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A Kennedy praises poetry

Caroline takes Jackie's faves to Harlem

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Hoping to encourage city school children to discover — and take comfort in — poetry, Caroline Kennedy read selections of a new collection of her late mother's favorite poems at a Harlem library yesterday.

"Out of all of the gifts I received from my parents, few were greater than the gift of love of language," said Kennedy, the daughter of former President John F. Kennedy. "I want to be able to share that."

Kennedy's book, "The Best Loved Poems of Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis," consists of works that the former First Lady read to Caroline and her brother, the late John F. Kennedy Jr., throughout their childhood.

The reading was sponsored by the New York Public Library and the American Library Association to encourage students to use the resources available at local libraries.

The famously media-shy Kennedy decided to discuss the comforting qualities of poetry, which could be helpful post-Sept. 11.

"I've been reading a lot of works about faith and country lately," Kennedy told her audience at the Countee Cullen Regional Library on W. 136th St. "They've made me feel better."

Yesterday, Kennedy read selections from poems that were the most meaningful to her, including Alfred Lord Tennyson's "Ulysses," which her father and her "Uncle Bobby" — the late Sen. Robert F. Kennedy — frequently quoted in speeches, and Robert Frost's "The Gift Outright," which the poet himself read at JFK's inauguration.

The audience of primarily junior high school students seemed to embrace Kennedy's message.

"I really like that she took the time to speak to children about something that's important to her," said eighth-grader Jasmine Blount, 13, of Manhattan. "She was very inspirational."



Caroline Kennedy reads poetry yesterday at library in Harlem.

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