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## Why Do We Write Poems?

In today's poem, with at least three stunning particulars, earn the right to make a statement about why you write poetry. The first quotations below are not poems just statements.

"...a poem freshens the world."

Ted Kooser in *The Poetry Home Repair Manual*

Some days, we just need a place  
Where we can bleed in peace.  
Our only word for this is  
*Poem.*

Amanda Gorman  
in "Cut"  
from *Call Us What We Carry*

We write  
Because you might listen.  
We write because  
We are lost  
& lonely, & you, like us,  
Are looking  
& learning.

Amanda Gorman  
in "We Write"  
from *Call Us What We Carry*

Poetry is a kind of meditation that slows me down and brings me back to myself. Allen Ginsberg

The poet is the one who breaks through our habits. St. John Perse

By writing poetry, even those poems that fail and fail miserably, we honor and affirm life. We say "We loved the earth but could not stay." Ted Kooser in *The Poetry Home Repair Manual*

Alice Walker once suggested that poems are what we do with all the leftover love.

Stanley Kunitz has said, in effect, that poetry is the voice behind the masks we all wear, the voice of our usually hidden selves.

Poetry is the voice of the soul. Carolyn Forché

### Why Do Poets Write?

My wife, a psychiatrist, sleeps  
through my reading and writing in bed,  
the half-whispered lines,  
manuscripts piled between us,

but in the deep part of night  
when her beeper sounds  
she bolts awake to return the page  
of a patient afraid he'll kill himself.

She sits in her robe in the kitchen,  
listening to the anguished voice  
on the phone. She becomes  
the vessel that contains his fear,

someone he can trust to tell  
things I would tell to a poem.

Richard Jones  
Anthologized in *One Art: poems*  
*about poetry,*  
edited by Michael Wiegers

### Reunion

Already one day has detached itself from all the rest up ahead.  
It has my photograph in its soft pocket.  
It wants to carry my breath into the past in its bag of wind.

I write poems to untie myself, to do penance and disappear  
Through the upper right-hand corner of things, to say grace.

Charles Wright

Praising all creation, praising the world:  
That's our job— to keep  
The sweet machine of it  
Running as smoothly as it can.

With words repairing, where it wears out,  
Where it breaks down.

With songs and poems keeping it going.  
With whispered endearments greasing its gears.

Gregory Orr  
in *How Beautiful the Beloved*

### **These Poems**

These poems  
they are things that I do  
in the dark  
reaching for you  
whoever you are  
and  
are you ready?

These words  
they are stones in the water  
running away

These skeletal lines  
they are desperate arms for my longing and love.

I am a stranger  
learning to worship the strangers  
around me

whoever you are  
whoever I may become  
June Jordan.