

# Getting into... Poetry

If you're an avid reader of poetry, you need no further encouragement: you know a few carefully selected words can express extraordinary and beautiful ideas. You are also likely to know that many of our most important, influential, and imaginative writings – from the earliest times through the present – are, if not poems, rather *poetic*.

If, on the other hand, you tend to *avoid* poetry, you might not realize what you are missing. Perhaps your first encounters with poetry were frustrating, a struggle to determine what a poem was saying or might have meant. Whatever your reasons for staying away, we encourage you to discover – or *rediscover* – the promise, profundity, and powers of poetry.

Why? There are *many* good reasons to read poetry. There is the sheer enjoyment of seeing words (and hearing them as you read a poem aloud) come together to create intriguing impressions, fascinating descriptions, sounds, rhythms – *music*! Poetry can be very entertaining as well! Poetry sparks imagination, dares you to see things in new light, and helps to reveal truths about ourselves and our world. One poem can mean *many* things to different persons: interpretations can make poems come alive, affect and inspire us in unexpected ways.

## Some Poetry Concepts Worth Learning...

**Formal Verse** – Poems adhering to certain rhythms, rhymes, and rules (such as a Sonnet – see below).

**Free Verse** – Poems that tend to follow no particular set of rules or rhymes. Words can be arranged any number of ways.

**Haiku** – These very short meditative poems are usually about nature, run three lines long, and can speak volumes!

**Metaphor** – Something or someone equated with something else, as in “Juliet is the sun” or “All the world’s a stage.”

**Simile** – When something or someone is likened to something else, as in “My love is like a red, red rose.”

**Sonnet** – A classic form of poetry, usually 14 lines long, with lines that rhyme in a certain pattern (a *rhyme scheme*).

**Stanza** – Groups of words or lines of text. Two, three, or four line stanzas are *couplets*, *tercets*, or *quatrains* respectively.

## Some Fairly “Easy-to-understand” Poets to Consider...

Maya Angelou  
Basho (haiku)  
Wendell Berry  
Billy Collins  
Emily Dickinson

Robert Frost  
Nikki Giovanni  
Langston Hughes  
Ted Kooser  
W. S. Merwin

Sharon Olds  
Mary Oliver  
Kay Ryan  
Gary Snyder  
William Carlos Williams

## Some Classic Poets & Poems

William Blake (*Songs of...*)  
Dante (*Divine Comedy*)  
John Donne (*Sonnets*)  
Homer (*The Iliad, The Odyssey*)  
John Keats (*Endymion*)

Omar Khayyam (*The Rubaiyat*)  
John Milton (*Paradise Lost*)  
Ovid (*Metamorphoses*)  
The Book of *Psalms*  
Rumi (mystical poems of love)

William Shakespeare (*Sonnets*)  
Lao Tzu (*Tao Te Ching*)  
Vyasa (*The Bhagavad Gita*)  
Walt Whitman (*Leaves of Grass*)  
William Wordsworth (*The Prelude*)

## Challenging & Thought-Provoking Poets to Consider...

Rae Armantrout: One of many “language poets,” she frequently weaves words in compelling and challenging ways.

John Ashbery: Many of his poems can resist a reader’s expectations, confound literary critics, and defy definition.

Geoffrey Chaucer: His *Canterbury Tales* can be difficult in its original Middle English. Modern renditions can be helpful.

Hart Crane: His poem *The Bridge*, inspired partly by the Brooklyn Bridge, uses myth and metaphor to explore American life.

E. E. Cummings: Many of his *verbally* and *visually* acrobatic poems are simply amazing – often a joy to see *and* to read!

T. S. Eliot: *The Waste Land* is one of the most difficult and popular poems. Also try his more meditative *Four Quartets*.

Pablo Neruda: Nobel Prize for Literature winner (1971). Translations of his impassioned sonnets and other poems exist.

Ezra Pound: His epic (yet unfinished) *Cantos* contain passages written in various languages, including Chinese.

Louis Zukofsky: His poem *A* is one of the longest and challenging-to-read poems ever written – over 800 pages!

(continued)

## Popular Poetry Anthologies & Periodicals for Further Reading

*Best American Poetry* (anthology published annually)

*The Norton Anthology of Poetry* (a standard poetry collection used in many colleges)

*Paris Review* (published quarterly)

*Poetry* (magazine published monthly)

*Poetry 180: A Turning Back to Poetry* - Billy Collins (poetry anthology edited by a U.S. Poet Laureate, 2001-2003)

## Some Poetry Reading Tips...

Try *not* to rush it: **experience every single word** when reading a poem.

Enjoy the act of reading.

Try approaching a poem like a **gourmet dish** whose ingredients were meant to be tasted and savored fully.

Consider **reading a poem aloud** to hear the **sounds** and **rhythms** of its words.

Try to notice if the poem **rhymes** –if it has a “rhyme scheme” (a regular pattern of rhyming).

Try to **pay close attention to phrases** used throughout in a poem. Do any of them **repeat**?

Are the poem’s lines **arranged in groups** of two or three or more? Are they evenly grouped or irregular?

Are there any obvious **comparisons** between two or more things (what we would call similes)?

Are there **metaphors** – dissimilar things compared without the words “like” or “as,” as in these two examples from William Shakespeare: “the world is a stage” and “Juliet is the sun” (note the word “is”)

Keep in mind any “**I**” in the poem can be a **character** (a “speaker”) and *not* the poet.

What is the overall **emotional tone** of the poem? Joyful, sorrowful, angry, pensive, unsure, inspired?

What do you think the poem **means**? How does it make you **feel**? What do you **see**?

Try **rereading** a poem and see if you notice anything new or feel differently toward it.

See if you can **memorize** one or more lines of poetry. It can be challenging but fun to quote later on!

Explore **different poets from different times, places, and cultures** to enrich your reading experiences, broaden your perspectives on life, and to increase your understanding and appreciation of the world around you.

## Some Books to Help You Get More out of Poetry

*The Art of Reading Poetry* - Harold Bloom

*How to Read a Poem and Fall in Love with Poetry* - Edward Hirsch

*The Discovery of Poetry: A Field Guide to Reading and Writing Poems* - Frances Mayes

*The Making of a Poem: A Norton Anthology of Poetic Forms* - Mark Strand and Eavan Boland

*The Sounds of Poetry: A Brief Guide* – Robert Pinsky

## Going Beyond Poetry Reading: Learning to Write Poetry

*The Ode Less Travelled: Unlocking the Poet Within* – Stephen Fry

*The Poetry Home Repair Manual: Practical Advice for Beginning Poets* - Ted Kooser

*A Poetry Handbook* – Mary Oliver

*Rules for the Dance: A Handbook for Writing and Reading Metrical Verse* - Mary Oliver

*The Book of Forms: A Handbook of Poetics, Including Odd and Invented Forms* - Lewis Turco

*Poemcrazy: Freeing Your Life with Words* - Susan G. Wooldridge

## For More Information on Poetry in and Beyond Middletown Thrall Library...

Please be sure to check out our online **poetry catalog**, our **directory of poetry websites**, our **literature and poetry criticism/analysis databases**, **poetry eBooks**, and **downloadable / printable guide** (“Looking for... Poetry”) full of reading suggestions and names of classic and contemporary poets you might enjoy.

All you need to do is visit our home page ([www.thrall.org](http://www.thrall.org)) and click the “**poetry**” link (on the **Literature** line in the center column). You can also go directly to [www.thrall.org/poetry](http://www.thrall.org/poetry) to access all of the above resources!

*Middletown Thrall Library invites you to wonder....*

# Why *Like* Poetry?

There are *many reasons* to enjoy reading *or* writing poetry! Here are a few:

## Poems can...

- ...be *unlike anything* you ever read!
- ...show you the *power of words*!
- ...tell really *interesting* stories!
- ...remind you *words really matter*!
- ...be *fun* to read aloud!
- ...help you *appreciate things more*.
- ...often be read in just *minutes*.
- ...help you *use words in new ways*!
- ...be *silly* or *serious* or *strange*.
- ...help you *see how things relate*.
- ...have *rhythms* and be *musical*!
- ...make you *think more deeply*.
- ...be *free from all rules of writing*.
- ...take you to *new places*!
- ...help you *discover possibilities*.
- ...inspire you to *imagine and invent*.
- ...be a nice challenge to *memorize*!
- ...inspire you to be more *creative*!
- ...teach you *new words*.
- ...show you things *not seen at first*.
- ...let you *express yourself*.
- ...give you *fresh perspectives*.
- ...challenge you to *think differently*.
- ...help you to share your *feelings*.
- ...help you to *listen more carefully*.
- ...help you to *understand others*.
- ...show you the *beauty of words*.
- ...teach you things about the world!
- ...mean *different things* to anyone.
- ...help you to *learn about yourself*!

# Poetry: Patterns & Parts

We'll start with the *obvious*: the **title of a poem**. Many titles can help us **understand the topic or feeling(s)** to be expressed in a poem. Some titles can have **multiple meanings** or be **ironic** (saying *one thing* but meaning something *entirely different*). Many poems have *no titles*!

If **two or more lines repeat** at the beginning, that is called **anaphora**. Words *and* sounds can repeat through a poem.

Notice how each poem's **words** are often **arranged in lines**, and how those lines can be grouped together. Each group of lines is called a **stanza**.

A two-line stanza is often called a couplet. A 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, or 8-line stanza is respectively called a **tercet**, **quatrain**, **quintet** (or **cinquain** or **quintain**), **sestet**, **septet**, or **octet**.

Many poems have **regular rhythms** (known as **meter**) and **rhyme** at regular points *within each stanza* – a **rhyme scheme**. Many poets do *not* use meter or rhyme.

Poems often have **imagery** – *verbal pictures*, like the **forest** and the **roads** in this poem. Such images can be **symbols** (*symbolic*) or **metaphors** (*metaphorical*), representing and saying *more than what they might seem to suggest* at first.

## The Road Not Taken

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,  
**And** sorry I could not travel both  
**And** be one traveler, long I stood  
**And** looked down one as far as I could  
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair,  
And having perhaps the better claim,  
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;  
Though as for that the passing there  
Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay  
In leaves no step had trodden black.  
Oh, I kept the first for another day!  
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,  
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh  
Somewhere ages and ages hence:  
**Two roads diverged in a wood, and I –**  
I took the one less traveled by,  
And that has made all the difference.

*poem by Robert Frost*

When, in disgrace with fortune and men's **eyes**,  
I all alone beweep my outcast **state**  
And trouble deaf heaven with my bootless **cries**  
And look upon myself and curse my **fate**,  
Wishing me like to one more rich in **hope**,  
Featured like him, like him with friends **possess'd**,  
Desiring this man's art and that man's **scope**,  
With what I most enjoy contented **least**;  
Yet in these thoughts myself almost **despising**,  
Haply I think on thee, and then my **state**,  
Like to the lark at break of day **arising**  
From sullen earth, sings hymns at heaven's **gate**;  
For thy sweet love remember'd such wealth **brings**  
That then I scorn to change my state with **kings**.

*Sonnet 29 by William Shakespeare*

This kind of poem is called a **sonnet**, one of the most popular **poetic forms** over the *last few centuries*!

Sonnets often have **14 lines** written in **iambic pentameter** (5 *unstressed* / *stressed* syllables a line).

**Rhyming** in this poem happens nearly *every other line* (see the **words in bold**). The **rhyme scheme** for this poem can be written as **ABAB CDCD EFEF GG**.

The **last two rhyming lines** in this kind of sonnet are known as a "**heroic couplet**."

This is **haiku**, one of the *oldest yet most popular* poetic forms from Japan. Haiku are brief yet *very meaningful*!

Haiku poems traditionally have **3 lines** (5, 7, and 5 **syllables** respectively per line). Haiku are often about **nature** and can contain a **kigo** (words depicting a **season**, like summer).

An old silent pond...  
A frog jumps into the pond,  
*splash!* Silence again.

*haiku by Matsuo Basho*





# Meet the Poets!



*A Selection of Famous Poets & Poetry to Explore...*



## Maya Angelou

(1929 - 2014) African-American poet / writer / essayist / dramatist / civil rights activist. Often an inspirational poet/writer.

Poetry Collections:

***The Complete Collected Poems***  
***Phenomenal Woman: Four Poems Celebrating Women***



Popular Poems:

**Caged Bird**  
**On the Pulse of Morning**  
**Still I Rise**  
**Touched by an Angel**

See also her **autobiographies**, including:  
***I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings***



## Matsuo Basho

(1644 - 1694) Japanese poet. Among the greatest / most influential haiku poets. He also wrote in other poetic forms.

Poetry Collections:

***Basho: The Complete Haiku***  
***The Essential Haiku: Versions...***



Popular poems:

**Don't Imitate Me**  
**Even in Kyoto**  
**The Old Pond** (his famous "frog poem")

See also his famous **travel diary** written in the "haibun" form (prose + haiku):  
***The Narrow Road to the North***

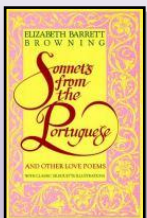


## Elizabeth Barrett Browning

(1806-1861) English (Victorian) poet / translator / scholar (able to read Greek, Latin, Hebrew). Wife of poet **Robert Browning**.

Poetry Collections:

***Complete Collected Poems***  
**\* *Sonnets from the Portuguese***



Popular poems:

***Aurora Leigh*** (a novel in verse)  
**The Cry of the Children**  
**A Musical Instrument**  
**\* Sonnet 43** ("How Do I Love Thee?")

Also explore her / Robert's **letters** (online at: [www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/author/781](http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/author/781))

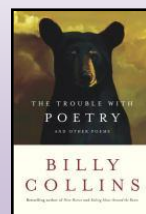


## Billy Collins

(1941-) American poet. U.S. Poet Laureate (2001-2003) and NYS Laureate (2004-2006). Easy to read, also fun, profound, moving.

Poetry Collections:

***Aimless Love***  
***Sailing Alone Around the Room***  
***The Trouble with Poetry***



Popular poems:

**Forgetfulness**  
**Introduction to Poetry**  
**Today**

See also his "poem-a-day" anthology:  
***Poetry 180: A Turning Back to poetry***

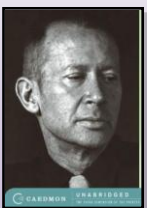


## E. E. Cummings

(1894-1962) American poet / dramatist / artist. Famous for inventive placement and use of words / punctuation in poems.

Poetry Collections:

***Complete Poems***  
***Essential E. E. Cummings*** (audio CD)



Famous poems:

**anyone lived in a pretty how town**  
**somewhere i have never travelled**  
**spring is like a perhaps hand**

See also his autobiographical work:  
***The Enormous Room***

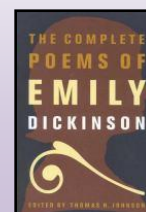


## Emily Dickinson

(1830-1886). American poet celebrated today for her many brief and witty poems. While reclusive in later years, her letters reveal a lively and fascinating personality.

Poetry Collection:

***Complete Poems***



Famous poems:

**After Great Pain, A Formal Feeling Comes**  
**I'm Nobody! Who Are You?**  
**Hope Is the Thing with Feathers**  
**The Poets Light But Lamps**

Also explore her various collections of **letters**.

*continued...*



## T. S. Eliot

(1888 - 1965). American/British poet / critic / dramatist / essayist. One of the most influential poets / critics of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

Poetry collections:

**Collected Poems (1909 – 1962)**  
**Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats**

Famous poems:

**Four Quartets**  
**The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock**  
**The Waste Land**

Also explore his **essay** collections: **The Sacred Wood**, **The Use of Poetry...**



## Robert Frost

(1874 - 1963). American poet. Popular for using plain diction, nature/rural themes, and realism. Won the **Pulitzer Prize** *four times*.

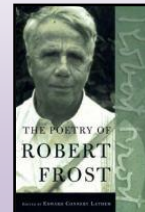
Poetry Collection:

**The Poetry of Robert Frost**

Famous poems:

**Acquainted with the Night**  
**Fire and Ice**  
**Mending Wall**  
**The Road Not Taken**  
**Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening**

Also explore his **plays** and **letters**.



## Langston Hughes

(1902 - 1967). African-American poet. One of the most influential writers in the **Harlem Renaissance** literary period.

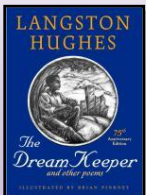
Poetry collection:

**Collected Poems of Langston Hughes**

Famous poems:

**Democracy**  
**Dreams**  
**Harlem** (his famous "dream deferred" poem)  
**I Too Sing America**

Also explore his **plays**, **essays**, **novels**, **short stories**, and **children's books**.



## Edna St. Vincent Millay

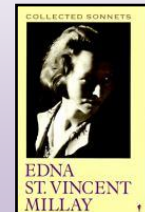
(1892 - 1940). American poet / dramatist. Won the **Pulitzer Prize** for her poetry.

Poetry collections:

**Collected Sonnets**  
**Renascence, and Other Poems**

Famous poems:

**Apostrophe to Man**  
**Conscientious Objector**  
**Dirge Without Music**  
**Love Is Not All**  
**Renascence**  
**The Spring and the Fall**



## Pablo Neruda

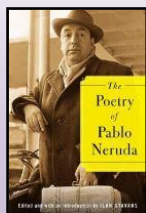
(1904 - 1973) Chilean poet. Winner of the **Nobel Prize for Literature**. Neruda wrote mostly in Spanish, but many translations of his numerous poetry collections exist.

Poetry collections / translations:

**The Essential Neruda** - includes:  
**Veinte poemas de amor y una canción desesperada** (Twenty Love Poems and a Song of Despair)

**Odas elementales** (Elemental Odes)

**The Poetry of Pablo Neruda** - includes:  
**Cien sonetos de amor** (100 Love Sonnets)



## Rumi (Jalal al-Din Rumi)

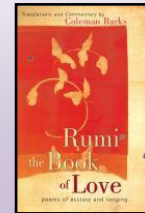
(1207-1273) Persian poet and mystic. One of the oldest and popular poets in the world (for the *past* several centuries), Rumi is celebrated for his ecstatic verses meditating on **life**, **love**, **joy**, and more. His poetry has been translated into English.

Poetry collections / translations:

**The Essential Rumi**

**The Illuminated Rumi**

**Rumi: The Book of Love – Poems of Ecstasy and Longing**



## William Shakespeare

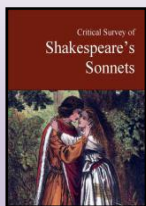
(1564 - 1616) English dramatist / poet. He wrote plays mostly in "**blank verse**" (unrhymed lines with five beats) and some of the most beautiful **sonnets** of all time.

Famous poems:

**Sonnets** (He wrote over 150 sonnets!)  
**Venus and Adonis**

See also his **plays**: **Hamlet**, **King Lear**, **Macbeth**, **A Midsummer Night's Dream**, **Othello**, **Romeo and Juliet**, **The Tempest...**

Also explore **video or audio performances** as well as **criticism** of his **plays** and **poems**.



## Walt Whitman

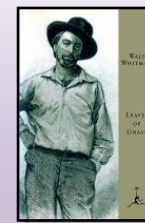
(1819 - 1892). American poet. Lyrical to epic and beyond, Whitman's verse changed poetry forever, ushering in new era of truly liberated, inspired, and *inspiring* expression.

Poetry collections:

**Complete Poems**  
**Leaves of Grass**

Famous poems:

**O Captain! My Captain!**  
**Song of Myself**  
**Song of the Open Road**  
**When I Heard the Learned Astronomer**



For more poets and poetic possibilities to explore, please visit our **Reference Department** or see these websites:

[www.thrall.org/poetry](http://www.thrall.org/poetry)

[www.thrall.org/literature](http://www.thrall.org/literature)

[www.thrall.org/litcrit](http://www.thrall.org/litcrit)

# Looking for: *Poetry*

Looking for poets or poetry books? Here are some library “call numbers” and topics to get you started!

<b>American Poetry</b>	<b>811</b>	<b>French Poetry</b>	<b>841</b>	<b>Italian Poetry</b>	<b>851</b>
<b>Chinese Poetry</b>	<b>895.11</b>	<b>Greek Poetry</b>	<b>881</b>	<b>Poetry Collections</b>	<b>808.81</b>
<b>English Poetry</b>	<b>812</b>	<b>Haiku</b>	<b>895.61</b>	<b>Spanish Poetry</b>	<b>861</b>

## Select Poets

(best used with **Author** searches in the **library catalog**)

<i>Alexander, Elizabeth</i>	<i>cummings, e. e.</i>	<i>Lowell, Robert</i>	<i>Rimbaud, Arthur</i>
<i>Angelou, Maya</i>	<i>Dickinson, Emily</i>	<i>Lorca, Federico Garcia</i>	<i>Roethke, Theodore</i>
<i>Ashbery, John</i>	<i>Donne, John</i>	<i>Mallarme, Stephane</i>	<i>Rumi</i>
<i>Atwood, Margaret</i>	<i>Doty, Mark</i>	<i>Marlowe, Christopher</i>	<i>Ryan, Kay</i>
<i>Auden, W. H.</i>	<i>Dove, Rita</i>	<i>Marvell, Andrew</i>	<i>Sandburg, Carl</i>
<i>Basho</i>	<i>Ferlinghetti, Lawrence</i>	<i>Masters, Edgar Lee</i>	<i>Sappho</i>
<i>Baudelaire, Charles</i>	<i>Frost, Robert</i>	<i>Merrill, James</i>	<i>Schuyler, James</i>
<i>Benet, Stephen Vincent</i>	<i>Ginsberg, Allen</i>	<i>Merwin, W. S.</i>	<i>Sexton, Anne</i>
<i>Berryman, John</i>	<i>Giovanni, Nikki</i>	<i>Milosz, Czeslaw</i>	<i>Shakespeare, William</i>
<i>Bishop, Elizabeth</i>	<i>Gluck, Louise</i>	<i>Milton, John</i>	<i>Simic, Charles</i>
<i>Bly, Robert</i>	<i>Graham, Jorie</i>	<i>Moore, Marianne</i>	<i>Soto, Gary</i>
<i>Bradstreet, Anne</i>	<i>Hall, Donald</i>	<i>Nye, Naomi Shihab</i>	<i>Spenser, Edmund</i>
<i>Brooks, Gwendolyn</i>	<i>Hass, Robert</i>	<i>Ogden, Nash</i>	<i>Stein, Gertrude</i>
<i>Browning, Elizabeth Barrett</i>	<i>Heaney, Seamus</i>	<i>Olds, Sharon</i>	<i>Stevens, Wallace</i>
<i>Brodsky, Joseph</i>	<i>Hirsch, Edward</i>	<i>Nemerov, Howard</i>	<i>Strand, Mark</i>
<i>Browning, Robert</i>	<i>Hughes, Langston</i>	<i>Neruda, Pablo</i>	<i>Teasdale, Sara</i>
<i>Bukowski, Charles</i>	<i>Hughes, Ted</i>	<i>O'Hara, Frank</i>	<i>Tennyson, Alfred</i>
<i>Burns, Robert</i>	<i>Jarrell, Randall</i>	<i>Oliver, Mary</i>	<i>Thomas, Dylan</i>
<i>Byron, George Gordon</i>	<i>Keats, John</i>	<i>Ovid</i>	<i>Walker, Alice</i>
<i>Carson, Anne</i>	<i>Kerouac, Jack</i>	<i>Pastan, Linda</i>	<i>Walcott, Derek</i>
<i>Chaucer, Geoffrey</i>	<i>Kinnell, Galway</i>	<i>Paz, Octavio</i>	<i>Wilbur, Richard</i>
<i>Collins, Billy</i>	<i>Koch, Kenneth</i>	<i>Pinsky, Robert</i>	<i>Williams, C. K.</i>
<i>Coleridge, Samuel Taylor</i>	<i>Kooser, Ted</i>	<i>Plath, Sylvia</i>	<i>Williams, William Carlos</i>
<i>Crane, Hart</i>	<i>Kumin, Maxine</i>	<i>Poe, Edgar Allan</i>	<i>Whitman, Walt</i>
<i>Creeley, Robert</i>	<i>Larkin, Philip</i>	<i>Pound, Ezra</i>	<i>Wordsworth, William</i>
<i>Doolittle, Hilda (H.D.)</i>	<i>Levertov, Denise</i>	<i>Pushkin, Aleksandr</i>	<i>Yeats, W. B.</i>
<i>Dunn, Stephen</i>	<i>Levine, Philip</i>	<i>Rexroth, Kenneth</i>	<i>Zukofsky, Louis</i>
	<i>Lorca, Federico Garcia</i>	<i>Rich, Adrienne</i>	
	<i>Lowell, Amy</i>	<i>Rilke, Rainer Maria</i>	

## Some Library Catalog Keyword Searches to Consider...

African American Poetry	French Poetry	Modern Poetry	Poetry Slam
American Poets	Gardening Poetry	Nature Poetry	Poets - Biography
Beat Generation Poetry	Haiku	Nursery Rhymes	Poets Laureate
Best-loved Poems	Humorous Poetry	Poetry Collections	Religious Poetry
Children's Poetry	Irish Poetry	Poetry - Audiobooks	Rhyming Dictionary
Chinese Poetry	Italian Poetry	Poetry - Authorship	Sonnets
Contemporary Poetry	Latin American Poetry	Poetry – History & Criticism	Women Poets
English Poets	Love Poetry	Poetry - Publishing	Zen Poetry

You can explore any (or all!) of these subjects through Middletown Thrall Library's **Literature Guide** ([www.thrall.org/literature](http://www.thrall.org/literature)). Once there, just click on “**Poetry in the Library Catalog**” and select a title, name, or topic.

Some titles follow on the next page. For more help or suggestions, please speak our Reference Department librarians.

## ***Some Titles to Consider...***

### **Classic Poems, Epic & Narrative Poetry**

<i>The Aeneid</i> – Vergil	<i>Leaves of Grass</i> – Walt Whitman
<i>Aurora Leigh</i> – Elizabeth Barrett Browning	<i>The Metamorphoses</i> – Ovid
<i>Beowulf</i>	<i>The Odyssey</i> – Homer
<i>The Bridge</i> – Hart Crane	<i>Paradise Lost</i> – John Milton
<i>The Canterbury Tales</i> – Geoffrey Chaucer	<i>Paradise Regained</i> – John Milton
<i>The Cantos</i> – Ezra Pound	<i>The Prelude</i> – William Wordsworth
<i>The Divine Comedy</i> – Dante	<i>Rime of the Ancient Mariner</i> – Samuel Taylor Coleridge
<i>Don Juan</i> – Lord Byron	<i>Song of Myself</i> – Walt Whitman
<i>Les Fleurs du Mal</i> – Charles Baudelaire	<i>Sonnets</i> – William Shakespeare
<i>Four Quartets</i> – T. S. Eliot	<i>Sonnets from the Portuguese</i> – Elizabeth Barrett Browning
<i>Hero and Leander</i> – Christopher Marlowe	<i>Songs of Experience</i> – William Blake
<i>Howl</i> – Allen Ginsberg	<i>Songs of Innocence</i> – William Blake
<i>The Iliad</i> – Homer	<i>Spoon River Anthology</i> – Edgar Lee Masters
<i>Kubla Khan</i> – Samuel Taylor Coleridge	<i>The Wasteland</i> – T. S. Eliot

### **Poetry Collections**

*The 100 Best African American Poems* – edited by Nikki Giovanni  
*American Hybrid: A Norton Anthology of New Poetry* – edited by David St. John  
*Americans' Favorite Poems* – edited by Robert Pinsky, Maggie Dietz  
*Basho: The Complete Haiku* by Matsuo Basho  
*Best American Poetry* [by year] – various editors  
*The Best Poems of the English Language: From Chaucer through Robert Frost* – edited by Harold Bloom  
*A Book of Luminous Things: An International Anthology of Poetry* – Czeslaw Milosz  
*The Collected Poems* by Sylvia Plath  
*The Complete Collected Poems of Maya Angelou* – Maya Angelou  
*The Ecco Anthology of International Poetry* – edited by Ilya Kaminsky  
*Essential Pleasures: A New Anthology of Poems to Read Aloud* – edited by Robert Pinsky  
*The FSG Book of Twentieth-Century Latin American Poetry: An Anthology* – edited by Ilan Stavans  
*Good Poems* – edited by Garrison Keillor  
*New and Selected Poems* (Volume One and Two) by Mary Oliver  
*The Norton Anthology of Poetry* – edited by Margaret Ferguson, Jon Stallworthy and Mary Jo Salter  
*The Oxford Book of American Poetry* – edited by David Lehman and John Brehm  
*The Oxford Book of English Verse* – edited by Christopher Ricks  
*Poetry 180: A Turning Back to Poetry* – Billy Collins  
*The Poetry of Pablo Neruda* by Pablo Neruda  
*The Poets Laureate Anthology* – edited by Billy Collins  
*The Enlightened Heart: An Anthology of Sacred Poetry* – edited by Stephen Mitchell.  
*Sailing Alone Around the Room: New and Selected Poems* by Billy Collins  
*She Walks in Beauty: A Woman's Journey Through Poems* – Caroline Kennedy  
*Till I End My Song: A Gathering of Last Poems* – edited by Harold Bloom  
*The Vintage Book of Contemporary American Poetry* – edited by J.D. McClatchy

### **Learning about Poetry**

*Fooling with Words: A Celebration of Poets and Their Craft* – Bill Moyers  
*How to Read a Poem: And Fall in Love with Poetry* – Robert Hirsch  
*The Making of a Poem: A Norton Anthology of Poetic Forms* – Mark Strand, Eavan Boland  
*The Ode Less Travelled: Unlocking the Poet Within* – Stephen Fry  
*A Poetry Handbook* – Mary Oliver  
*The Sounds of Poetry: A Brief Guide* – Robert Pinsky



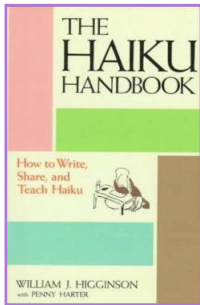
Middletown Thrall Library Presents

# Becoming a Poet

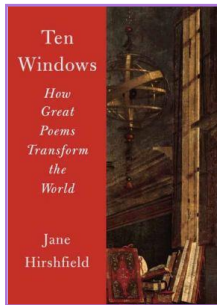
*Ever wanted to write a poem but didn't know where to start?*

*It's easier than you think! Here are some suggestions to help you begin:*

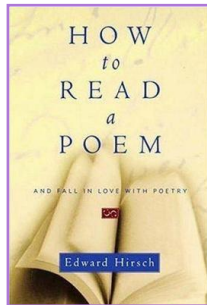
**Books You Can Borrow** *within the Library System...*



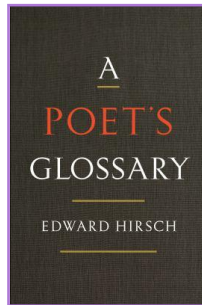
**The Haiku Handbook**  
- William J. Higginson



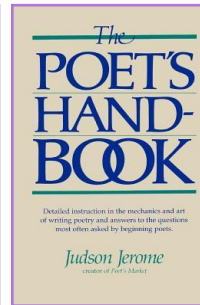
**Ten Windows: How Great Poems Transform the World**  
- Jane Hirshfield



**How to Read a Poem**  
- Edward Hirsch



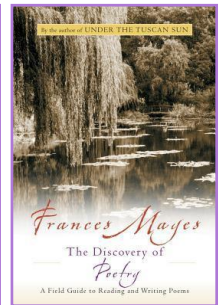
**A Poet's Glossary**  
- Edward Hirsch



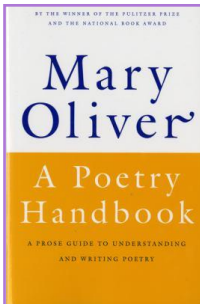
**The Poet's Handbook**  
- Judson Jerome



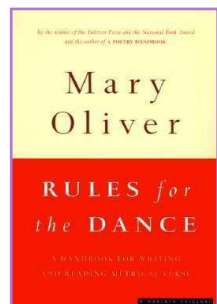
**The Poetry Home Repair Manual**  
- Ted Kooser



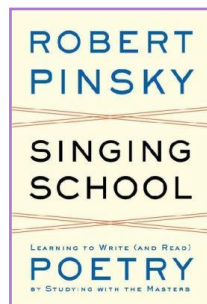
**The Discovery of Poetry**  
- Frances Mayes



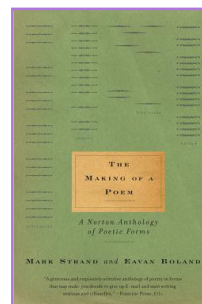
**A Poetry Handbook**  
- Mary Oliver



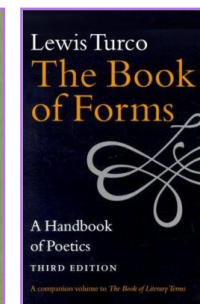
**Rules for the Dance**  
- Mary Oliver



**Singing School**  
- Robert Pinsky



**The Making of a Poem**  
- Mark Strand, Eavan Boland



**The Book of Forms**  
- Lewis Turco

Even more books exist under these subjects in the library catalog:

- Creative Writing
- Poetics
- Poetry – Authorship
- Versification

*Need some help with rhyming?*  
**Rhyming dictionaries** also exist!

You can always ask a librarian about any of these topics!

**Some Websites You Can Visit** *to Learn More about Poetry...*

- The Academy of American Poets: [www.poets.org](http://www.poets.org)
- The Poetry Foundation: [www.poetryfoundation.org](http://www.poetryfoundation.org)
- Poetry Resources Online: [www.thrall.org/poetry](http://www.thrall.org/poetry)

**Some Helpful Tips** *for Your Consideration...*

- **Learning to write poetry** can be fun, educational, even therapeutic and inspiring!
- Poetry can help us **explore, express, and understand the world** (and even ourselves) in **new ways**!
- A **librarian** can help you locate **poetry collections** (also known as **poetry anthologies**), and these can enable you to learn more about **popular and classic poems** as well as to help you gain a better sense of **what kinds of poetic styles and topics you might like to explore in your own poetry**.
- Always be **ready to write**. Keep some paper and a pen or pencil handy so, when **inspiration** strikes, you're prepared! When it does, quickly write whatever thoughts come to mind. You can always **revise** later.
- If you have a **computer, laptop, tablet, or smartphone**, you might be able to download **software** or "**app**" which can let you **type or record your ideas and observations** as they occur to you.
- Learning **basic poetry concepts** can help you understand **how poems work** and what makes "good poem."
- You can download our **free poetry guides** at [www.thrall.org/poetry](http://www.thrall.org/poetry) and begin to see how various **poetic techniques** can **transform ordinary words into moving and memorable passages**.
- For **more possibilities**, we invite you to visit our **National Poetry Month** website: [www.thrall.org/npm](http://www.thrall.org/npm)

# Poetry Words Worth Learning

**Alliteration, Assonance, Consonance:** Similar sounds repeated, as in *little lights* (**alliteration** of the letter “L”), *dreams seem real* (**assonance** of vowel “E”), and *thunder drums in the distance* (**consonance** of consonant “D”).

**Allusion:** A direct or indirect **reference** to something else, such as a literary work, character, or event. A literary work can “allude” (*mention* or *refer*) to one or more other works, characters, historic persons, myths, and so on.

**Apostrophe:** When the **speaker of a poem** talks to *someone* or *something* imagined or *no longer around*.

**Concrete Poetry:** When words are arranged in the *shape of the subject* the poem is about (e.g. a *heart* for *love*).

**Connotation / Denotation:** Words can *imply* or *suggest* (*connote*; be *connotative*) or *speak clearly, directly*, and *mean just what they say* (*denote*; be *denotative*).

**Couplet:** Two lines of verse (poetry). Couplets can often *end in the same sound* (**rhyme** – see below).

**Epic:** A long poem often about a hero's adventure. *The Iliad*, *The Odyssey*, and *The Aeneid* are all **epic poems**.

**Foot:** A unit of measurement used along with **meter** (see below) to describe the regular pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables in a poem's lines. Such “feet” include the **iamb** (as in *iambic pentameter*; unstressed followed by a stressed syllable), the **trochee** (as in *trochaic tetrameter*; stressed followed by an unstressed syllable), the **anapest** (two unstressed syllables followed a stressed syllable), the **dactyl** (a stressed syllable followed by two unstressed syllables), the **spondee** (two stressed syllables in succession), and the **pyrrhic** (two unstressed syllables in succession).

**Form:** Poems written in a **poetic form** (also known as **formal verse**) generally adhere to the **structure and rules** of that form. Many different forms of poetry exist. Popular poetic forms include **haiku** and **sonnets** (see below).

**Free Verse:** Poetry without regular rhythms (**meter** – see below) or **rhyme scheme** (see below). AKA **vers libre**.

**Haiku:** Classic **Japanese poem**, often about **nature** and arranged in **three lines** (5, 7, 5 syllables respectively).

**Imagery:** Vivid verbal pictures of persons or things (e.g. *frog* and *calm pond* in *a frog leaps into the calm pond*). Just like painters, poets can “paint” with words in various styles and artistically express things creatively.

**Interpretation:** Interpretation is **what you believe a poem means**. Each person interprets things uniquely due to her or his experiences in life, ideas, expectations, beliefs, and so on. This means each poem can be interpreted *any number of ways* by people. One poem can, in fact, mean *many things*! This is one of the most important and rewarding concepts of poetry! Also, your interpretations can *change* when you reread poems later.

**Metaphor:** When something is **described** as (or figuratively **equated** with) something *else*: *The world is a stage*.

**Meter:** A measurement of regularly stressed and unstressed accented syllables in lines of poetry. Some poems (such as **Sonnets** – see below) are fairly *metrical*. Some popular meters are trimeter (three stressed syllables a line), tetrameter (four), and pentameter (five). Many sonnets have iambic pentameter.

**Onomatopoeia:** “Onomatopoeic” words **sound like** what they *mean*: *buzz*, *click*, *fizz*, *hum*, *pop*, *splash*, *whoosh*!

**Poetic License:** Freedom to express regardless of rules, logic, expectations, etc. Also known as *artistic license*.

**Rhyme Scheme:** The pattern of **rhyming words** (words ending with similar sounds) within a poem. Many contemporary poems (especially those written in **free verse** – see above) do *not* have a rhyme scheme.

**Rhythm:** The general rise and fall of stressed / unstressed syllables (stressed word parts) in a poem. Most classic poetry and poems written in **forms** using **meter** (see above). **Free verse** (see above) usually has *irregular rhythms*.

**Simile:** When something is compared with something else: *as bright as the sun* or *like as two peas in a pod*.

**Sonnet:** A classic poetic **form** (see above) traditionally **14 lines** long. Different kinds of sonnets exist: Petrarchan, Shakespearean, each with their own **rhyme scheme** (see above). Some poets who wrote in this form include Elizabeth Barrett Browning, John Donne, Petrarch, and William Shakespeare, who wrote over 150 sonnets.

**Speaker of a Poem:** The **person** (represented by the letter “I”) narrating the poem. That person could be a **fictitious character** or the *poet* speaking. It is usually best *never to assume the speaker is the poet*.

**Stanza:** A **group of lines** in a poem. A two-line stanza is often called a couplet. A **3, 4, 5, 6, 7, or 8-line stanza** is respectively called a **tercet**, **quatrain**, **quintet** (or *cinquain* or *quintain*), **sestet**, **septet**, or **octet**.