FOREWORD REVIEWS THE INDIE WE LOVE.

FOREWORD REVIEW ♥♥♥♥♥ LANGUAGE ARTS

Writing Poetry to Save Your Life: How to Find the Courage to Tell Your Stories

Maria Mazziotti Gillan
MiroLand (Apr 30, 2013)
Softcover $20.00 (200pp)
978-1-55071-747-1

Poet gives straightforward, caring advice on how beginners can develop courage against fears and doubts to find the stories they have to tell.

Maria Mazziotti Gillan's poetry writing guide is based on one fundamental belief: We all have stories to tell. There are no magic formulas to be had here; rather, Gillan makes readers feel like they're sitting across from her at the kitchen table while she dishes out ample servings of encouragement. Her advice is straightforward and caring, and for those who have considered writing poetry, her book reinforces the notion that it's never too late.

Gillan, the poet and director of the creative writing program at Binghamton University-SUNY, provides guidance that stems from her own experience as a working class, Italian-American wife and mother from Paterson, New Jersey. Believing at first that she couldn't write poetry because she wasn't "poetic" enough, she began turning to her own experiences and found a wealth of things that she felt moved to write about—and that she discovered also moved others.

Structured in very short chapters (two to four pages each), the book focuses on four main areas: finding the stories you have to tell, improving your writing, making your writing come alive, and developing courage against fears and doubts. Each chapter contains simple, accessible exercises as well as an example poem to help make each point clear. Additionally, she mentions other example poems (the majority of poems are the author's), which are referenced in the book's bibliography.

The most extensive and, perhaps, most valuable part of her book comes in the final chapter, which is more than one hundred pages long and offers writing prompts, divided into blocks of five. The prompts range from a line that immerses readers in a scene ("Climbing barbed wire fences") to ideas that trigger memories ("Write about Sunday dinner at Grandmother's"). Schedule twenty minutes a day to write is the goal she lays out to her readers. The prompts are meant to make the goal easy—you open the book, pick a prompt from the five prompts for that day, and get writing! And because there are five prompts for every day, you can easily repeat the process.

Aimed at beginning writers, *Writing Poetry to Save Your Life* is a perfect writing guide for those who have considered writing and wondered just how to get started.

JENNIFER FANDEL (May 31, 2013)

Disclosure: This article is not an endorsement, but a review. The author provided free copies of his/her book to have his/her book reviewed by a professional reviewer. No fee was paid by the author for this review. Foreword Reviews only recommends books that we love. Foreword Magazine, Inc. is disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255.