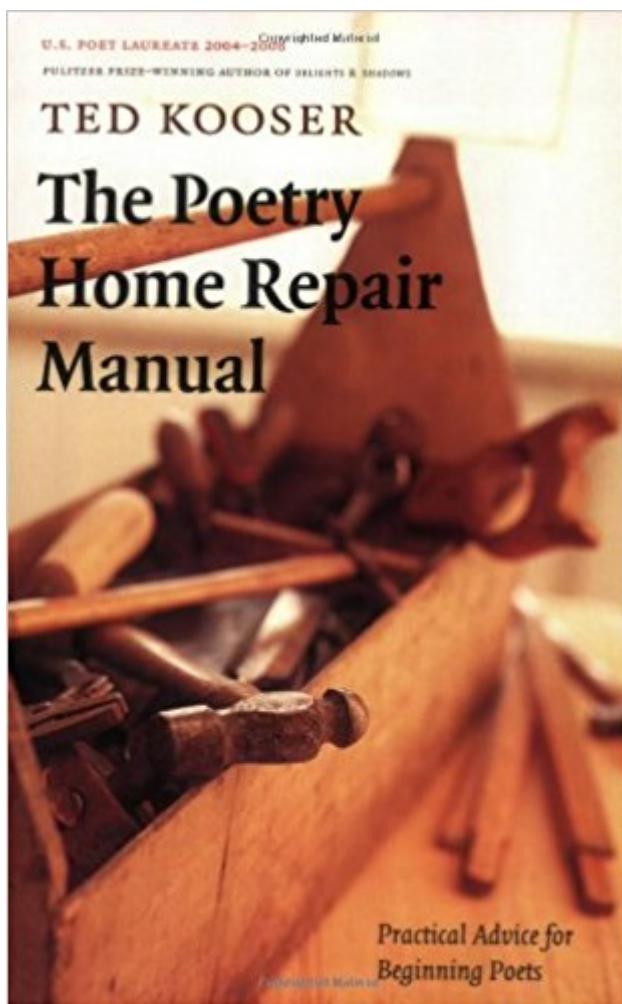


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# The Poetry Home Repair Manual: Practical Advice For Beginning Poets



## Synopsis

Ted Kooser has been writing and publishing poetry for more than forty years. In the pages of *The Poetry Home Repair Manual*, Kooser brings those decades of experience to bear. Here are tools and insights, the instructions (and warnings against instructions) that poets— aspiring or practicing— can use to hone their craft, perhaps into art. Using examples from his own rich literary oeuvre and from the work of a number of successful contemporary poets, the author schools us in the critical relationship between poet and reader, which is fundamental to what Kooser believes is poetry's ultimate purpose: to reach other people and touch their hearts. Much more than a guidebook to writing and revising poems, this manual has all the comforts and merits of a long and enlightening conversation with a wise and patient old friend—a friend who is willing to share everything he's learned about the art he's spent a lifetime learning to execute so well.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Now the 13th Poet Laureate Consultant in Poetry to the Library of Congress, the Iowa-born, Nebraska-based Kooser has 40 years' experience in constructing verse. Like Wallace Stevens, Kooser was for many years an insurance executive, and begins chapter one with the following admonition: "You'll never be able to make a living writing poems." The soundness of that advice sets the tone for this no-nonsense book, which "advocates for poems that can be read and understood without professional interpretation." To that end, he offers plenty of examples from

contemporary poets like Jane Hirschfield and B.H. Fairchild (as well as from his own work), explaining uses of rhyme, meter, imagery and other fundamentals without resorting to overly technical language. He stresses the use of judicious detail (which has its source in close observation), and shows, with subtlety, how and when one might shift from metaphor to simile, or vice versa. The last of 12 chapters stresses time as the greatest help in editing: "leave your poem alone until it looks as if someone else might have written it." Perhaps the most important feature of the book is Kooser's voice, which comes through clearly and evenly, with little patience for cant, but a clear desire to advise those starting down a largely thankless path. "The truth is," he writes, "nobody's waiting for you to press your poetry into their hands." Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

The work of Kooser, America's new poet laureate, will be receiving more attention now, attention that is amply deserved. As this collection of essays shows, he is a generous presence in the poetic world, one who feels that poets' "job description" (which he discusses in the book's first essay) is not to make money or even fame, but to "serve the poems we write." While encouraging poets to think of their audience as they write, and to revise toward intelligibility, he does not prescribe who that audience will be. His own work tends toward the rural and populist, but he does not disdain those whose audience will be urban and urbane. Rather, he urges poets to focus on the work of poetry rather than on the idea of being a poet. His advice, useful to poets at any level of achievement, includes both broad and specific ideas on revising, and enlightening discussion of matters ranging from the often-underestimated power of simile to employing narrative effectively. Patricia MonaghanCopyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

When you've already been writing poetry for 50 years, what you need is not a 'how-to-do-it' book, but instead, a 'how-to-make-it-better' book. There is information in this modest volume which I have already employed to great advantage in improving some of my poetry, making it really work! If you write poetry, and often find yourself almost where you want to be - but not quite - this book may be exactly what you need. Kooser's suggestions are real, are practical: they make uncommonly good sense for those of us in an uncommon profession. (Really, if we'd had any sense, we'd have become accountants!) If you must write poetry, and want to make it the best it can be, I'd strongly suggest a walk through the garden of The Poetry Home Repair Manual. If you are just beginning,

you MUST have this volume with you on the journey.

To say this is a helpful guide on writing and then editing your poetry would be a vast understatement. This is perhaps THE single best guide for newer poets hoping to improve their craft. It has changed how I read and write poetry. Kooser's mentor-like tone and approach are perfect for a book of this nature. I'm very happy with my purchase and reading of this incredible little book.

If you are a writer and you want to make your work better, read this. If you are a poet and you want to make your work better, memorize this and sleep with it under your pillow. By far the best poetry craft book I've read, incl Mary Oliver, Kim Addonizio, and the like. Kooser is real and poignant and necessary.

I have had a handful of poems published, so I am not a raw beginner. But I continue to learn from Ted Kooser's book every time I pick it up--and I pick it up a lot! Kooser's advice is both encouraging and challenging--and it is both because he demystifies poetry and makes it sacred at the same time. Look harder. Write clearer. Read more. Write more. He advises you to strip away the smoke and mirrors and pretend (believe) you are actually trying to communicate to other human beings. The risk is that you may discover you have nothing to say. But the value is that you will sharpen your powers of observation and make your poems real. And then, with practice and the internalizing of good poetry written by others, you will find your own voice and your own way of holding up something to the world and saying "Look at it this way! Isn't that amazing?" This book is filled with good advice, and at different moments, you may need different pieces of it. This is one to own, mark up, make your own. And then turn to it whenever you need a nudge, or encouragement, or reproof. You will find it all in these few pages.

I am astonished and delighted by the quality and wisdom of this book. It is quite simply one of the best books I have ever read. I intend to read it every 1-2 years for the rest of my life.

This poet, Ted Kooser, can do no wrong, and he has written the perfect book to use in a class room for kids just being introduced to poetry or adults who already love poetry. He gives the reader so many great examples of poems that work and some that don't work--and tells us why. He de-mystifies the concepts, and oh, I wish I'd had this book in hand when I tried to interest tenth graders in poetry. I did my best, but could have used Ted Kooser's help. He's so intellectual but at

the same time grounded. His own poetry is such a delight, and in this book I discovered what a marvelous teacher he is, as well. If you ever have wondered what makes a poem truly a poem, read this.

I must confess two things: I'm already a Kooser fan and I only found him because he's the current poet laureate of the United States. But since I came upon him he's become my favorite, not only for his superb writing, but for the person who shines through in every sentence in his poems and in this book, *The Poetry Home Repair Manual*. What this book isn't, is a list of all the do's and don'ts, of forms and rules. It's not a list at all, but an invitation to have a fireside chat about poetry, get cozy and talk about our favorite subject. And because Ted is a gifted teacher he can't help but share the kinds of observations that let us come away with tremendous insight and learning. What this means is that, as a result of reading *The Poetry Home Repair Manual*, you will become a better poet (if what you do is write poetry), and someone whose insight into poetry has increased so much that poetry becomes revealed like never before (if you are a reader of poetry). Now here's the bonus: Because Ted Kooser is generous instead of elitist, kind instead of exacting, and possesses a gentle heart and a wise mind you will have access like never before to use your own discernments with regard to poetry. Only last night I was able to put aside a poet with whom I never connected, without guilt. Five stars are not enough! Ted sets you free.

It's not just for "Beginning" poets. It's filled with useful information for all poets. I've been reading and buying Ted Kooser since the early '90s. Of our United State's Poet Laureates, he's one of our best. He knows what he's talking about and he communicates it well.

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