

Powering into Poetry

Unit 1: Ways to Get into Writing

Where to begin

Inevitably most writing books and courses commence with a definition of poetry.

What is your definition?

Take a few moments to jot down your thoughts - how does poetry differ from prose?

For me poetry is a concentrated dose of sensory detail, providing a rich vision of the ordinary in extraordinary three dimensions.

What elements should a poem have?

Getting Immersed

Visit a library, a book store, a second-hand book store, or visit poetry magazines online to really find out what sort of poetry is currently being published in Australia and overseas.

Lorraine Marwood

Passionate about writing and teaching writing, Lorraine has been widely published in literary magazines across Australia, the UK, USA, New Zealand and Canada.



The Australian editor of an international literary magazine, Lorraine is also the recipient of a May Gibbs mentorship in children's writing.

[www.](http://www.lorainemarwood.com)

lorainemarwood.com

A Writing Journal

As a poet I like the concept of inspiration or writing at any point in my day. Inspiration strikes at any moment and evaporates just as quickly without hard recording into words. So a notebook, not loose papers, is the key.

I use ordinary school exercise books, the 240 page or 320 page varieties. But many people prefer a spiral bound book, or unlined pages or something a bit more upmarket. It's your choice.

Two 'must dos' for writing in books is to date each entry and to treat the book as a draft - permission to cross out, write hurriedly, in whatever pen or pencil is to hand.

Sometimes in the middle of the night, I have quickly scrawled a fleeting line that had enough resonance to wake me from sleep.

Don't think that you will remember a line or an idea, I have chanted to myself a wonderful line as I drove to work, only to remember hours later a sense of loss and frustration because I never got the opportunity to record it - keep that note book handy.

What goes into that notebook?

- snatches of dialogue
- newspaper clippings that might make a great poem
- memories
- surprising images, happenings - remember truth is stranger than fiction
- sketches
- recipes/tickets/images/photographs

Warm up Technique

Daily writing helps to overcome writer's block or that helpless feeling - what can I write?

Here's a technique to practice as a warm up every time you go to write. Pick up your pen and write anything: for example use the first line from an article in today's newspaper or perhaps make a list of what is outside your window.

wind blowing green heads of umbrella plant

plastic bag, grey with weather

swaying bush

scratch of wind claws on roof

chameleon sunlight glittering then dulling

is the wind dull?

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Give yourself a time limit - say 5 minutes and over a period of time, gradually increase this.

This technique is often called **free writing** - just to write without expecting any great literary output, but to write, write, and it is by writing free writing that we begin that shift from left brain to right brain. Once that pen connects with the page don't lift it, write, and give yourself a time limit.

Like any muscle, writing needs to be developed. It makes any project easier to tackle once you have warmed up. I have also found from experience that this eliminates waffle or dead-ends before I begin the real work of writing.

ACTION ACTIVITY

- This week choose a note book to record your writings - portability is a big consideration and useability.
- Practice free writing. Time yourself for 5 minute sessions. Don't worry about spelling or punctuation, just write.