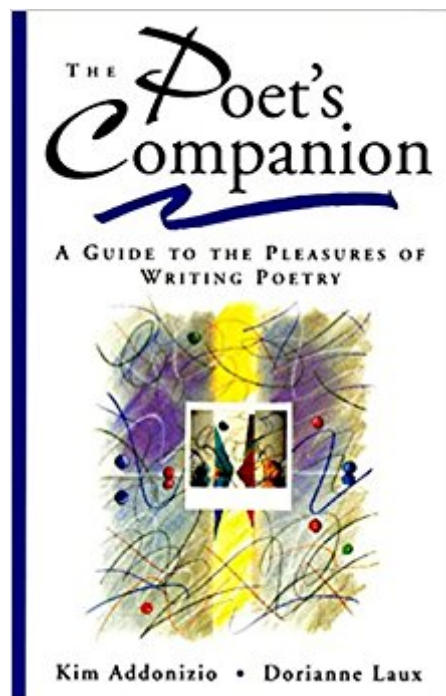




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The Poet's Companion: A Guide To The Pleasures Of Writing Poetry



Synopsis

From the nuts and bolts of craft to the sources of inspiration, this book is for anyone who wants to write poetry-and do it well. The Poet's Companion presents brief essays on the elements of poetry, technique, and suggested subjects for writing, each followed by distinctive writing exercises. The ups and downs of writing life—including self-doubt and writer's block—are here, along with tips about getting published and writing in the electronic age. On your own, this book can be your "teacher," while groups, in or out of the classroom, can profit from sharing weekly assignments.

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Customer Reviews

"We wanted to create a book," say poets Kim Addonizio and Dorianne Laux in their introduction to The Poet's Companion, "that would focus on both craft and process." The book they have created is an impassioned exploration of poetry writing that addresses subject matter, craft, and the writing life. The reigning wisdom is that poets, like other creative writers, should write what they know. "The trick," say the authors, "is to find out what we know, challenge what we know, own what we know, and then give it away in language." Elsewhere they add that, while "as poets, we need to write from our experience ... that experience may be mental, emotional, and imaginative as well as physical." Addonizio and Laux are lively spokespersons for the poet's life; they pepper their thoughts with well-chosen poems from their contemporaries—including David Bottoms, Jack Gilbert, Linda Gregg, and Jane Kenyon--and they conclude each short chapter with an invigorating collection of ideas for writing. These "ideas" culminate in a terrific section of writing exercises at book's end: write a poem

describing "your most acutely embarrassing moment

Poets Addonizio and Laux warn against cliché, and although textbooks on writing come a dime a dozen these days, theirs is head and shoulders above the rest. There are three main sections: "Subjects for Writing" (e.g. death, the erotic), "The Poet's Craft" (metaphor, rhyme), and "The Writing Life" (self-doubt, writer's block); four separate appendixes list other writing texts, anthologies, marketing tips, and electronic resources. The many exercises offered emerge largely from the intensive one-day workshops conducted by Addonizio and Laux. Both knowledgeable and practical in their approach, the authors offer everything a poet needs, including one feature more necessary than ever in the postliterate age yet absent from other writing texts: a gentle yet insistent lesson on grammar. Highly recommended for all libraries. ?David Kirby, Florida State Univ., Tallahassee Copyright 1997 Reed Business Information, Inc.

The strengths of the book are its suggestions for enhancing the language employed by the poet and the many exercises it suggests as idea generators for new poems. Its greatest weakness is its age. The sections on word-processing, Internet use, and publishing are hopelessly (but understandably) out of date. I suspect the bibliography is likewise pretty dated. Things move so quickly in our electronic world. I think, though, for a beginning poet at least, the strengths outweigh the weaknesses. There is a lot to learn here about the structures of poetry and the way one can manipulate those structures to make one's poems stand out in the crowd.

Never thought of myself as a poet but this book has great tips and exercises. I really loved all of the included poems, too.

textbook was in need of repair

I have used this book in the creative writing class I teach. Students enjoy working through various chapters on their own and have produced some solid work as a result.

Great book!

would buy again

To me, The Poet's Companion can do no wrong. I realize others will surely disagree, but there, I've said it! Smallish in size, the book is a wonderful help for anyone wanting both to enjoy and to write poetry. I love its occasional tongue-in-cheek writing, its humor and its fine taste in picking poems to use as examples. Along with "The Triggering Town" by Richard Hugo, "The Poet's Companion" has been my teacher, and I find myself learning A LOT.

I have read only the first two chapters and already love it. The opening chapter is the best introduction to poetry writing I have read urging the writer to create his or her unique world in language and saying it in a very encouraging and practical way. I eagerly look forward to using this book for more ideas on practice throughout this coming summer.

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