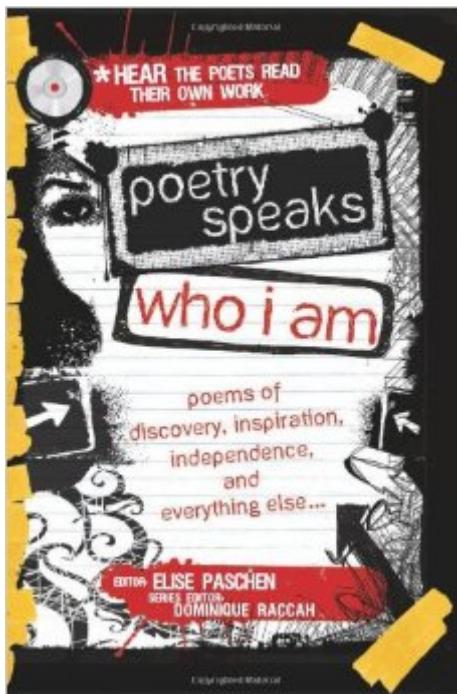


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# Poetry Speaks Who I Am: Poems Of Discovery, Inspiration, Independence, And Everything Else (A Poetry Speaks Experience)



## Synopsis

Poetry Speaks Who I Am is filled with more than 100 remarkable poems about you, who you are, and who you are becoming. Dive in-find the poem you love, the one that makes you angry, the one that makes you laugh, the one that knocks the wind out of you, and become a part of Poetry Speaks Who I Am by adding your own inside the book. Poetry can be life altering. It can be gritty and difficult. It can be hilarious or heart-breaking. And it's meant to be experienced, so we've included a CD on which you'll hear 44 poems, 39 of which are original recordings-you'll only find them here. You'll hear poets both classic and contemporary, well-known and refreshingly new, including: --Dana Gioia expresses the hunger of a "Vampire's Serenade" --Elizabeth Alexander waits for that second kiss in "Zodiac" --Langston Hughes flings his arms wide in "Dream Variations" --Marilyn Nelson reads to her class in "How I Discovered Poetry" --Paul Muldoon's poem "Sideman," brought loudly to life by the band Rackett --And 39 more poems that are immediate and vibrant From Lucille Clifton's "Here Yet Be Dragons" to Edgar Allan Poe's "Annabel Lee" to "Tia Chucha," by Luis J. Rodriguez, Poetry Speaks Who I Am is a collection that is dynamic, accessible, challenging, classic, edgy, and ultimately not quite perfect. Just like you. If you're lucky, it'll serve as a gateway to a lifetime lived with poetry. At the very least, it'll be a good time. Dive in, and happy hunting.

## Book Information

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Age Range: 12 - 16 years

Grade Level: 7 - 12

## Customer Reviews

In spite of having a poet for a mother (or perhaps because of it) I have never come to terms with poetry. Which is not to say that I didn't try. As a kid I would pluck up a collection of the stuff and try to read through it. I was handed poems in elementary, middle, and high school with regularity, but I didn't quite understand why snowy woods were any more important in stanzas than in paragraphs. Poetry seemed like something I should like, but I never found the right way to get a taste ...more In spite of having a poet for a mother (or perhaps because of it) I have never come to terms with poetry. Which is not to say that I didn't try. As a kid I would pluck up a collection of the stuff and try to read through it. I was handed poems in elementary, middle, and high school with regularity, but I didn't quite understand why snowy woods were any more important in stanzas than in paragraphs. Poetry seemed like something I should like, but I never found the right way to get a taste for it. Kids today may have it easier. There are verse novels and books like *A Love That Dog* and *Locomotion* to help them get a better grip on poetry. There are collections like *A Kick in the Head* or *A Poke in the Eye* to teach them various forms. But why should they care? What does poetry really say firsthand to them? *Poetry Speaks Who I Am* aims to make them care. It's a collection of 108 poems by poets alive, dead, and otherwise has been carefully selected and crafted collection to mirror the hopes and fears of kids and teens today. It says that it is for tween and young teens, and yea verily I agree. If I had read this book as a young 'un, maybe I would have a great love of poetry now. Of course after reading this I have to think that maybe it's never too late to learn 108 poems. A range of different poets. In this book big themes are tackled headlong aside smaller concerns. "I Am Black" by Gwendolyn Brooks on one page. "The Germ" by Ogden Nash on another. These poems discuss love, parents, death, animals, and more. They try to make sense of our world. You will find Shakespeare on one page and Billy Collins on the other. Poets of every race and ethnicity have their say until by the end you've the feeling that every person reading this book could find at least one poem in here that speaks to them. One poem in here that will help them figure out who they are, and what they can be. Includes a CD of many poets reading their own works. The editing job on this book is pretty fabulous. Selecting the right poems in the first place couldn't have been a picnic. Let's say you want to include one work of Shakespeare. How do you decide which poem is the most accessible? I happen to agree with the editors that Sonnet 130 was the right way to go, but I'm sure there are folks out there who'd disagree. Still, each poem in this book feels especially chosen. This is borne out by the particular thematic pairings you run across as you read. Wendy Cope's "Valentine" alongside Myra Cohn Livingston's "An Angry Valentine" is particularly fun since the two play off of one another. There's the strange math at work in both Rita Dove's "Flash Cards" and Carl Sandburg's "Arithmetic". And the angry siblings of "A Boy in a Bed in

the Dark" by Brad Sachs and "The Talk" by Sharon Olds. Wonderful pairings all. Then I had to consider the age of this book when I read it. It says it's for tweens as well as kids in their early teens. True? Well, there are poems like "Still I Rise" by Maya Angelou that ask, "Does my sexiness upset you? / Does it come as a surprise / That I dance like I've got diamonds / At the meeting of my thighs?" And sure "The Skokie Theatre" by Edward Hirsch mentions briefly a girl touching a boy below his belt, but they are fleeting allusions. Older kids won't be shocked. Their parents might, but those parents probably won't be handing this book to their ten-year-olds anyway. So there's that. And many of the poems in this book are about kids themselves. Do poems about kids necessarily mean that they are for kids? Not always (not originally either) but a lot of the time it works just the same. Part of the allure of any book of poetry is that you can pick and choose where to begin and where to end. Kids may read and reread their favorites and eschew the others in the book, only to stumble across them later and find, to their surprise, that they love them. Reading the book cover to cover has its advantages, though. The editors begin with poems about poetry. "Eternity" by Jason Shinder and "Perhaps the World Ends Here" by Joy Harjo have that feel. Halfway through the book you run into "From For a Girl Becoming" by Joy Harjo (again), which offers advice on how to live. And at the end is Richard Wilbur's "The Writer", about a kid writing on a typewriter. Typewriters are gone now, but you can tell that the book hopes that kids will find inspiration here to write their own poems next. How kids make this collection their own stands to be considered. Certainly the book bends over backwards to be accessible. There are blank pages in the back for writing one's own poems. The size of the book is comfortable, not too big, and not too small. The layout looks part notebook, part zine, with scribbled and scrawled drawings in the margins. And then there is the CD. The accompanying CD of poets reading their poems piqued my curiosity. It is possible that it will primarily be used by teachers wishing to make a daily lesson in poetry a little more interesting. But will kids listen to this CD at all? Do kids even listen to CDs these days, I wonder. Many do. And there may be some that take the CD and place selections from it onto mix CDs or put it on their mp3 players for easy listening. We can't predict how a kid will deal with something like this, but I'm fairly certain that it will find a use. Not everywhere. Not with everyone. But for a couple kids, they'll make it their own. It is true that you will find many races represented on these pages. It irked me a little that the same could not be said of sexualities. Admittedly, this is a book for tweens and teens and coming-of-age sexuality is the stuff of older fare. Still and all, it felt like a gap. I don't know what the solution would have been, but there are enough love poems in here discussing folks of opposite genders to include just one by folks of the same, don't you think? I had high hopes for Edward Hirsch's "The Skokie Theatre" until the Chris in the story turned out to be a girl. Doggone it. So

maybe not all kids will find themselves represented here after all. I run a bookgroup for kids between the ages of 9 and 14. They're good kids, but such a strange range of ages that sometimes it's hard to find materials for all of them. They tend to want to read fantasy or realistic fiction titles. I look at Poetry Speaks Who I Am, though, and I think of how great it would be to do this book with them. Even kids who don't like poetry could find one or two in here to enjoy (my favorite turned out to be Paul Muldoon's "Sideman"). It's been created for the purpose of getting kids to actually enjoy and identify with poems. It doesn't pressure them to "get" anything. It doesn't quiz them or force them to like or not like something. It's just a fun book built to be enjoyed. All we can hope for is for it to get into the right hands. And that's where the adults come in. Ages 10 and up.

I got this book for my 10 yr old stepdaughter, who struggles with focus in school and has been in counseling for years due to issues with her mother. I heard about it on NPR last year, and felt it would be very good for her to hear poems by/about other children her age and the issues that bother them. She has read the entire thing, some of it several times, and listened to the cd. I can't say with certainty, but she seems to have bonded with some of the poems that speak directly to her about things that she deals with. I think this is an excellent book for a tween/young teen who struggles with identity - my greatest wish for her is that she learn who she is independent of all the pressures from peers and family and this book I hope will help her achieve that.

Poetry Speaks comes with a CD that includes poets reading their own works. The table of contents lets you know which poems are on the CD, since only about half of them are included. The ARC also included a little 1/2 sheet with the selections listed on it. That was really helpful since I didn't have to turn back to the beginning to check on a poem, I could just consult the sheet I was using as bookmark. The poems looked like I might have typed them out on recycled paper and then added a design. Spare but creative and encouraging. Not a normal standoffish type of poetry book at all. There are even lines in the back to write your own poems. I am not a huge poetry fan but this book spoke to me. I loved the mix of contemporary and classic poets, the mix of ethnicities, the well-known with the not-so well known. We had works from Langston Hughes, Edgar Allan Poe, Maya Angelou, Percy Bysshe Shelley, Sherman Alexie and Billy Collins. Some of my favorites were SEDNA by kimiko hahn, WHAT YOUR MOTHER TELLS YOU NOW by mitsuye yamada, and MEDIATION kim stafford. At the dinner table, before the thrownplate, but after the bitter claim, in the one beat of silence before the parents declare war their child, who had been temporarily invisible, but who had from school a catechism, speaks: "Would you like me to help solve the conflict?"

Silence. They can't look at each other. A glance would sear the soul. A wall of fire seethes, Maginot line through the butter plate, split salt from pepper, him from her. Silence. So the child speaks: "Three rules, then: One--you have to let each other finish. Two--you have to tell the truth. Three--you have to want to solve the conflict. If you say yes, we will solve it. I love you. What do you say?" Another one I enjoyed POETRY SLALOM mary jo salter Much less the slam than the slalom gives me a thrill: that solemn, no-fuss Olympian skillin skirting flag after flag of the bloody obvious; the fraction all lag, while speeding downhill, at the key moment, in a sort of whole-body trill: the note repeated, but elaborated, more touching and more elevated for seeming the thing to be evaded. You can read these for fun as well as teach them. So many terms you can define: metaphor, simile, enjambment, litote, rhythm, rhyme scheme, free verse, etc. I think both teachers and students will love this. I already bought some for our school library! I give this 5 stars because it's not one to be read in a normal lit circle but to put in your pocket and carry around with you. My only issue is they printed it in hardcover. This needs to be paperback for portability and usability.

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