

English 223-70
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Poetry Journal

Too often poetry is viewed as a rarified thing that only appeals to and can be understood by a small and specially trained segment of the population, but in fact poetry—which is very likely the oldest form of literary expression—comes naturally to human beings; and evidence of this fact is that poetry is all around us, every day—so much so, that, like the air we breathe, it more often than not goes unnoticed. The main purpose of your Poetry Journal is to heighten your sensitivity to poetry; that is, to open your eyes and ears to the poetry that surrounds you and runs through your brain every single day. It should also serve to increase your understanding of the various poetic forms we’re studying.

The idea is to make entries in your Poetry Journal at least once a week (hopefully what will happen is that you become so attuned to workaday poetry that you’ll be scribbling notes and tearing out pages of newspapers to the point of its becoming an obsession). Physically speaking, your Poetry Journal could be almost anything—a spiral notebook, loose-leaf paper collected in a binder, a fancy journal/diary you could get at Barnes & Noble (or Wal-Mart or some such place), or something you keep electronically and then print out to bring to class. Each week you’ll be asked to informally talk about your evolving Journal, and during the last session you will present your Journal as your final project (200 points).

What sorts of things could go in your Journal? Here is a very partial list:

- Poems or parts of poems (or poetic song lyrics) you come across in the normal course of your day (these could be children’s rhymes or “adult” poetry).
- Poetic elements (e.g., alliteration, assonance, word-play, double entendre) you find in non-poetic forms of communication, like advertisements, newspaper/magazine headlines/titles, commentary by people on radio or television or the Internet.
- References to well-known or not-so-well-known poems, poets, or venues for poetry (e.g., journals or websites that publish poetry).
- Things that are not *poetry* per se but have poetic resonance, at least as far you’re concerned (these poetic things may or may not be words—pictures and other visual art forms can certainly be poetic, as can sounds (music, birdsong, a widow’s lament, etc.)).
- Original poems you write, either to practice some of the forms we’re studying or simply because you’ve been inspired to try your hand at poetry.
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