

10 TIPS FOR GREAT POETRY

by Brad Roghaar

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1. Use concrete images to describe abstract concepts— show rather than tell.
 2. Avoid abstract nouns and tired verbs.
 3. Delete—be willing to part with whole chunks of verse. Sometimes there are only five or ten lines of really good poetry in a whole page.
 4. Don't mistake great emotions for great poetry.
 5. Address universal themes or concepts through specific situations or examples— but don't really worry about the "big themes." They'll show up by themselves.
 6. Makes sure the poem—with all of its parts—conveys a unified message.
 7. Put a lot of "geography" (places) and "furniture" (things) in your poems—the more detail the better.
 8. Dare to take chances.
 9. Write a lot—let "happy accidents" happen.
 10. But most of all, read a lot and read widely.
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*Brad Roghaar has worked as a professor in the WSU English department for 14 years and has been teaching poetry for 16 years. He has written hundreds of poems and is published widely in several journals and magazines. He has published one book of poetry titled *Unraveling the Knot* and is just finishing up a second book titled *Stand of Aspen: Places of Healing*. He is also currently writing the script— a "cin-poem"— for a film on wild horses in Utah. As if these projects weren't enough, he also serves on the editorial board for *Rough Draft*, is the faculty advisor for *Metaphor*, and is the editor for *Weber Studies*. Roghaar teaches a poetry writing class every quarter, and always has great advice for writing better, more effective poetry.*

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