



# CATCH YOUR BREATH

Writing Poignant  
Poetry

LAURA PURDIE SALAS

WRITER'S NOTEBOOK

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Writing Poignant Poetry

by Laura Purdie Salas

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# Introduction

"Writing poetry is taking a subject – be it a pigeon or a Popsicle – and breathing new life into it."

–Lee Bennett Hopkins, author of *City I Love*, *Mary's Song* and more, and a Guinness World Records anthologist

**A formal definition of poetry might be that poetry is words broken into lines instead of paragraphs. But as a writer, you know poetry is much more than this. Poets create striking images that plant themselves in a reader's head. They combine words in surprising, unexpected ways. Poets can show readers something new – or something old, but in a new way. Good poetry makes readers' minds blossom!**

# The poetry habit

Poets have limitless imaginations. They're often quirky and love to observe things in their own unique way. When they look at a crow, for instance, they might think of a scoop of licorice ice cream or a splash of oil. Poets love to pinpoint exactly the right words to describe things. They often love music, and that includes the sounds of letters and words. They can be very particular about the way a poem looks on the page.

Does this sound like you? Congratulations, you're a poet!

Poets write poetry. No surprises there. But there are methods (other than simply "sit down and write") that can make you an even better poet.



# Method 1: Embrace

Poets often think about things in a different way and feel things more deeply than the rest of us. And that's a good thing. For instance, read how Kate Coombs describes her relationship with poetry – in a poem called "Poems".

i.

it's time to sleep  
but the poems  
lope up my spine howling  
like I'm their moon.



ii.

it's time to sleep  
but the poems  
inventory my dreams  
like pinball machines.

iii.

it's time to sleep  
but the poems come  
waving their eyestalks  
like metaphors  
swinging their spider legs,  
pittering their lavender feet.

iv.

the poems come  
flipping the world like a pancake  
flipping the world  
the way water flips light.

–Kate Coombs, "Poems", author of *Water Sings Blue*,  
*The Runaway Princess* and more, all rights reserved