

WRITE 'EM - FIX 'EM - SEND 'EM

Making Poems Better and Getting Them Published

Your poems are your poems. Don't let anyone change your style, your voice, your syntax. There are too many "experts" out there ready to tell you that you should write poems the way they do.

I'll give you a seasoned reader's reaction to your work. I'll point out, poet to poet, where the storyline is engaging and visual and where it is not.



I'll be specific and detailed. I want to see your poems on the desks of the best editors. That's my goal.

I look forward to working with you. Here are a few suggestions:

Give the poems TITLES - even if they are only working titles. They will allow me to refer to them by name. Titles also lend a validity to poems.

Make sure the poems allow us to SEE scenes rather than just hear editorial comments.

Not:

"He was really a strong man."

But rather:

"A tanner by trade, his hands were mostly leather, the arms as massive as country fence posts."

Not:

"They were very unpleasant looking birds."

But rather:

"The palms are hung high with vultures; they have blisters for eyes and helmets of gray skin wrinkled about the head."

Remember that a good poem is as specific as a police report. Think of yourself, the poet, as a photographer who is not allowed to use film. Imagine a blank-frame filmstrip laid along the margin of your poems. You should be able to sketch-in most lines' IMAGES so that the filmstrip is filled with pictures. "Destiny" and "Friendship" draw blanks in those little frames.

And, finally, remember that readers and editors are aware of the young writer's burden (no matter how old the writer): The SOAPBOX upon which sermons can be delivered to the waiting throngs of non-poets in need of instruction. Make kindling out of the soapbox.

I look forward to reading your work!

-Dan Masterson