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Introduction to Poetry

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OPPORTUNITY

Introduction to Poetry

by Dr. Robert Sam Lackey

Poetry is pudding.
My father used to warn me,
"Don't argue with people over
Matters of taste.
You can't talk them into liking
Tapioca
If they don't."

Who said what?
What color is the wheelbarrow?
Data.
The part of poetry beyond the data
Is style, music, chocolate or vanilla,
A counterpoint of carmel,
An ironic crunch of cone.

Poetry is dance.
Sure, nobody has to dance.
We can step, step, step, step,
Solid, sane, even heel-to-toe,
Steadily covering the ground
From "A to B to C to C."

But when our spirits carry us
Out of the endless lock-step lines
And shuffling cardboard crowds,
And we make a move
With energy and grace,
When our words leap and climb,
When they sing and swing
And sting—
And the listeners start
To sway and feel
The waves of energy and light,
The beat, the swirling sound,
The heat

Then
Poetry
Has
Happened...
Whatever poetry might be.

We know the pudding from the Lo-Cal soup.
We know that dancing makes
A deeper sense, a higher leap,
A jump that clears the fence
Of Taste-Free, plodding, practicality.

Most practical of all,
I say,
Is to catch the words with wings

and soar

Beyond the edges of ourselves
Into the space
That lets us live
Like sparks across the gap
Of time or race or sex
Or sensibility.

Spock-like, we link
Through the alien rock-like skin
The visions join
The nerves entwine
The lives transfuse

And we have tasted others'
Joys and tears...
Perhaps across a thousand years
Of silent dust
And tombstones blown
To sand.

What else can speak to us—
Who want to straddle both the future and the
past—
But codes that lock our essence out of time?

The spiral language of the
Cell
And the spinning crystal of the
Rhyme.■

DR. ROBERT SAM LACKEY has been a member of the SOSU Language Arts Department since 1970. He teaches Philosophy and a variety of courses in the field of English, including Introduction to Poetry.