



Poetry for Dummies

The Poetry Center, John Timpane, Maureen Watts

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Sometimes it seems like there are as many definitions of poetry as there are poems. Coleridge defined poetry as "the best words in the best order." St. Augustine called it "the Devil's wine." For Shelley, poetry was "the record of the best and happiest moments of the happiest and best minds." But no matter how you define it, poetry has exercised a hold upon the hearts and minds of people for more than five millennia. That's because for the attentive reader, poetry has the power to send chills shooting down the spine and lightning bolts flashing in the brain -- to throw open the doors of perception and hone our sensibilities to a scalpel's edge. "Poetry For Dummies" is a great guide to reading and writing poems, not only for beginners, but for anyone interested in verse. From Homer to Basho, Chaucer to Rumi, Shelley to Ginsberg, it introduces you to poetry's greatest practitioners. It arms you with the tools you need to understand and appreciate poetry in all its forms, and to explore your own talent as a poet. Discover how to: Understand poetic language and formsInterpret poemsGet a handle on poetry through the agesFind poetry readings near youWrite your own poemsShop your work around to publishers

Don't know the difference between an iamb and a trochee? Worry not, this friendly guide demystifies the jargon, and it covers a lot more ground besides, including: Understanding subject, tone, narrative; and poetic languageMastering the three steps to interpretationFacing the challenges of older poetryExploring 5,000 years of verse, from Mesopotamia to the global villageWriting open-form poetryWorking with traditional forms of verseWriting exercises for aspiring poetsGetting published

From Sappho to Clark Coolidge, and just about everyone in between, "Poetry For Dummies" puts you in touch with the greats of modern and ancient poetry. Need guidance on composing a ghazal, a tanka, a sestina, or a psalm? This is the book for you.

Poetry for Dummies Details

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From Reader Review Poetry for Dummies for online ebook

Kirk Bullough says

The authors included examples of everything they wrote about. Very well put together.

Keith Addison says

Does go into the very basics of writing poetry and covers a good history of poetry as well. It has some good exercises and helps to make sense of some of the more complicated aspects of writing poetry. It is basic though and I would say it is a fairly basic level. There are better books out there in my opinion which will teach you a lot more.

Efren says

Just as I feared. Tsk tsk.

Christopher Elam says

Gotta start somewhere... Why not here?

Soul Rhallin says

This book has some great content. It is easy to read, and written with enough humor to keep a reader moving through it with a smile.

On the other hand, the table of contents and index are not accurate and can lead to frustration when one is attempting to 'cherry pick' the content for specific material.

Overall, it provides a lot of functionally useful information on poetry forms and how to create new material, which is its intended purpose.

Erik Akre says

Despite myself, and at the risk of admitting (oh no!) that I'm a real poetry "dummy", I totally loved this book! Great introduction to genres and theory, which is nice, but more than that: useful and inspirational information about starting to write your own poems. For someone already interested in poetry, but who lacks a bit of confidence about diving in, this is perfect. Go for it. It's a great gateway. It will get you started

writing.

Christopher Hurtado says

Poetry for Dummies by The Poetry Center (2001)

Amr Elnahla says

Still struggling.

Edie Kestenbaum says

Well written! A very good introduction to poetry- covers MOST of the basics. Various rules, forms, and techniques of reading, writing, and understanding are covered. So is the history of poetry. However, more writing exercises and more forms of traditional poetry need to be covered. This book doesn't explain enough the starting habits of a writer.

Alice says

I dislike the title of the book, but I must admit the content is pretty good, especially in the first half of the book. The explanations of the basic concepts in poetry are straightforward and often humorous. Worth reading even if you aren't hugely into poetry.

Robert Gluck says

Helpful.

Bob Nichols says

The book provides a good introduction to poetry – its various forms, how to read and interpret and write it. While poetry's content and form are seemingly infinite, ranging from the simple and straightforward to highly obscure language that requires background and dedication to appreciate, the common feature to all poetry is the use of language as an art form, although the authors do not state this so explicitly. Interestingly, the dictionary's definition is verse -- “a sequence of words arranged metrically in accordance with some rule or design” - - or prose “having beauty of thought or language.” By language, the authors emphasize that most poetry is meant to be read aloud. Beauty lies as much on sound as it does on meaning or form.

One of their criteria for poetry is the ability of words or sound to evoke emotion. This is more challenging

for the complex forms of poetry that require “doing legwork,” “tracking things down,” by consulting with the dictionary, history books and reference or, in the case of “The Wasteland,” the services of a good teacher. This is certainly the case with ancient and old poems or much of contemporary poetry with “modernist,” “symbolism,” or “imagism” styles that the authors reference in this book. Regarding these later day poems, the reader has to make a decision at some point whether, if a poem’s value is not immediately evident, it is worth it to spend time on it.

Loved one of the reviews of this book: "Gotta start somewhere...why not here."

Sincerae says

This is a must for anyone who is interested in poetry or who loves to write it. It presents in an easy to read and lively prose format information on the history of poetry, the technical side to poetry, and various traditional styles such as the sonnet, ghazal, and haiku. This book also explains how to read poetry aloud and how to interpret it. There is much more information about how to go about getting published in magazines and journals, reading to audiences, how to connect with other poets in the real world and online, etc.

Shari says

Despite my distaste for the title, this was an excellent book. It covered a wide range, so is appropriate for both new and advanced poets. I imagine a newer poet might wish to reread it at some point to tease out the morsels at a higher level. It even covers contemporary forms such as slam poetry, a facet often overlooked in the poetic world.

David says

A wonderful introduction for the poetry neophyte. It stresses how to read and appreciate poetry more than how to write it, although the authors make references to one's own writing throughout. This was well worth it.
