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How to Write Bad Poetry

By Stephen Earley Jordan, II

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So you've decided to crown yourself with a title that a million other people (just like you (yes, just like you!)) give themselves every day. Some people believe giving yourself such a title is equivalent to, and just as beneficial monetarily, as naming yourself Queen of England. But, there is no grace, rarely enough publicity, and only the title of Court Jester seems to be becoming for you because you are a fool among others.

What is this sacred title? Poet.

Why does titling yourself a "poet" make you a Fool? Well, it doesn't, not in and of itself. But if you've only been published online, never in print—that could be a sign of your well-earned Fool status. To be blunt—that is a sign that you write bad poetry.

Why would these sites accept your work if it sucked, you ask? Maybe to raise their quota, maybe to get more submissions of the site's particular interest, but mainly to actually HAVE something to post—most (but not all) sites are desperate for submissions. Or maybe they're out for a profit. Come on, who among us HASN'T had something accepted by the National Library of Poetry, and then gotten all the brochures for expensive products featuring our work?

The Webmaster vs. Editor Problem: Go to any website, check it out. Can you find someone with the title of Webmaster? How about editor? Or, still yet, Webmaster AND Editor? A Webmaster does not, by any means, mean Editor. Simply because someone is a webmaster (someone who controls the site, updates the postings, etc. . .) does not mean that the person is an EDITOR (someone who corrects the work, proofreads, re-writes, re-words, etc...) of the work posted on the site. In many cases, webmasters who are disguising themselves as editors are giving real editors a bad name. A webmaster, will too often post submissions "as is" and not give a damn about the content or presentation. However, if a site has someone who can both edit and be a webmaster then the site is moving in the right direction.

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This is the main problem source. Building a website, and getting work "published" on a website is so easily done by anyone whether they have talent or not that it de-values the word "published" and lessens the role of an Editor.

Granted, the internet IS a great marketing tool for promoting your work, getting your name in the public's eye, and getting writing experience, but have you ever asked yourself why your work is ONLY published online? Perhaps it is because no discerning EDITOR has ever seen your dribbly poems, except in browsing the web for bad poems to laugh at.

Here are a few tips that will help you to get your work published online. Hey, I figured if you're going to be a fool about getting your unpolished work published on the internet for the world to see, I'd give a few tips to help your bad poetry stay that way, since you seem to like that way best:

Place the word "Love" in your title. That's a major plus!

Be straight-forward, don't use symbols, metaphors or anything that will make the reader think. Readers don't have time to think.

Focus on form—(sonnets, villanelles, haiku). Since you think in form, write in form.

Keep your poem in a rhyme-scheme. Why? Well, EVERYONE knows that all GOOD poems rhyme, the rest can be disregarded as a post-modern mess!

Only write in YOUR point of view. Write exactly what you believe, never try to portray the image of someone else. Better yet, start the poem with "I".

Keep your poems untitled. Readers love to be creative and imagine what the title should and could be.

Write in the same place. If you write in your bedroom—always write there; if you write outside under a tree—always write there—why try variety and ruin a good thing?

Don't ever base a character in a poem on someone you actually KNOW. Heaven forbid you get the piece published, and have to explain to the person—"this is you".

Read, but if you don't like a poem or a poet—just toss it. Don't even question why you don't appreciate the work.

Have no structure. Poetry is about limitless expressions, right? So in that sense, make your lines and stanzas as long as you wish. Just write exactly how you feel!

Don't keep a journal. Journal causes too much self-reflection and you want to write for the moment, not yesterday.

Use clichés as much as possible. People like to read familiar phrases.

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Not every line of a poem is important. Just make sure you have a good first and last line.

14. Poems don't progress, that's the difference between a story and a poem. Poems aren't suppose to take you on a journey to learn.

Submit your poems to only websites. That way, you will never have to face the fact that your poetry SUCKS, because it will only be read by the friends and relatives to whom you give the site's URL, and your friends will never tell you that reading your poetry is greater torture than letting a small, sharp-clawed guinea pig walk on their sunburned skin.

If you follow these guidelines, and start writing, you will be a "poet" in no time. Remember that poetry HAS to rhyme, and remember that the less you practice the better you are.

Joking aside—you might want to try doing exactly opposite of the "tips" in the list. And, since many webmasters (who are titling themselves Editor) aren't doing their job, it's up to you to learn to edit your work before you embarrass yourself.

(This article is not commenting that ALL online poetry is not well-crafted. But the poorly crafted poetry far outweighs the well-written by a landslide.)

Stephen Jordan, a Medical Editor in Greenwich, Connecticut, currently lives in New York City, has five years experience within the educational publishing industry. Stephen was a freelance editor with such educational foundations as Princeton Review, The College Board, New York University, and Columbia University. Away from the office, Stephen promotes his creative writing, painting, and his home-based freelance business OutStretch Publications. Stephen holds two Bachelor of Arts degrees in writing and literature from Alderson-Broaddus College of Philippi, West Virginia.

Poetry in a Nutshell

By Gary R. Hess

Poetry is more than just rhyming and prose that is in meters and verse. It is an art form. It is something that can not be judged by its cover and can not be criticized to the point where it just "sucks." Poetry is about expression. Poetry expresses the way we feel on a certain subject through imagery and other senses. It helps us deal with our daily problems, be it good or bad.

The emotion which is put within the poem brings it life. A poem without emotion is not a poem at all but simply prose. Poetry is what makes us feel happy or sad, mad or gleeful, loving or broken hearted. Poetry is life on paper. It does not need to be of a certain subject or even rhyme.

Poetry is poetry. It has its own mind. If it flows good if not... it needs work. The rules can be bent but not broken. Our life is our life and no one can tell us what we have been through but ourselves. We know best not some stranger reading our poems. Our poetry is our life, not what someone says.

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Rhyming in poetry is not always the best way to express yourself. Rhyming actually takes away many words that could have been used. If you try to rhyme it cuts your dictionary into little pieces. It doesn't need to be this way, choose flow over rhyme.

As a result of this, poetry is defined as a way of putting flowing words together in meter and verse to show emotion or tell a story.

Gary R. Hess is a webdesigner and writer for

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