



The Alchemy of Illuminated Poetry®: Seven Steps to Your Personal Gold

Xianna Michaels

Xianna Michaels, Illustrator

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This is a master class experience on the art and science of illustrated poetry.

Xianna Michaels's *The Alchemy of Illuminated Poetry®* is a surprising and successful hybrid of poetry and prose that serves as a meditative experience. A deeply personal yet universal outline, the book is unconventional in the best sense of the word.

As explained here, illuminated poetry is the term for illustrated poetry, and alchemy "simply means the art of transformation." Through seven different steps, Michaels presents a guide to what she calls "poem-mandalas," drawings and poetry that she makes with her left, non-dominant hand. The process is like "spiritual alchemy," which she says "is above all about inner transformation."

The lessons begin with the presentation of "Prima Materia," or a personal moment or concept that has meaning to the practitioner and also serves as the foundational core of the work. Michaels suggests writing down a prima materia each day and working to simply observe as the poetry "spills out of you."

Michaels jumps into the process by instructing with the universal "we" and "us," bridging the gap between teacher and students. This creates seasoned, easy-to-understand language to help guide newcomers through the complex topics covered in the book.

Throughout the seven steps, amid a game plan for transcendent and visionary poetry, Michaels shares a series of "Facets." The facets are small historical or logistical anecdotes that provide the collection of lessons with a loose narrative presence.

Whether through a mini-biography of Maria Prophetissa or a brief contemplation of the limitations of time, the facets are another testament to the book's intention to educate and enlighten, more than anything else.

Michaels provides samples of personal poems and mandalas and even builds up to an innovative verse of her own creation, "Xoem." This blend between the personal and professional provides the ultimate teaching experience and helps connect each step that is needed to create illuminated poetry.

In the seventh and final step, "Personal Gold," Michaels draws on a popular alchemy ideal: "The alchemists' quest to turn lead into gold, though certainly pursued by many, was also a metaphor for refinement of the self to attain one's Personal Gold."

As the book constantly reinforces, this lead-to-gold transformation is the product of continuous practice and an eternal curiosity.

With *The Alchemy of Illuminated Poetry®*, Xianna Michaels has created a master class experience on the art and

science of illustrated poetry. The intricate brown-and-gold packaging is reason enough to pick up the book, but the written and illustrated artwork within is what makes this such an intriguing read.

LILLIAN BROWN (May 21, 2017)

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