

TEN WRITING TIPS

From the Poetry Society of South Carolina

Compiled by Ann Herlong-Bodman, PSSC Skylark chairperson, from several sources, including notes from poet Daniel Nathan Terry, who judged the 2011 competition.

1. Avoid writing a poem on heavy topics such as love, destiny, hate, even religion, primarily because they are done to death. (Unless you feel you can compete with the famous poets who have already used these topics.)
2. Write about what you see, hear, feel. No one else has your memories, your experiences. No one else can see through your eyes, hear with your ears, touch with your skin. Your canvas is YOUR life, YOUR biography.
3. Let your images and sounds speak for themselves. Don't tell your reader whether you are sad or joyful. Try never to name an emotion. Show. Show. Show.
4. Record the moment with precise but surprising language. Surprise yourself.
5. Be careful and accurate but also notice the magic around you. Write as if you are amazed to be alive.
6. Leave some of your thoughts unexplained so the reader can read between the lines. Let the reader do the work.
7. Your title is an introduction to what you want to say but don't give away the meaning.
8. Try for at least one memorable metaphor or simile, a comparison that you have never read or heard before. No clichés!
9. Play with line endings. Force the reader to move to the next line for the meaning or to complete the idea. Keep the reader in suspense.
10. Remember that poetry is compressed language. Cut extra words. Then cut some more. Make every word count.

Did we say read? Read. Read. Read!