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## Introduction to Poetry

Robert Sam Lackey

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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.