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Young Adults' Perception of Poetry in Times of Crises

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According to psychological research, recovering from emotional trauma implies processing traumatic experience through identifying and accepting one's emotions (Weing, 2025). Literature can serve as a powerful means to work through collective trauma (Yuan & Li, 2025). In times of crisis, trauma literature, which focuses on psychological distress and emotional aftermath (Heidarizadeh, 2015), can help confront and process ongoing traumatic experiences (Becker & Sjöström, 2024). Among different literary forms, poetry often has a particularly strong emotional impact on readers. This research focuses on whether Ukrainian students perceive trauma poetry as a source of emotional support.

In the first stage, 14 students were asked to share their favourite poem in English. Based on the selected poems, a survey on students' perception of these texts was administered.

Of the 14 texts, five (e.g. *An Insider's Guide on How to Be Sick* by Andrea Gibson; . (a poem on generational trauma) by Kateryna Rudiakova) fall into the category of trauma literature while other nine pieces were samples of supportive, reflective or inspirational poetry (e.g. *I Sit Beside the Fire and Think* by J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Builders* by H.W.Longfellow).

When asked to assess how much they liked the listed poems, participants gave the highest score to *I Sit Beside the Fire and Think* (M=4.4 out of 5), followed by *She Walks in Beauty* by George Gordon Byron (M=3.9), *The Builders* (M=3.8) and *An insider's guide on how to be sick* (M=3.8). Regarding how thought-provoking the poems were, *I Sit Beside the Fire and Think* was rated equally high as the poem by Kateryna Rudiakova (M=4.3).

The participants agreed that poetry is an effective tool for communicating the Ukrainian experience to the global audience (M=3.9) and helps maintain a sense of national unity (M=4.2). However, turning to poetry for emotional support was not marked as common practice (M=2.6).

Thus, we can conclude that while Ukrainian students understand and appreciate trauma poetry, they are more likely to seek emotional support from other sources today.

The research limitation concerns the initial task, which required students to select poetry in English. Students' responses to trauma poetry may differ when reading in their first language and could be explored in future research.

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