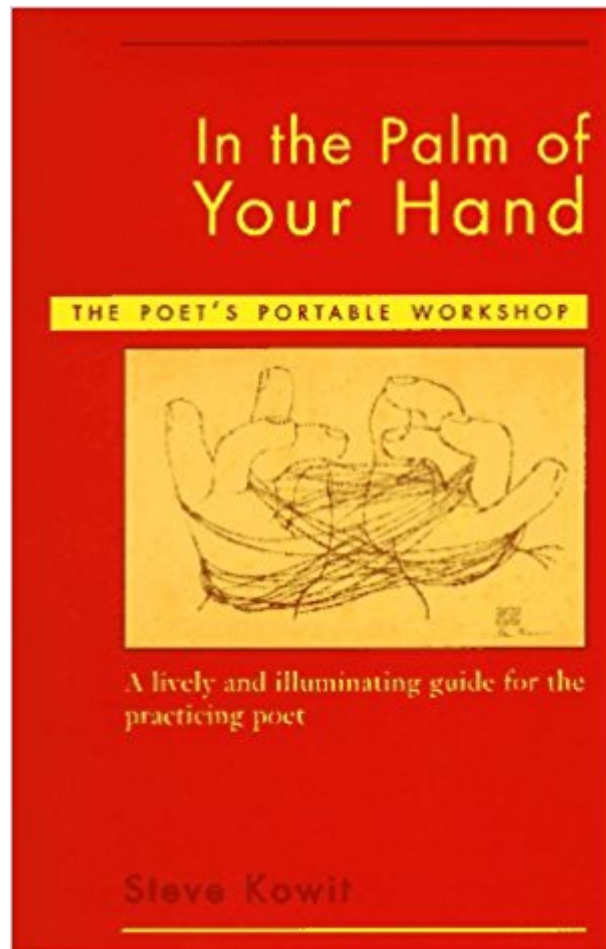




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In The Palm Of Your Hand: The Poet's Portable Workshop



Synopsis

An illuminating and invaluable guide for beginners wary of modern poetry, as well as for more advanced students who want to sharpen their craft and write poems that expand their technical skills, excite their imaginations, and engage their deepest memories and concerns. Ideal for teachers who have been searching for a way to inspire students with a love for writing--and reading--contemporary poetry.

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Customer Reviews

Steve Kowit believes, and rightly so, that poetry should show, not tell. The same could be said for good teaching, which is what makes this volume so remarkable. In *In the Palm of Your Hand* Kowit employs more than 100 poems and excerpts to illustrate his discussions on everything from metaphor to meter to metaphysics. Working your way through this book--and it is work--is like sitting in on a terrific creative-writing seminar, minus the criticism (both constructive and destructive) of fellow students. If you go by the book, you'll have written at least 69 poems by the end. Because of its explication of the basic tenets of poetry, *In the Palm of Your Hand* might be mistaken for a beginners' book only. That would be a shame. There are so many good ideas here that more experienced poets won't want to miss out; Kowit has lots of exciting ways to invigorate one's writing. (Here's a favorite quick tip: "A good rule of thumb is never to use a word that you're proud of.") *In the Palm of Your Hand* is also recommended for members of writing groups who are interested in imposing some kind of structure on their meetings.

Kowit really delivers what his title promises, so that reading the book is like taking a workshop with a generous poet willing to share everything he has learned about the creative process and the craft of poetry. Conversational in tone, it reads rather like an informal lecture. Kowit covers a lot of technical material on metrical variations and line breaks and sound, and he balances it by attending to the sources of poetry in dream and emotion, in longing and loss. Although likely to find its largest audience among aspiring poets, Kowit's effort is substantial enough to be of use to more practiced poets and to poetry readers, too. Patricia Monaghan

I found about 2/3 of the prompts and exercises useful in my own work the first time through, which is a very good average for me. I mostly read it wishing I'd had it when I taught Introductory Creative Writing; it would be an excellent textbook. Most of the exercises would challenge beginners to do their best work, and it's really refreshing to see a book on poetry not insist that everyone's a perfect and special flower of a poet, and that every poem is brilliant simply because it exists. The idea that poetry can be appallingly bad -- and that writing said appalling poetry can be a step in development rather than an automatic death sentence to someone's hopes of writing -- should be presented to beginners as soon as possible. The chapter "Awful Poems" is worth the price of admission on its own because of how well it does just that...then follows up by showing how to recognize bad poetry and what can be done about it.

Over the past five years I've been facilitating an independent writers' workshop in Saint Paul, Minnesota, with a group of marvelous writers who also happen to be excellent respondents to other people's writing. We've had visiting poets and used various texts. Hands down, *In the Palm of Your Hand* is the best of all the books we've used in the group. It is a well-written how-to book with intelligent and heart-felt observations and information about poetry, marvelous example poems, and inspiring exercises for beginning to advanced poets. I was sad to learn of the recent death of the book's author, Steve Kowit. We're grateful that he gave us this marvelous book.

Great book for beginners or for relighting the fire!

I saw a sample of this elsewhere, connected to a poet who studied with Steve. Her work, and the sample from this book really moved me. I wanted to know more, try some of his writing exercises. He has passed away, I understand. It seems he must have been a great teacher, one of those special ones.

This has definitely helped my daughter with her online creative writing class.

One of my favorite "poetry workshop/exercise" books ever. A good choice for a poetry workshop, a poet trying to stretch his chops, or just for teaching poetry exercises as part of a creative writing unit. The only comparable book I've read is huge, out of print and expensive to get.

This book came to me as an exercise work book. I started it and realized that he was reaching a goal with the way he handled the teachings. His way of explaining how a style was built from the bottom up and the steps, as in one chapter after another, made creating so easy. I stuck to each and every lesson and poem assignment. If it meant research, I took a trip to the library. An adventure in trying different styles! I would put my mind, body and soul into what I would put on paper. We all know that writers have to write. Some of my old poems were redone with his ideas. My friends saw my revised poems and went "Oh WOW! And this is from the studies from this book?" A compliment for me and applause for his lessons. I highly suggest any poet, beginner, intermediate or advanced, to do read this book. AND I would suggest going back and redoing the exercises from the start. It was from my open-mindedness and my perseverance that would have me do each exercise. It wasn't work anymore, it was fun!!

I haven't finished the book yet, but from what I read, it inspired me and taught me a lot though I am writing now for about six years. I recommend it for everyone. I'm sure everyone will find something useful there.

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