pinsky, Robert Hass, Joseph Brodsky, Maxine Kumin, Gwendolyn Brooks, William Stafford, Robert Frost, William Carlos Williams. Others may be chosen in consensus with study group participants.