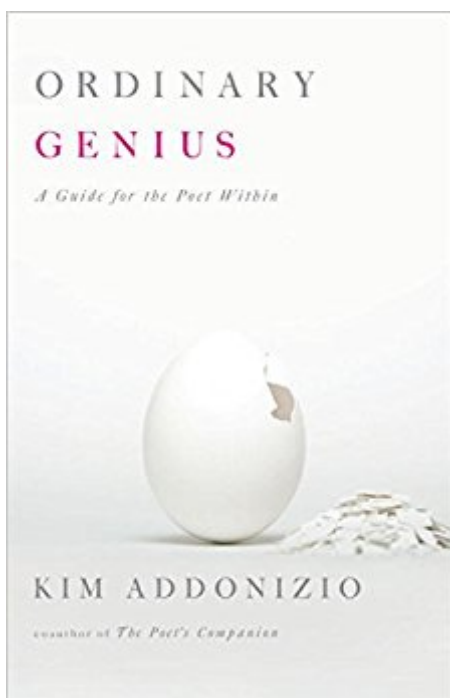


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Ordinary Genius: A Guide For The Poet Within



Synopsis

In this fresh approach to writing poetry, the coauthor of the perennially popular *The Poet's Companion* offers sharp insights into the craft of writing. "The creative process is just that," maintains Kim Addonizio. "Not a means to an end, but an ongoing participation." A widely acclaimed poet and finalist for the National Book Award, Addonizio meditates on her own process as she encourages writers to explore both their personal and political worlds, to seek inspiration from poets new and old, and to discover the rich poetic resources of the Internet. Lively, accessible, and informative, *Ordinary Genius* provides wisdom gleaned through personal experience and offers a heady variety of writing exercises. Chapters on gender, addiction, race and class, metaphor and line invite each individual writer to find and to hone his or her unique voice. This is the perfect book for both experienced writers and beginners eager to glimpse the angel of poetry.

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Customer Reviews

A finalist for the National Book Award, Kim Addonizio has also received a Guggenheim Fellowship, two NEA Fellowships, and a Pushcart Prize. She divides her time between living in Oakland, California, and New York City.

I've been writing and devouring poetry for over 30 years and I found this book to be a valuable, inspiring aid to my writing and I'm far from a beginner. I've read (and loved) all of Ms. Addonizio's books and this is, by far, one of my favorites. She does cover some of the basics of poetry writing,

but also delves into the deeper side of poetry with some fabulous examples - delicious tidbits thrown in by awesome poets like Sharon Olds, Billy Collins, Susan Browne, Lucille Clifton and Tony Hoagland to name just a few. The book is also overflowing with shimmering, thought-provoking quotes by other poets and writers. I wrote several in my "favorite quotes" notebook to refer back to. I was also thrilled to find quite a few new poems by the multifaceted Ms. Addonizio. Her poetry is as unique, distinctive and beautiful as Ms. Addonizio. I was happy to see one of my old favorites included, "What Do Women Want?" Reading this poem many years ago inspired me to go out and buy my first RED dress. You have to read the poem to understand....The book is divided into four parts with a total of 36 chapters: 1. Entering Poetry, 2. Inner and Outer Worlds, 3. The Poem's Progress, and 4. Toward Mastery, most with intriguing, motivating writing prompts to get your juices flowing. I read through the entire book and marked dozens of pages to go back to and re-read. I'm eager to get back into the book and try out some of the writing prompts. If you love poetry and just need a jump start to your writing, then definitely buy this book because it'll do the job. If you just love to read poetry, this book is for you, too, because it's loaded with poems!

Liking Kim Addonizio's work as I do, I confess to coming to this book with expectations somewhere between relating to another poet and being wowed. The potential for either had been fostered by references to "experienced writers" as though this book included them, and I suppose it does from the standpoint of having coffee with a peer with whom you enjoy shoptalk, but again, expectations. I wanted Kim to talk to me on a professional level, but in this book, she focused her far-reaching range of information and attention on beginning poets, class act college students, and the millions of people who truly could benefit from poetry therapy. Had I read this book several years ago, I might not have collected five shelves of books on or about poetry since Kim discusses much of what's said in them and then some. For instance, she helps poets tap into their problems, pain, humor, demons, and addictions while explaining poetic terms and techniques used by a variety of poets, including herself. Labeled as such or not, this book is a mini-course in poetry that new poets or those beginning to study poetry will welcome and embrace. So even though *Ordinary Genius* (love the title) does not meet my particular needs in a particular time of reading, I probably would have given it a five-star for those who want to learn about and experience poetry without getting bogged down in technicalities. What dissuaded me, however, was a tactile response to the unpleasantly rough newsprint pages printed by a giant in the poetry publishing business. Yes, expectations, but a book meant to be savored and reread needs to entice readers with silken sheets between the covers. In addition, the tasteful cover art depicts a newly hatched egg, implying that the inside

information relates to the fledgling poet and not those in flight.

Ordinary Genius strikes a perfect tone; empathetic but not precious, upbeat but not chirpy, wise but not cynical, savvy but not smart-ass. Kim Addonizio writes with the easy authority of someone steeped in her subject. Unlike too many vaunted academics, however, she also has the knack of clarifying the complex, making it seem achievable, and actually inspiring a stymied writer to settle down and pin some words to a page. She serves a wonderful confection of poetic vignette, personal anecdote, nuts and bolts know-how, and implementable advice. Her feeling for an apt line is palpable, her insights into poetry are first rate, and her advice on how to deal with the challenges to getting published are as helpful as they are sharp. As the anthologist of *Â Sonnets for Sinners: Everything One Needs to Know About Illicit Love*, I suppose, I might have been a tad biased in Kim's favor by her observation that poets are entitled to "invent" reality, which reminded me of lines from my favorite sonneteer, Elan Haverford, "Poets are permitted lies / there'd be no poets otherwise." Let me add, however, that I have returned to *Ordinary Genius*, several times, it being one of those books one can dip into and discover a golden nugget on just about any page. In all, a wonderful gift. Bravo -- and Thanks! -- is what I say.

As a fiction writer, I am always looking for ways to give my language rhythm and color, and so I have read several books on poetry. As a composer of music, I often feel I shouldn't need that kind of help, but have found that translating my musical ability to fiction is more difficult than I expected. This book isn't **exactly** what I was looking for in that regard, but it is a wonderful book, and has given me so much insight into poetry. It is intelligent but not academic, thoughtful but not touchy-feely. I think this is the best book on writing poetry I have come across. The exercises (if that's what your looking for) are taunting and clever.

Author Kim Addonizio appropriately dedicates her poetry guide to her students. She then puts her knowledge and expertise into play by leading them through the intricacies of a genre that is at times both exceedingly creative and difficult to master. The best thing about *Ordinary Genius* are the prompts included to get started with writing poetry. This book is highly recommended with an abundance of useful strategies and practical writing advice for aspiring poets. Also check out *The Poet's Companion* also by Kim Addonizio with Dorianne Laux. Different types of poetry is included and again strategies and useful advice for getting started is offered.

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