

Ars Poetica

An Ars Poetica poem talks about the art of writing poetry, presents the poet's views on what a poem is and how it should be written.

"I think some of the worst poems in the English Language are written by poets about how they make a poem."

Maxine Kumin

A Tao of Poetry

(an excerpt)

Each word carefully
tied to the next, the poem
is a net, and no
single knot is strong enough
to bear the burden alone.

Some nets are small, cast
for shrimp or herring. Some nets
are meant to hold whales.
In the ecology of
the poem, the fish is not

prey, but the surprise
catch of the day, a diamond
in the coal, a way
of awakening to something
just beyond what words can say.

Sam Hamill

The Daily Poem

(an ars poetica)

Beyond and below
the information from the senses,
and the diaristic listing
of the day's outer doings,
big thoughts
wait to rise and breach —
whales turning in air
and splashing back.

Down there, even now,
in their pods,
they commune
through mysterious, echoing song.
They own the depths,
these musical giants.
Listen for their enormous
thundering hearts.

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Good poems resolve emotions; bad ones provoke them.

Peter Robinson

Poetry isn't a profession.
It's a way of life. It's an

empty basket; you put your
life into it and make
something out of that.

Mary Oliver

Writing the Poem

Trying for some
clean economy

These are things I left out...

The arduous journey, the drifts
The boots, the pain;
Any discussion of Death.

What was left was hope
For essence of
Movement, of cold;
Of emptiness and loss.

The idea, lean
As a needle
Sharp as the edge
Of shadow

Trying to close with
That thing straining toward me
The ultimate openness
The poem without words
The indelible thing itself.

Gary Holthaus

Ars Poetica

May the poems be
the little snail's trail.

Everywhere I go,
every inch: quiet record

of the foot's silver prayer

I lived once.

Thank you.

It was here.

Aracelis Girmay