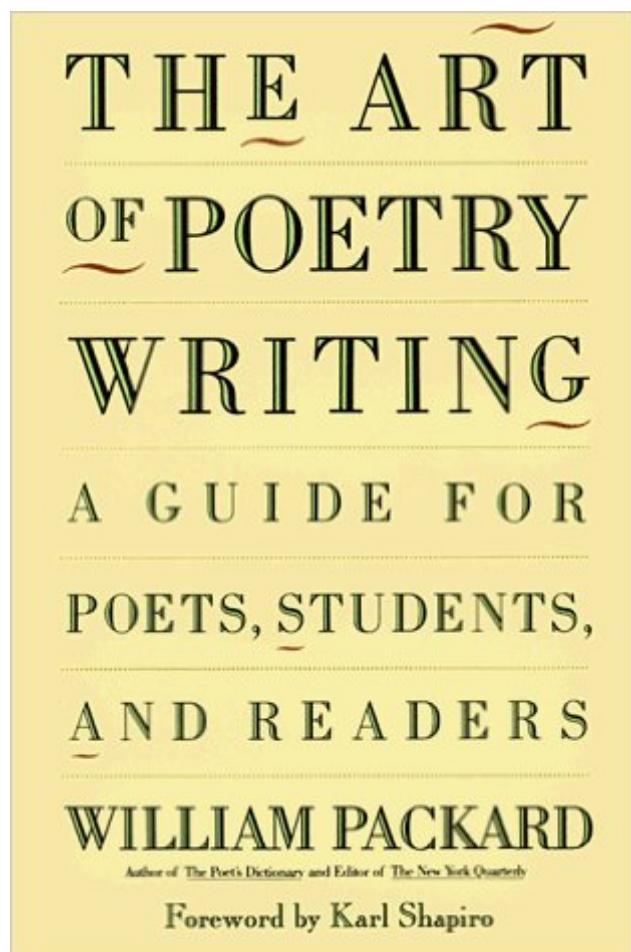


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# The Art Of Poetry Writing: A Guide For Poets, Students, & Readers



## Synopsis

Poet, novelist, scholar, translator, playwright, and teacher, William Packard has known every side of a writer's life. As founder and editor of *The New York Quarterly*, a national magazine devoted to the craft of poetry, he reads some 50,000 poems each year-most of them sadly deficient in sound, metrics, form, voice, and quality. This book is written to help poets address the central concerns of their craft and art. Lively, inspiring, opinionated, and sometimes curmudgeonly, *The Art of Poetry Writing* covers a broad range of topics, both technical and personal, that all poets need to consider:-Poetic devices and diction-Verse forms and free verse-Rhyme and metrics-Creative vision and revision-The benefits and problems of workshops and writing classes-30 writing challenges to develop form and style and technique-When to seek publication-and when not to-What to read while writing-The life of the poet, including keeping a journal, giving readings, applying for grants, and more. Remarks by and excerpts from the work of Coleridge, Wordsworth, Keats, Dickinson, Yeats, Auden, Stevens, Moore, Thomas, Ginsberg, Sexton, Plath, Dickey, Bukowski, Ashbery, and dozens of other poets make this an essential companion for students, teachers and anyone who writes or reads poetry.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I found that this book had little to say to the 'soul' of the poet but a tremendous amount to say about the craft. I first picked this book up several years ago, and since then the chapter on 'Verse Forms' is something that has stayed with me -- whenever I wonder just what a 'sestina' or a 'villanelle' is I

pick up this book. I have also found the example poems Packard uses to be unusual and therefore interesting and occasionally inspiring. It is a reference and it's not a 'feel-good' book, but it's one I value on my shelves, and which I've given to other people who want a little more discipline in their poems than free verse provides.

This book was everything I could have wanted; it is comprehensive in its listing of genres, forms, poetry devices and history, and has some good psychological pointers about the writer's life and the need to allow yourself solitude and time away from workshop madness. Its lists of books to read while writing, before writing and just plain writing literacy are superb, and its "writing challenges" (exercises for writing poems when you're stumped) are super. I'm working my way through them, day by day.

On the dust jacket of this book, the word "curmudgeonly" is used. Don't bother to look it up, just read on and you'll get the idea. He begins with an overview of the history of poetry - very interesting and very informative - and then moves on to discuss the pros and cons of various schools of thought. Again, interesting and informative. He is however, quite merciless in his criticism of the things he dislikes - his section on Poetry Workshops is a good example. Unfortunately, you get the impression that he doesn't have much time for us ordinary human beings who find writing poetry a satisfying experience without actually aspiring to the Pulitzer Prize. And while it is true that he addresses issues like 'when to seek publication', 'how to apply for grants' etc etc, he doesn't actually give you much information! A good book as an overview of the history and purpose of poetry, with some excellent exercises ("triggers"). Not however a book for someone starting out in poetry, or for anyone who has even the slightest doubt about their own abilities as a poet.

This book is a clear, concise guide to writing and reading poetry, starting with a brief introduction of the history of poetry. The author provides explanations of devices, examples of verse forms, and writing prompts.

Like most poets I own many books about the writing process. Why buy another one? This book was recommended to me by the New York Quarterly. When it arrived, I read it at once. And then I read it again...and again. I love this book! It is a summary of everything a writer needs to know about poetry and the poetic process. What impressed me most is that, rather than reading a book, I felt as though I were having a conversation with the author, William Packard. A bonus is that the book

contains a chapter of excellent poetry prompts! I plan to use this book when I give presentations on poetry. All right, so I won't keep it under my pillow. But close by. It's a keeper.

Auden recounts a tale of two teachers walking through a wood in the spring. The first quotes Wordsworth: O cuckoo shall I call thee bird or but a wandering voice. The second adds: State the alternative preferred with reasons for your choice. If the author of this skit was Housmann (so says Stephen Fry), little has changed in the century or so between our respective school days. Would-be teachers of poetry now being just as glib, just as clinical, and every bit as dull as their predecessors. The exception being that nowadays the second teacher would be read as some sort of ironic/sarcastic, self-referential postmodernist. He would though remain glib, clinical and dull, with the addition of becoming an incredible imbecile as well. Packard is no imbecile. He is droll where others are glib, expansive where they are clinical, he is intelligent, insightful and very far from dull. What he has achieved is commendable. The mechanics of a poem can be analysed and pored over and they have been by all and sundry. Those technical aspects however, can't be treated adequately in isolation from the the vision of the poem; its soul. To me this is what makes teaching poetry the most unenviable task. I know of know one who has been able to, in short, or at length, capture the essence of creating poetry, the 'art' of it, not as I understand it. Certainly not great poetry. And by that I mean simply poetry that has the power to exalt. Packard has approached this task as well as anyone. Having done so he is in rare company. Mary Oliver comes to mind. Strange that they should both be North American. Perhaps Europeans aren't quite so fearless. Or perhaps Europeans know better than to tread where angels wouldn't be caught dead?

Author has a superior intellectual attitude throughout. He reads others poems and critiques, but hasn't published much poetry himself, one poem only that I can determine, and this poem is published only because he included it in this "how-to" book as a poem example, and it is not good. Made me think that this was the only way he could get a poem published - to include it in his own "how-to" book. He's studied the mechanics of poetry but it takes some right-brain artistic talent and heart to write a poem. I didn't see artistic talent with this author. He makes dogmatic declarations such as 'people can't excel at two disciplines such as poetry and novel writing, they can only do well at one'. Really? He says that you must get a high quality, attractive notebook to write in to show that you care about what you are writing, such as the leather-bound notebook he writes in. Please! He also says poetry is more meaningful and significant than lyrics of a song because it stands alone without the accompaniment of music. This seems a gross overassumption/generalization of all

song lyrics. He didn't appear a true artist to me, only a wanna-be. The book is ok on poem structure but others are better. I got rid of this book as I didn't feel I was getting advice from a real pro.

Incredible. They said it was like new. It was definitely like new.

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