

ChicagoHistoryMuseum

Chicago Poetry

READ:

Do you have a favorite book or story about Chicago? Many people have written about Chicago in poems, books, songs and movies. We can learn a lot about the city from these authors like Gwendolyn Brooks, Sandra Cisneros, and Eve Ewing. They help us understand different places and times in history.

One famous Chicago author and poet was Carl Sandburg. He was born in Galesburg, Illinois in 1878 and moved to Chicago later in life. In Chicago, he became a biographer, historian, journalist, musician, and poet. He is well known for his collections of poems called *Chicago Poems* which was published in 1916.

Gwendolyn Brooks was the first Black author to win the Pulitzer Prize. She also was the poet laureate (a poet officially appointed by the government to write poems for special events and occasions) for the state of Illinois.

Excerpts (small portions) of poems by Sandburg and Brooks can be found on the following page. For more poetry check out the Chicago Public Library's (or your local public library) online holdings, or the Poetry Foundation website.

DO:

What do you think is special about Chicago?

- **Use** the letters that spell Chicago, your neighborhood, or your hometown to write your own poem. This is called an acrostic. Use the first letter to start the first word of that line of the poem.
- **Draw** a picture to go along with your poem.

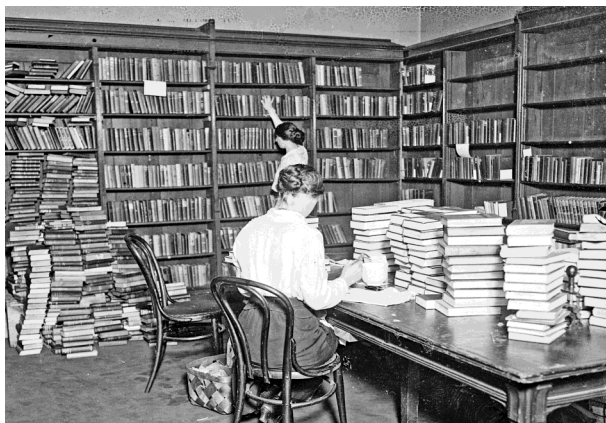
Approx. Time: 30—45 minutes

Materials:

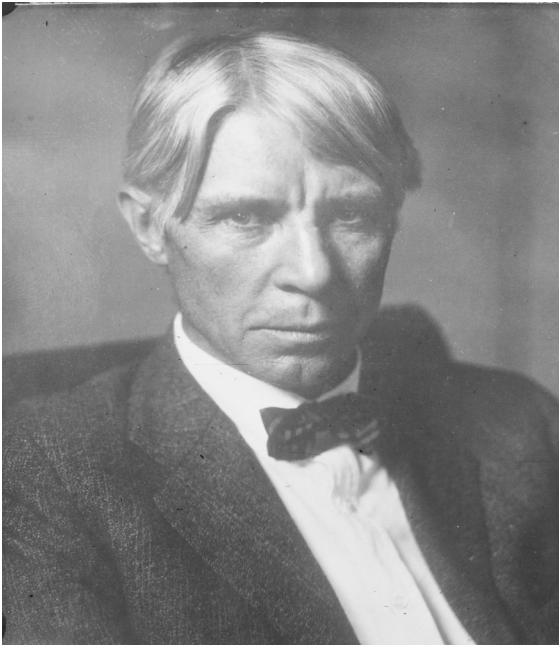
- ⇒ Paper/pen
- ⇒ Drawing materials

SHARE:

- **Hang** a picture of your poem and drawing in your windows for all to see!
- **Post** a picture of poem and drawing on Twitter or Instagram with the hashtag #CHMatHomeFamilies!



Women sorting books at the Chicago Public Library,
DN- 0068144



Portrait of Carl Sandburg, circa 1929.

DN—0087544

**Excerpt from Sandburg's Poem,
"Chicago"**

Hog Butcher for the World,
Tool Maker, Stacker of Wheat,
Player with Railroads, and the Nation's Freight
Handler;
Stormy, husky, brawling,
City of Big Shoulders

Excerpt from Brook's Poem

"Harold Washington"

Mayor. Worldman. Historyman.
Beyond steps that occur and close,
your steps are echo-makers.

*Note: Harold Washington was Chicago's
first African American mayor when he was
elected in February of 1983.*



Portrait of Gwendolyn Brooks circa 1960.
ICHI-059683

Sample Poem

Climbing towards the sky, are skyscrapers,
Homes are made of brick or wood or glass,
Inching along Lake Shore Drive in rush hour,
Cold in the winter and hot in the summer,
Along the lake are parks and the beach,
Go Bears Go,
Oh, the snow can stop the streets.

C _____

H _____

I _____

C _____

A _____

G _____

O _____