

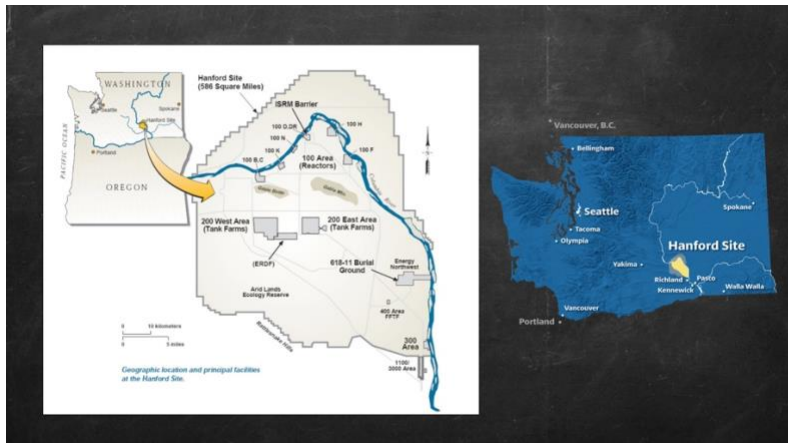
# 2023 Poetry Contest Presentation Script



**Liz:** Hi! I am Liz Mattson.

**Miya:** And I am Miya Burke.

**Liz:** We work for Hanford Challenge and we're here to talk about a poetry contest we launched. You can find more information about the contest at [hanfordchallenge.org/hotpoetry](http://hanfordchallenge.org/hotpoetry)

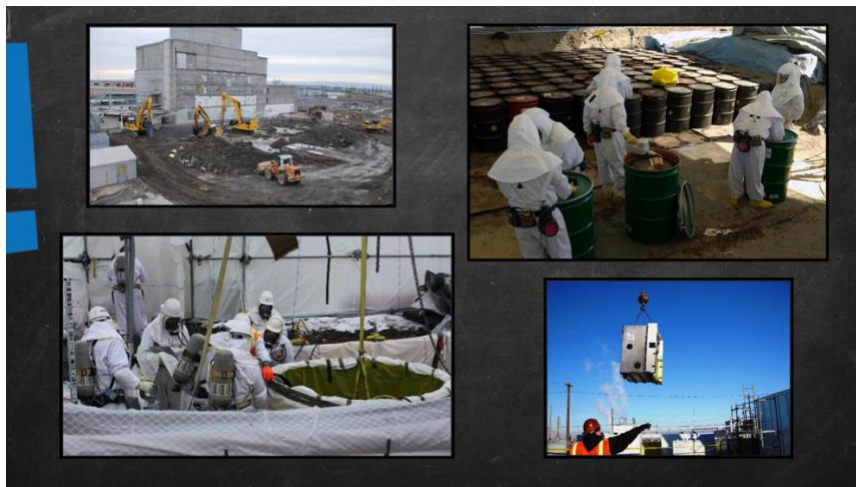


**Liz:** Hanford Challenge is focused on the cleanup of the Hanford Nuclear Site. The most contaminated nuclear waste site in the western Hemisphere. It's in southeastern WA bordering 50 miles of the Columbia River.



**Miya:** This is where the federal government made plutonium for nuclear weapons during World War II and the Cold War. Making plutonium for 45 years created a lot of nuclear and chemical waste that we are still dealing with today.

**Liz:** It's going to take over 75 years to clean up the radioactive and chemical waste that is on site and will cost between \$300-600 billion dollars. Yep, you heard that right, billion with a b. Everyone who pays taxes is paying for this cleanup.



**Miya:** A lot of the cleanup involves digging up waste that is close to the Columbia River and moving it to lined landfills in the center of the site. Some of the waste will leave the site and a lot of waste will stay at Hanford. The waste that stays needs to be monitored to keep people and animals out of the waste sites, essentially forever.

**Liz:** A unique thing we do at Hanford Challenge is work with whistleblowers and workers who are trying to make the cleanup safer. The goal is to protect the future with a cleanup that works. We want future generations to have a safer, cleaner future.



**Miya:** We need you to help build that safer, cleaner future. So, we are launching a nuclear waste themed poetry contest to get you hooked on Hanford!

**Liz:** If you are a college student in Washington state you can submit a poem and be eligible to win a cash prize!



**Miya:** We're going to share some background information about Hanford and some prompts to get your creative juices flowing.

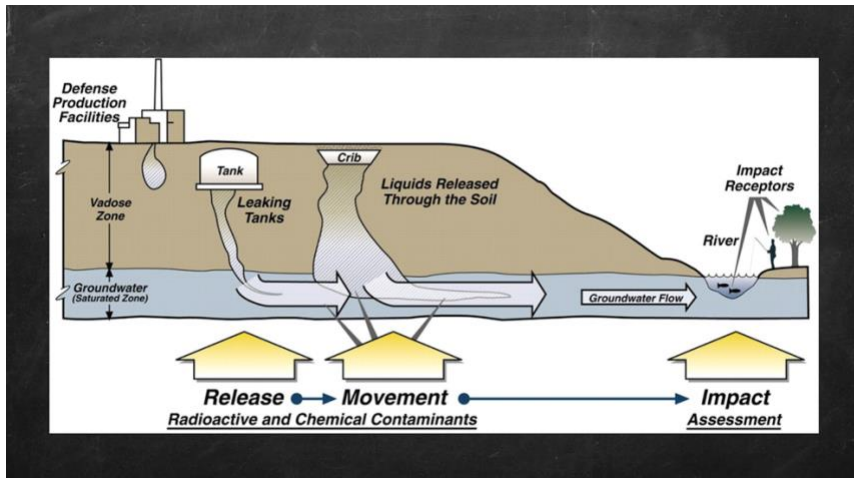
**Liz:** While you are watching the video grab a pencil and write down phrases or words that jump out at you and use the words later to write a poem.

**Miya:** To start, we're going to share a quick video from EarthFix media about Hanford.



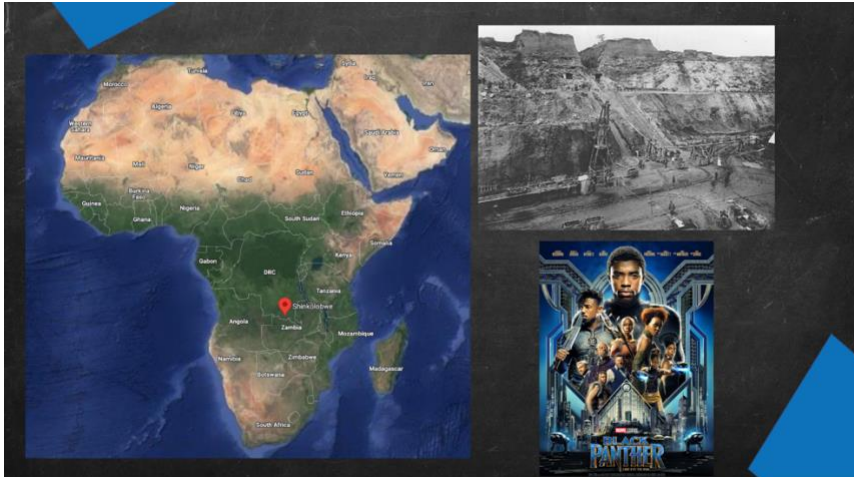
**Liz:** Alright, now that you have some background about Hanford you can see there are a lot of angles you can use to learn about and think about nuclear waste for your poetry submission. We also have resources at [hanfordchallenge.org/hotpoetry](http://hanfordchallenge.org/hotpoetry)

**Miya:** You can learn about the history that resulted in the waste we are cleaning up. Whose voices were included in decision making? Who was left out of those decisions?

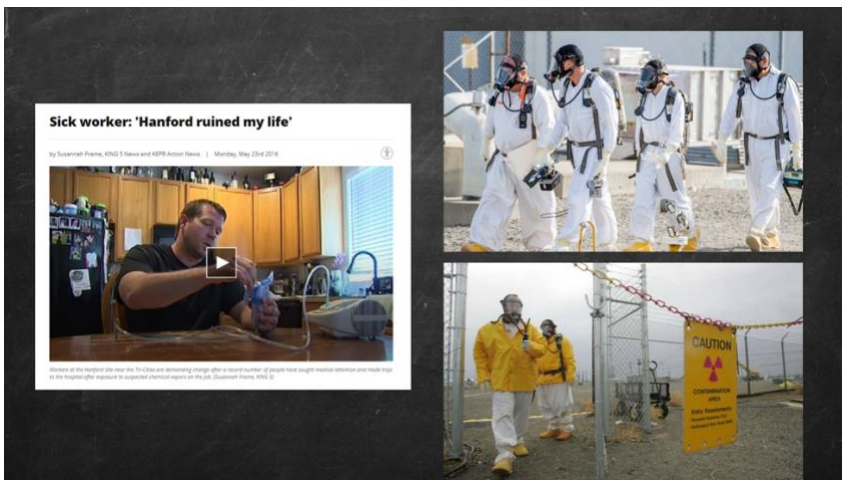


**Liz:** You can learn about the science that studies how contamination moves underground and predicts where it will end up in the future and who it might hurt.





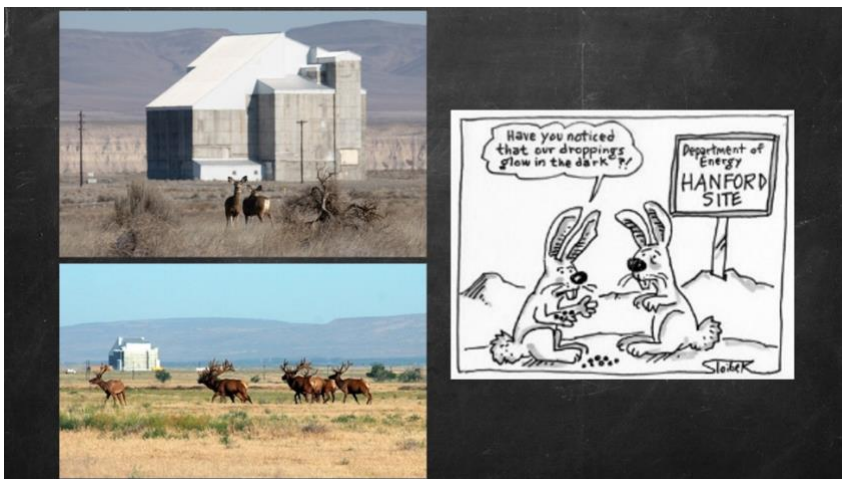
**Miya:** You can learn about the uranium mines, like the secret Shinkolobwe mine in the former Belgian Congo, now the Democratic Republic of the Congo, that provided the raw material that was used to make plutonium. Who owned the mines? How were the miners treated? How was Black Panther's Wakanda inspired by uranium mining activities in the Congo?



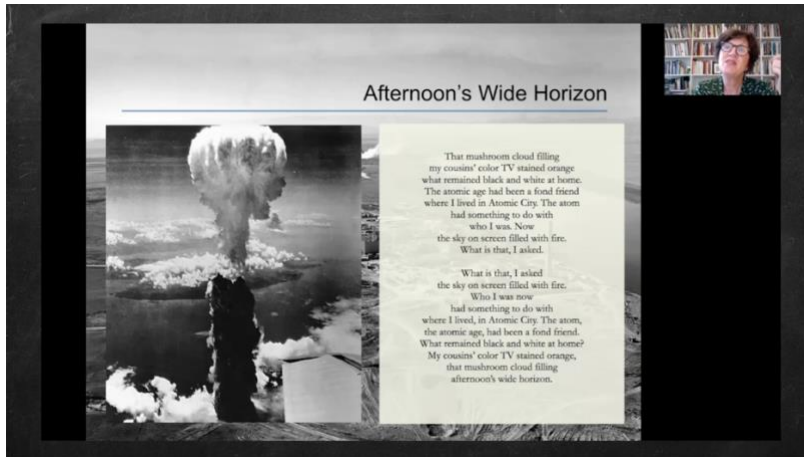
**Liz:** You can learn about the health and safety impacts of nuclear waste, like how to protect workers from exposure to toxic chemical vapors that vent from underground nuclear waste storage tanks. Hanford has 177 of these underground tanks and they hold a total of 56 million gallons of high level nuclear waste.



**Miya:** You can learn about how to keep people away from the radioactive and chemical waste in the future - like these designs developed to scare people away from nuclear waste storage sites thousands of years in the future.



**Liz:** You can even learn about the animals that have no idea their home is the most contaminated nuclear waste site in the western hemisphere. They're just living their lives and inadvertently digging up and spreading contamination, like these rabbits that spread radioactive rabbit poop! Yes, that is really a thing.



**Miya:** For this contest we are accepting any form of poem and poems in any language, as long as an English translation is provided.

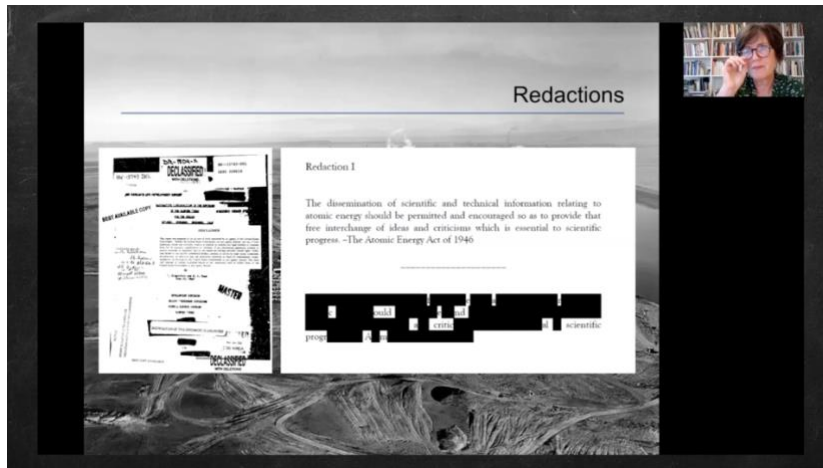
**Liz:** There are lots of poetic forms, so we're going to share some of our favorites with you as food for thought. As part of our Nuclear Waste Scholar Series, we invited former WA State Poet Laureate, Kathleen Flenniken to share her personal connection with the Hanford site and read some of her poems from her award winning book *Plume*. One of the poems she shared is a palindrome poem. Palindrome poetry starts with an initial poem and then hinges on a line in the middle and then repeats the lines of the poem in reverse order. Here is a clip from her talk.



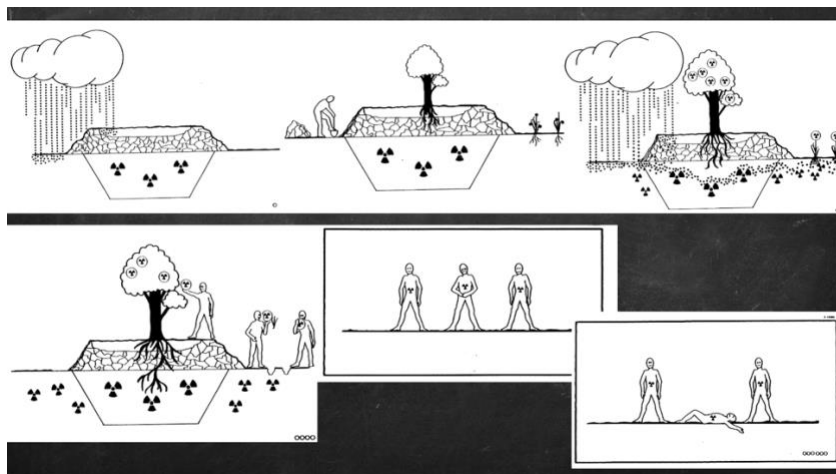
**Miya:** Another approach to writing poetry is as a reaction to or in conversation with a piece of art. This form of poetry is called ekphrastic poetry, or poems written about works of art. We have some examples of nuclear waste themed art on our website. One of my favorite pieces is shared on *A People's Atlas of Nuclear Colorado*, an interactive website created by Shiloh Krupar and Sarah Kanouse.

Zuni Pueblo artist Mallery Quetawki created these pieces of art called *DNA Damage and DNA Repair*. Her paintings draw on designs from Native communities across the Southwest to convey the connections between bodies and their susceptibility to DNA damage from exposure

to radioactivity. I love the multiple layers of symbols that Mallery uses in her work to convey the message of the damage and repair our bodies undergo when exposed to radiation.

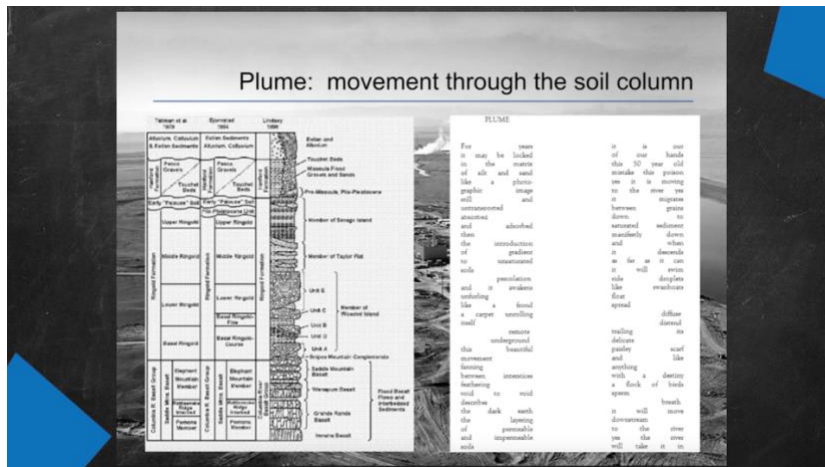


**Liz:** One of my favorite poetic forms is erasure poetry, or black out poetry, where you take an existing written text and redact portions of it to create a poem. We have a few documents for your perusal on our poetry contest webpage. [hanfordchallenge.org/hotpoetry](http://hanfordchallenge.org/hotpoetry). Kathleen Flenniken also shared one of her erasure poems in her scholar series talk on September 30th. And we're going to share that with you now.



**Liz:** You could also try writing a poem about the intergenerational burden of nuclear waste. Nuclear waste needs to be isolated from our water, resources, and wildlife, essentially forever. Try writing a poem to future generations about the nuclear waste that is going to be a part of their future. I wanted to share these pictures as food for thought. In the 1980's, an archaeologist named Maureen Kaplan was assigned a project to create images that tell people in the future not to dig where the radioactive waste was buried. You can see she used stick figures to show what happens if someone eats fruit from a tree growing on the waste site. Figuring out how to warn future generations about the hazards of nuclear waste is a huge challenge and a topic we hope you enjoy exploring through poetry.





**Miya:** Another example from Kathleen Flenniken is a poem she created to visually reflect a soil column at Hanford. This poem is titled *Plume* and it is an example of Concrete Poetry. The most important characteristic of a concrete poem is that its shape has something to do with the content. A plume contains contamination or pollutants that have been released from a specific source. Kathleen’s poem is about this plume of contaminants and shows visually through the shape of the poem how the plume would move through the soil column. Your poem can take any form you’d like and the shape of the poem itself can reflect the theme or content of the written words.

  
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[hanfordchallenge.org/hotpoetry](http://hanfordchallenge.org/hotpoetry)

**Liz:** Thank you so much for joining us today! We hope this gives you some food for thought as you work on your poems. We have more resources at [hanfordchallenge.org/hotpoetry](http://hanfordchallenge.org/hotpoetry) including videos, a reading list, articles, and more examples of poetry and art, that you can use while you are writing.

**Miya:** We’re here to support you so please feel free to reach out to us with any questions you may have! Happy writing!