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# A Poet's Guide To Poetry (Chicago Guides To Writing, Editing, And Publishing)



## Synopsis

A Poet's Guide to Poetry brings Mary Kinzie's expertise as poet, critic, and director of the creative writing program at Northwestern University to bear in a comprehensive reference work for any writer wishing to better understand poetry. Detailing the formal concepts of poetry and methods of poetic analysis, she shows how the craft of writing can guide the art of reading poems. Using examples from the major traditions of lyric and meditative poetry in English from the medieval period to the present, Kinzie considers the sounds and rhythms of poetry along with the ideas and thought-units within poems. Kinzie shares her own successful classroom tacticsâ€”encouraging readers to approach a poem as if it were provisional. The three parts of A Poet's Guide to Poetry lead the reader through a carefully planned introduction to the ways we understand poetry. The first section provides careful, step-by-step instruction to familiarize students with the formal elements of poems, from the most obvious feature through the most devious. Part I presents the style, grammar, and rhetoric of poems with a wealth of examples from various literary periods. Part II discusses the way the elements of a poem are controlled in time through a careful explanation and exploration of meter and rhythm. The "four freedoms" of free verse are also examined. Part III closes the book with helpful practicum chapters on writing in form. Included here are writing exercises for beginning as well as advanced writers, a dictionary of poetic terms replete with poetry examples, and an annotated bibliography for further explanatory reading. This useful handbook is an ideal reference for literature and writing students as well as practicing poets.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Known for her poetry (*Ghost Ship*) and for cogent critical essays (*The Cure of Poetry in an Age of Prose*), Kinzie here joins the crowd of poets explaining poetry to beginners (see "notes" below) and distinguishes herself. Mixing her own theories in with more widely shared axioms, Kinzie manages to cover the basics while shedding new light on line break, syntax and sentence. "Understanding poems as both embedded in progression and indebted to surprise," Kinzie shows how features like rhyme work sometimes as foreground, sometimes as background phenomena she dubs "recession of technique." Anticipating the needs of students who will encounter her *Guide* as a textbook or reference work, Kinzie has wisely designed the book to be used alongside a comprehensive poetry anthology (and recommends several). Her quotes and references come mostly and unapologetically from a particular tradition that emphasizes form and control: Thomas Hardy, Louise Bogan, Edwin Muir and the remarkable Julia Randall turn up a lot, while Pound and Williams scarcely appear. Her *Guide* concludes with a set of provocative exercises, a glossary, and a very knowledgeable bibliography. But sophistication of argument, charming idiosyncrasies of taste, and a refusal to condescend are what really make Kinzie's book stand out. Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Kinzie, a poet, critic, and director of the creative writing program at Northwestern University, knows her stuff. This is a sound reference book for any writer wishing to better understand the dynamics of poetry. The book is organized around six elements of style: line, syntax, diction, trope, rhetoric, and rhythm. While reasserting the claim of poetry as art, Kinzie balances the approaches (and risks) that tradition, technique, and meaning afford in the shaping of verse. Her organization asserts that the chief mechanism of thought is the sentence, and from its elegance bigger notions are built. Particularly strong is Kinzie's commitment to revealing the dynamics of how sounds and rhythms qualify thought units, vehicle qualifies tenor, and parallels continuously cooperate. While scholarly, this is also clear, unpedantic, and substantive. A good complement to the reliable verse handbooks of Louis Turco and Alfred Corn or Joseph Malof's *Manual of English Meters* (Greenwood, 1978).?Scott Hightower, NYU/Gallatin, New York Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc.

I'm using Kinzie's book right now in a poetry class I teach. I think it's one of the few books to actually talk about the kinds of tensions that make poems work and not work. I'm especially impressed by

her discussions of the way lines and sentences work with and at times against one another. I haven't read in any of the recent crop of books on prosody anything about the relationship of sentence to line, which makes Kinzie's work all the more exciting and original. And smart. I recommend this book to anyone who's really interested in the kinds of questions all poets must face. I wish someone would've given me this much information before I got to grad school. It's a terrific book, and not so hard to understand as the numbers of pages might suggest.

I am 100 pages into this book and wish I had never purchased it. Ms. Kinzie's seems determined to drive even the most ardent lover of the poetic arts to tear their hair in frustration. Her prose is stylistically dull and unnecessarily labyrinthine. She exhibits no joy in the art of poetry only the smug eye of the critic. The book is also badly designed in that she discusses poems in various segments of the book that the reader keeps having to refer to in her Poetic Sampler. Once bright note, a wonderful poem by Elinor Wilner from Operations Desert Shield, Desert Storm. I guess that was worth the price of admission but buy the Wilner book instead.

I have read several books on writing poetry to help me get the creative juices flowing. Most of the books I've read have primarily focused on allowing the words, whatever they are, to flow from your mind and onto the paper, and most chapters in those books end with a flamboyant exercise that promises to do just that. This book has exercises in it; but this is the first book which I have read that has broken the study of a poem into a science. This in essence is a textbook and upon reading it you will learn how to properly analyze a poem, create a straight vision with your poem, and how to maintain style and prose. At least that is how it has helped me.

This extensive guide to writing poetry is well done. Content, progression of skill and experience guides the novice forward and there is more than enough wisdom and guidance for the published poet as well. This will remain as a life-long referral source for me as a poet.

This gem is unfortunately out of print, which is a shame, since it offers one of the best explanations of poetry I've ever read.

A Poet's Guide has pride of place next to Francis Mayes' The Discovery of Poetry. The in depth definitions, explanations, examples of poetic technique are enhanced with writing exercises, an excellent bibliography and thorough index.

lovely book as posted - quick delivery - many thanks

Great Book !

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