Section 11, Mastering the Music of Poetry: Sound, Rhythm and Voice

Write-by-the-Lake Writer’s Workshop & Retreat
June 16-20, 2014
9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. each day
Pyle Center, 702 Langdon St., Madison

UW-Madison Continuing Studies & UW-Madison Dept. of English

Instructor: Marilyn Taylor

Here’s a one-week intensive workshop designed for any poet looking to get a better handle on poetry’s underpinnings—whether you ordinarily write free verse, prose-poems, or sonnets. The strategy? Paying conscious attention to subtle details that can turn a good idea into a terrific poem.

For example, have you tried tinkering with a poem’s intrinsic rhythms as you write it? Customizing its sound effects, including the possibility of using rhyme? What about manipulating the tempo, or the poem’s underlying tone of voice? Getting a firm grip on these long-established elements of prosody can serve as the master key for turning a good poem into a seriously memorable one.

With additional assistance from your fellow workshoppers and your own good ear, you’ll finish the week equipped with a new set of time-tested strategies for taking your body of work to the next level.

SYLLABUS

MONDAY: We Got Rhythm
Train your ear to hear the beat
The rhythms of free verse, and how to tweak them
The rhythms of meter, and how to mess them up
Homework: a poem with a great rhythm section

TUESDAY: We Got Music
Workshop Monday’s homework
The subliminal power of sound effects
Digging for rhyme
Homework: a “Golden Shovel” poem

WEDNESDAY: We Got Attitude
Workshop Tuesdays assignment
The point of having a point of view
Taking the first person when it’s not the poet talking
Homework: a poem with a voice that says it all

THURSDAY: We Got Latitude
Workshop Wednesday’s assignment
The poem of protest: what’s form got to do with it?
Satire, parody, and other poetic subversions
Homework: a poem with a hidden agenda

FRIDAY: We Got Each Other
Workshop Thursday’s assignment (translations)
Catch-up workshop, If necessary
Collaborative exercise, or Hey, we’re all in this together!

Marilyn L. Taylor, Ph.D., former Poet Laureate of the state of Wisconsin (2009 and 2010) and of the city of Milwaukee (2004 and 2005), is the author of six collections of poetry. Her award-winning poems and essays have appeared in many anthologies and journals, including Poetry, The American Scholar, Able Muse, Measure, Ted Kooser’s “American Life in Poetry” column, and the recent Random House anthology titled Villanelles. Marilyn also served for five years as Contributing Editor and regular poetry columnist for The Writer magazine. She is currently a member of the Wisconsin Poet Laureate Commission and the Council for Wisconsin Writers Board of Directors. She recently moved from Milwaukee to Madison, where she continues to write and teach.

Credit Option: Participants earn 1 credit by attending class and completing the assigned work for the week: daily reading, writing at least five pages of original work, and critiquing of own and others’ work. To earn 2 credits, participants submit an additional five pages of their poetry. Participants earning 3 credits complete all of the above requirements supplemented by another five to 10 pages of poetry or a short paper synthesizing how the material covered during the week applies to their own creative projects and/or teaching. The work must be handed in within two weeks of final class date.