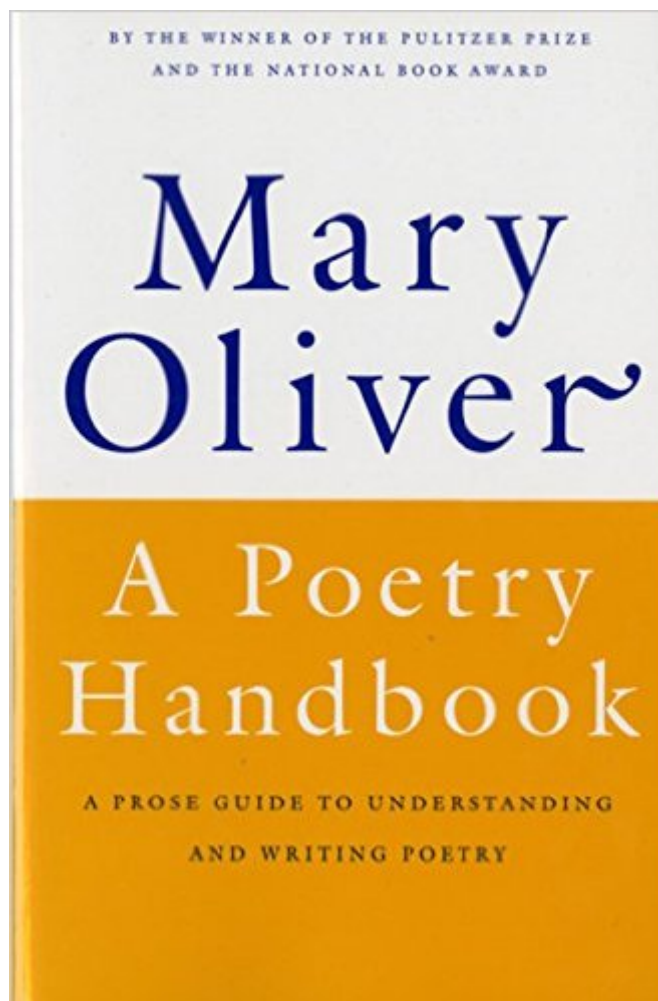


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A Poetry Handbook



Synopsis

With passion, wit, and good common sense, the celebrated poet Mary Oliver tells of the basic ways a poem is built—meter and rhyme, form and diction, sound and sense. Drawing on poems from Robert Frost, Elizabeth Bishop, and others, Oliver imparts an extraordinary amount of information in a remarkably short space. “Stunning” (Los Angeles Times). Index.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This slender guide by Mary Oliver deserves a place on the shelves of any budding poet. In clear, accessible prose, Oliver (winner of both the Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Award for poetry) arms the reader with an understanding of the technical aspects of poetry writing. Her lessons on sound, line (length, meter, breaks), poetic forms (and lack thereof), tone, imagery, and revision are illustrated by a handful of wonderful poems (too bad Oliver was so modest as to not include her own). What could have been a dry account is infused throughout with Oliver's passion for her subject, which she describes as "a kind of possible love affair between something like the heart (that courageous but also shy factory of emotion) and the learned skills of the conscious mind." One comes away from this volume feeling both empowered and daunted. Writing poetry is good, hard work.

National Book Award winner Oliver (*New and Selected Poems*) delivers with uncommon concision and good sense that paradoxical thing: a prose guide to writing poetry. Her discussion may be of

equal interest to poetry readers and beginning or experienced writers. She's neither a romantic nor a mechanic, but someone who has observed poems and their writing closely and who writes with unassuming authority about the work she and others do, interspersing history and analysis with exemplary poems (the poets include James Wright, William Carlos Williams, Elizabeth Bishop, Marianne Moore and Walt Whitman). Divided into short chapters on sound, the line, imagery, tone, received forms and free verse, the book also considers the need for revision (an Oliver poem typically passes through 40 or 50 drafts before it is done) and the pros and cons of writing workshops. And though her prose is wisely spare, a reader also falls gladly on signs of a poet: "Who knows anyway what it is, that wild, silky part of ourselves without which no poem can live?" or "Poems begin in experience, but poems are not in fact experience . . . they exist in order to be poems." Copyright 1994 Reed Business Information, Inc.

This book is a veritable gem. I cannot recommend it highly enough. I read it again and again.....for comfort, for inspiration, for courage. This handbook is a real gift from Ms. Oliver to anyone whose heart calls out to writing poetry. Thank you Mary Oliver....for your gorgeous poems and for your generous spirit in writing this book for the poet in the rest of us.

If you are a serious poet or a teacher of poetry then buy this book. if you dabble in literature studies and write the odd poem 'from your gut' it might be a bit heavy going. This handbook gets highly technical on matters of rhythm and sound and reveals the extent of Oliver's grasp of craft. This shouldn't have surprised me, given her skill, but the lightness of her touch in her poetry writing made the detailed descriptions and poetic terminology a surprise. That said, it is always highly readable and you feel you are sitting at the feet of a Master for a short while, if clearly a stern one!

Mary Oliver's poetry is outstanding. So is this lucid and very helpful handbook. Anyone wanting a basic primer on poetic style will find this book worthwhile.

My title says it all. I found this small book filled with solid advice. Mary Oliver knows of what she writes and writes it well. I rank this with Richard Hugo's "The Triggering Town" as a must have resource for poets and poetry lovers. It is full of insights that can be appreciated by all writers. Do yourself a favor and buy it.

A quick and easy read with all the basics of poetry covered. There are some good examples of

different styles of writing but it could use some more.

A joy to read! What an unexpected joy. I opened the cover to learn a few things, some inner workings of poetry from someone who knows what she's talking about, I'd heard. This science book of poetry with its categories and definitions was not a dissection process. It was a guided observation and Oliver was pointing out the details, the unnoticed beauties to me a novice as we watched these poems out in the wild.

This is one of the more concise and useful books of craft I've come across. Oliver sticks to what poets can actually use, rather than spending too much time belaboring lofty ideas or her own philosophies on poetry. That stuff has its place, but this is a refreshing change; it truly is a "handbook" and worth keeping around (I will NOT say "keep it handy" or "close at hand," because I am not a monster).

Mary Oliver is one of my favorite poets, this is a great book for poets at all stages

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