**9th Form National Poetry Recitation Contest**

**Title of Poem**: Perhaps the World Ends Here

**Poet**: Joy Harjo

**Link**: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/49622/perhaps-the-world-ends-here



**About the Poet (From Poetry Foundation)**:

Joy Harjo was born in Tulsa, Oklahoma, and is a member of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation. She earned her BA from the University of New Mexico and MFA from the Iowa Writers’ Workshop. Harjo draws on First Nation storytelling and histories, as well as feminist and social justice poetic traditions, and frequently incorporates indigenous myths, symbols, and values into her writing. Her poetry inhabits landscapes—the Southwest, Southeast, but also Alaska and Hawaii—and centers around the need for remembrance and transcendence. She once commented, “I feel strongly that I have a responsibility to all the sources that I am: to all past and future ancestors, to my home country, to all places that I touch down on and that are myself, to all voices, all women, all of my tribe, all people, all earth, and beyond that to all beginnings and endings. In a strange kind of sense [writing] frees me to believe in myself, to be able to speak, to have voice, because I have to; it is my survival.” Her work is often autobiographical, informed by the natural world, and above all preoccupied with survival and the limitations of language.

# Perhaps the World Ends Here

# By Joy Harjo

The world begins at a kitchen table. No matter what, we must eat to live.

The gifts of earth are brought and prepared, set on the table. So it has been since creation, and it will go on.

We chase chickens or dogs away from it. Babies teethe at the corners. They scrape their knees under it.

It is here that children are given instructions on what it means to be human. We make men at it, we make women.

At this table we gossip, recall enemies and the ghosts of lovers.

Our dreams drink coffee with us as they put their arms around our children. They laugh with us at our poor falling-down selves and as we put ourselves back together once again at the table.

This table has been a house in the rain, an umbrella in the sun.

Wars have begun and ended at this table. It is a place to hide in the shadow of terror. A place to celebrate the terrible victory.

We have given birth on this table, and have prepared our parents for burial here.

At this table we sing with joy, with sorrow. We pray of suffering and remorse. We give thanks.

Perhaps the world will end at the kitchen table, while we are laughing and crying, eating of the last sweet bite.

**Study Guide:**

Why do you think the author focuses everything around a “kitchen table”?

What does the author mean when she says “This table has been a house in the rain, an umbrella n the sun”?

Do you agree that life will end at the kitchen table?

**Vocab:**

Scrape – rubbing painfully against a hard, rough surface

Remorse – regret

Ghost – energy left over from a person who has died