

Why Read Poetry?

Into your hands I place this book—
A thin, small book of poems—
With thanks to you if on your shelves
It soon may find a home.
But, first, I pray their simple verse
May each day warm your heart,
For if they do so blessed by God,
They will have done their part.
D. Tamminga

Poetry. Why read it? Why write it? Poetry can be encouraging, entertaining, convicting, and enjoyable...but so can prose. So, why poetry? Why not study prose?

“[Don’t] we all experience those moments when a hymn, a psalm, a poem can capture the unutterable mix of emotions we are feeling? ...can bring our confusion into focus, can sift and sort and precisely echo what our own hearts can’t seem to relay to our lips?”

from My Peace in the Puzzle, author unknown

Poetry writing takes more discipline than prose. In a poem, one cannot ramble on. In a poem, the writer is forced to choose his words carefully. They are limited, and each noun, verb, and adjective must aid in driving home a point, firing up an imagination, evoking an emotional response, or bringing a reader to another time and place.

The reading and writing of poetry, then, better equips one to write prose, for one is forced to slow down over the sentences and think about every word, searching out synonyms in a thesaurus, weighing the emotional response certain words will produce, and pausing to delight in the repetition of sounds or syllables that give a bright ring to the poem! In short, you could say that reading and writing poetry is stocking up one’s arsenal with a wide array of vocabulary, while tuning the heart to the emotions that the right words can evoke.

The reading and writing of *poetry* is a delightful discipline that serves to sharpen the writing of *prose*...

...Make space then for the lovely, pure,
Fill eye and ear and home
With harmony, truth, virtue, praise—
A glimpse of God be shown.

from A Place for Art and Music
by Doreen Tamminga