

"Always look for the 'meta.'" from poet and teacher Paul W. Hankins:

"This something I say often in Room 407. I try to tuck some of this into my own artwork and the poetry I create. 'Meta' is the term I would use to describe Marjorie Maddox's new collection from Kelsay Books, *INSIDE OUT: POEMS ON WRITING AND READING POEMS WITH INSIDER EXERCISES*. As you can see, the 'meta' here seems to begin with a title that suggests the generative nature of poetry.

There is a sort of reciprocity without an edge like a Mobius loop that leaves the reader to wonder: Does the poetic form dictate the kind of content that must fit inside or does the content begin to seek its own shape on the page? Marjorie Maddox presents a response to a question such as this while inviting possibilities for conversations that would extend beyond the answer we think we might know.

With blurbs by Father Goose, Charles Ghigna, and Dr. Sylvia Vardell of Pomelo Books and the Poetry Friday series, I was already hooked on this book. I knew I would need to see it. Now, having read through the book on a Tuesday morning, I am not only better for the experience, I find myself longing again for the classroom where I would be putting these poems up on the document camera for consideration.

At a slim sixty-one pages, Marjorie Maddox packs this book with invitations to not only consider but to cogitate. As a somewhat experienced poet in the area of wordplay, I am amazed at what Maddox is able to do within the form and the shape to present within that space a comment on the form itself. Much of this book is like walking around in multi-colored stanzas with a combination of what might be the U.S. Poet Laureate meets Willie Wonka. There is a playfulness within the text that does not get in the way of presentation of poetry and poetic forms. The "fun" of, and within, the forms will make Maddox's book a go-to for classroom teachers looking to invite poetry into their classrooms.

And this will be a push. How many times are students taught the rules of the form which are sometimes most rigid to really look at the relaxed posture one might take in entering into a form to consider how the subject fits or could fit. Marjorie Maddox invites us to take our own subjects into the dressing rooms of form to see what fits in a three-way mirror of subject, poet, and form.

In my classroom, we use Sondra Perl's *FELT SENSE* book to enter into our year-long multigenre/multiform project. The first five poems in Maddox's book are actually "sense" poems asking the reader to consider the senses attached to poetry. We all know how a poem might feel to us upon seeing one on a page, right? Or is this a sort of perception? Have we ever thought about entering into poetry via the individual senses? Maddox invites the reader to do just this. "How to Hear a Poem," the second piece in the collection is a concrete poem that spirals inward and reminded me of a sort of earworm presenting on the page.

As I say, "Look for the 'meta.'"

In "How to Befriend a Poem," Maddox seems to assuage our shared trepidation that we may not understand a poem. Opening lines include, "Best to offer intriguing conversation/that's light on analysis." The last couple of lines of the piece read, "Sometimes he's shy/and just needs a little coaxing./Much of what he has to say/lies between the lines."

Even in this short sample, we could begin to pick apart shape and form and "eye rhymes in 'shy' and 'say.'" The internal rhymes of lines and lines. And this is before we get to the real comment of the poem that would serve to bust the lock on poetry for so many. This is the gift that Maddox's book could be the classroom where forms are introduced each year with formality. Here is an informal look at poetry that suggests the genre might be your friend.

Within "Dramatic Monologue," Maddox brings the 'meta' in a manner that would have a public speaking student navigating enough Ps for a thousand pods. All the while building on the idea that poetry invites of itself and one who might write it a multitude of personas and presentations.

And the more technical terms we almost never get to like "Enjambment" and "Caesura?" These are given Maddox's creative treatment as well. Maddox is like the scrapbook artist that shows you a MOMA-worthy look at the family reunion when we are still trying to remember not to touch Instamatic film that is still processing (I hope Maddox likes what I have done here; I'm inspired by this book, I'll tell you).

If iambic pentameter is still giving your students in the room fits, then Maddox's "Getting Ready with Iambic" could become an introductory text allowing for an entry point and toehold into a subject that always began with stressed and unstressed markers that always left me the former and not the later.

Sonnets (English and Italian). Sestinas. Clerihews. Villanelles. They are forms we would love to get to but often the language of the masters gets in the way of how the room is set up for the guest. Maddox invites these forms with accessible language that is figurative without being frustrating.

Maddox completes the book with nine ready-for-the-room invitations for students to consider and create. In no time, they might be composing for Maddox's gentle touch on this genre. A love for poetry and how it is created is not kept from Maddox's reader as she reminds us that this language was never meant to be shibboleth but, rather, shared. Everyone is invited to play here with the ideas and the words they have brought.

A glossary of poetic terms is included as paratext for the reader. Only here does Maddox begin to point the reader to some of the more classic poets and poems we, as ELA teachers, would probably want them to see. The terms are cross-referenced back to the original poems within the collection to help solidify the term to the approach the reader has already seen in poetic form.

I am so glad to have stumbled upon this collection of poems. It is releasing during a time when many a book could get lost. Without fanfare and launch, these are the collections that some of us may know and pull from our sleeves to share at a conference only to watch for you to scribble down the author and the title. Save that conference registration fee.

Marjorie Maddox's book is the one for which you were looking to get your poets cooking. Accessible and full of playful attitude, reading this book made me really think about how much I am missing a classroom full of writers right now."-poet and teacher Paul W. Hankins