

Your Poems Are Waiting

A Letter from the Poet Joyce Sidman

Anyone can write poems. Really. Here's the secret of poetry: the poems are already inside you. They are waiting. All those thoughts, and feelings, and observations (that's what poems are, after all) are waiting for the right words to set them free.

What helps set poems free? Reading other poems. When you read a good poem, you start to see the possibility of poetry—the way words play with one another, the way they sing, the way they hint at things, create pictures, make meaning out of images. Why should comparing a bad mood to an elephant help you understand the bad mood (or the elephant) better? Who knows?—But it does. That is the magic of metaphor.

Reading good poems can help you find blueprints for writing. When you read the apology poems in *This Is Just to Say*, I hope you will find ways to begin your own apology poems. When you read the riddle poems in *Butterfly Eyes*, I hope you'll be tempted to create a riddle poem about a Big Hairy Armadillo (which is your current favorite animal). *Meow Ruff* might show you how to write about a snowflake—in the shape of a

snowflake! And *Red Sings from Treetops* could give you an excuse to explore how turquoise (which is really the best color, after all) sounds, smells, and tastes. Yum.

The poems are waiting. But they need words. You can find words anywhere, but poetry books are good places to start. Poetry thrives on juicy words. Look in *Song of the Water Boatman* for watery words, or in *The World According to Dog* for doggy words. But don't stop there—read lots of poems, by all kinds of poets. Read them out loud: let them sing. Let the words spiral through the air. Notice which words, which phrases, make pictures in your head. When you are under the spell of all those delicious words, begin to write. Trust me. Your words will be delicious, too.

Your poems are waiting. Inside you. They want to come out. Help them! Pick up a poetry book, a pencil, and a piece of paper. Start reading. And start writing. You'll be surprised at what happens.



For more information about me and my books, visit www.joycesidman.com. This is the perfect place to find poem starters, poetry challenges, reading guides, and more!

