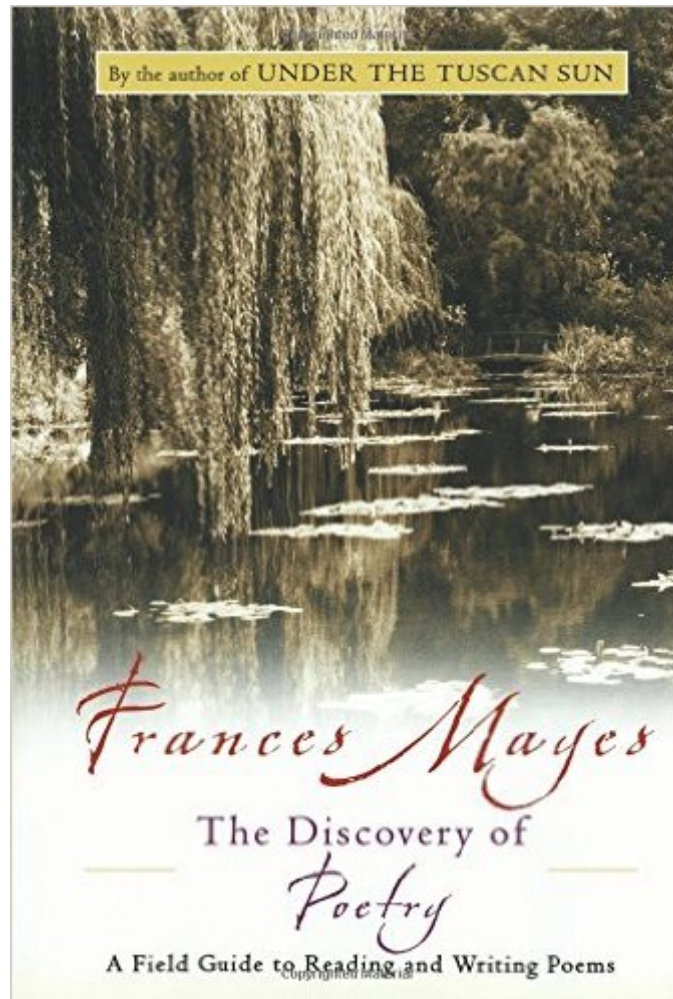


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# The Discovery Of Poetry: A Field Guide To Reading And Writing Poems



## Synopsis

The bestselling author of *Under the Tuscan Sun* brings poetry out of the classroom and into the homes of everyday readers. Before she fell in love with Tuscany, Frances Mayes fell in love with verse. After publishing five books of poetry and teaching creative writing for more than twenty-five years, Mayes is no stranger to the subject. In *The Discovery of Poetry*, an accessible "field guide" to reading and writing poetry, she shares her passion with readers. Beginning with basic terminology and techniques, from texture and sound to rhyme and repetition, Mayes shows how focusing on one aspect of a poem can help you to better understand, appreciate, and enjoy the reading and writing experience. In addition to many creative and helpful composition ideas, following each lyrical and lively discussion is a thoughtful selection of poems. With its wonderful anthology from Shakespeare to Jamaica Kincaid, *The Discovery of Poetry* is an insightful, invaluable guide to what Mayes calls "the natural pleasures of language—a happiness we were born to have."

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I've bought and read many "Introduction to Poetry" books over the past several years, but this one is my favorite. Most of the books of this genre are long on technical information, but lack passion behind the text. Think of a book about music written by a mathematician; The writer might get the technical points across, but the joy of experiencing the music would probably be lacking. This book presents both the technical information necessary to enjoy poetry, and a selection of wonderful poems

that demonstrate the principles first hand. In fact, Ms. Mayes is so adept at selecting suitable poems that I think she could prove to be an anthologist of the highest caliber (hopefully she'll read this suggestion and take it to heart). I recommend this book to anyone who has been baffled by poetry in the past. Enjoy the delights of this book for a time and you'll be hooked on poetry for good. By the way, do the writing exercises too. You just may find your inner poet.

I bought this book for my daughter, since she came home from school suddenly interested in writing poetry and I found it so fascinating that I bought another copy for myself. I've read Mayes's other books and loved them and sense that same person speaking, clearly and directly, but this time about a subject I've never really warmed to. And she's opened my eyes to another world, helped me tear down and push away all those cliches I had about poetry. Now I'm not so "afraid" when I read a poem that I'm not going to get it. She's very calmly shown me that a poem can just "be." My daughter loves it too and she's sixteen. Highly recommended for those who have always wondered why they never really understood what poetry was all about, but really wanted to.

I was excited to discover this book, although its massive size at first made me curious. How much stuff is packed in here? I wondered. The excellent features of this book include the "In Your Notebook" sections where you can try out the techniques and strategies Mayes has just explained. I also really enjoy the variety of poets whose works are introduced. However, there are some moments where there is so much detail that I found myself losing interest and not retaining as much. In that respect, it really showed Mayes background with a university-type audience. It is definitely worth it to have on any aspiring poet's shelf. I can see myself using this as a reference and as an inspiration for years to come.

The Discovery of Poetry is not only an excellent reference for various forms and styles, it is an excellent anthology for the person who has an interest in poetry, but who is unsure of what to buy. If you could only afford to buy two books on poetry, this should be one of them!

Anyone who is familiar with Mayes' books *Under a Tuscan Sun* and *Bella Tuscany* will not be at all surprised that she has written a book about poetry. In recounting the story of how she and her husband discovered and renovated their home in Italy, her writing moves with the rhythms of a poet's voice and savors words for their sounds and textures as well as the images they evoke. The author of 5 books of poetry and a creative writing teacher at San Francisco State University for

years, Mayes has turned her experiences into a simple, straightforward approach to reading, appreciating and writing poetry. Simple, however, does not mean easy. As Mayes is quick to point out, poetry requires concentration, contemplation and the suspension of our linear and time driven expectations. Even the results of reading and writing poetry, she cautions, are not what we might expect. "...many of us are overtrained to read for factual information," says Mayes. "Overly pragmatic, we look for a result, a conclusion." Mayes' approach to studying poetry is to set the simple fundamentals that are common to all poetry before the reader and then let poems themselves illustrate her points. The book is divided into 11 parts, which cover everything from reading and interpretation, points of view, and imagery, to the mechanics of rhyme and meter, traditional versus free verse, and tips for would be writers. However, the thing that impressed me most throughout the book were her choices of poems to include, and her insightful commentary on them. These comments are offered with genuine pleasure and the graciousness of a friend sharing something she truly loves. There is nothing high handed or condescending in her discussions. Instead you feel like you've been invited to share in a delightful secret or been offered the chance to join a special club. This is a book that given the time and careful consideration it deserves will help you fall in love with poetry.

Poetry is a very personal art form, and there will always be divergent reactions to the same work. I have read several textbooks and anthologies. This may not be the strongest text or the broadest anthology, yet taken as a whole it is the most inspiring book about poetry I have ever read. This is a text that stirs the readers emotions to something other than boredom. It was refreshing to find a text that admits that the scansion of a poem is not set in concrete but can be open to interpretation. The selection of poems is broad and avoids the flood of dated political "poems" that have dominated college texts in years past. Any professor would do well to include this in their book list. I am amazed that any teacher would think a course in poetry or literature could be taught from only one text.

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