

Writers on Poetry

a collection of quotes about the genre

“Poetry: the best words in the best order.” – Samuel Taylor Coleridge

“Fill your paper with the breathings of your heart...” – William Wordsworth

“Poetry isn’t a profession, it’s a way of life. It’s an empty basket; you put your life into it and make something out of that.” -- Mary Oliver

“I write poetry in order to live more fully.” -- Judith Rodriguez

“A poem begins with a lump in the throat.” -- Robert Frost

“Poetry is like making a joke. If you get one word wrong at the end of a joke, you’ve lost the whole thing.” -- W.S. Merwin

“A poet's work is to name the unnameable, to point at frauds, to take sides, start arguments, shape the world, and stop it [from] going to sleep.” -- Salman Rushdie

“All good poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquility.” -- William Wordsworth

“Poetry is the art of substantiating shadows.” -- Edmund Burke

“A poet looks at the world the way a man looks at a woman.” -- Wallace Stevens

“God is the perfect poet.” -- Robert Browning

“Painting is silent poetry, and poetry is painting that speaks.” -- Plutarch

“Poetry is all that is worth remembering in life.” -- William Hazlitt

“Poetry is an echo, asking a shadow to dance.” -- Carl Sandburg

“Poetry is plucking at the heartstrings, and making music with them.” -- Dennis Gabor

“Poetry is the art of creating imaginary gardens with real toads.” -- Marianne Moore

“Poetry is the synthesis of hyacinths and biscuits.” -- Carl Sandburg

“The difference between the right and the nearly right word is the same as that between lightening and the lightening bug.” -- Mark Twain

“Poets utter great and wise things which they do not themselves understand.” -- Plato

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"A poet is someone who stands outside in the rain hoping to be struck by lightning." --
James Dickey

"I'm also a listener. I hear lines of poetry issue from the mouths of seemingly ordinary people. And, as a writer, my duty is not to make people perfect, particularly Mexican Americans. I'm not a cheerleader. I'm one who provides portraits of people in the rush of life." – Gary Soto

"I also like revising poems, changing the words around and improving a poem, little by little, until it's what I want it to be. Sometimes I revise a poem fifteen or twenty times." –
Eloise Greenfield