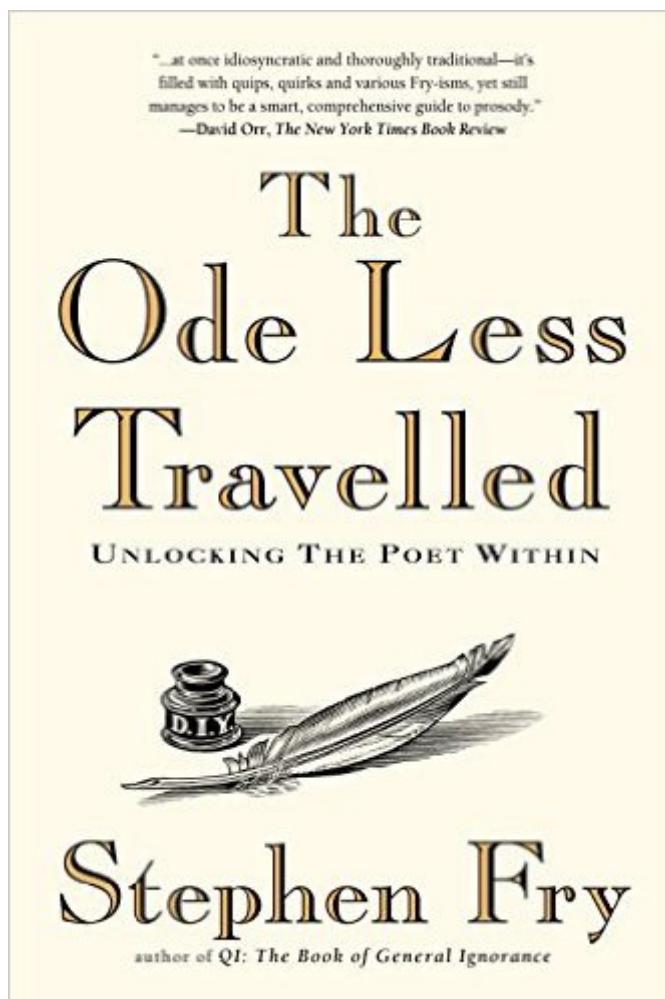


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# The Ode Less Travelled: Unlocking The Poet Within



## Synopsis

Comedian and actor Stephen Fry's witty and practical guide, now in paperback, gives the aspiring poet or student the tools and confidence to write and understand poetry. Stephen Fry believes that if one can speak and read English, one can write poetry. In *The Ode Less Travelled*, he invites readers to discover the delights of writing poetry for pleasure and provides the tools and confidence to get started. Through enjoyable exercises, witty insights, and simple step-by-step advice, Fry introduces the concepts of Metre, Rhyme, Form, Diction, and Poetics. Most of us have never been taught to read or write poetry, and so it can seem mysterious and intimidating. But Fry, a wonderfully competent, engaging teacher and a writer of poetry himself, sets out to correct this problem by explaining the various elements of poetry in simple terms, without condescension. Fry's method works, and his enthusiasm is contagious as he explores different forms of poetry: the haiku, the ballad, the villanelle, and the sonnet, among many others. Along the way, he introduces us to poets we've heard of but never read. *The Ode Less Travelled* is not just the survey course you never took in college, it's a lively celebration of poetry that makes even the most reluctant reader want to pick up a pencil and give it a try.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

In this delightfully erudite, charming and soundly pedagogical guide to poetic form, British actor (narrator of the Harry Potter movies, among other roles), novelist and secret poet Fry leads the reader through a series of lessons on meter, rhythm, rhyme and stanza length and reveals the structural logic of every imaginable poetic form, including the haiku, the ballad, the ode and the

sonnet. Writing poetry, like any hobby, should be fun, Fry claims, and while talent is inborn, technique can be learned. Inviting readers to study the wealth of choices of form available in the world's major poetic traditions, Fry himself pens intentionally vapid yet entertaining poems that demonstrate each form's rules and patterning, and ends each lesson with wittily devised exercises for readers. Fry rails against the dumbing down of verse in a section subtitled "Stephen gets all cross": "It is as if we have been encouraged to believe that form is a kind of fascism and that to acquire knowledge is to drive a jackboot into the face of those poor souls who are too incurious, dull-witted or idle to find out what poetry can be." Fry has created an invaluable and highly enjoyable reference book on poetic form, which deserves to achieve widespread academic adoption, despite or even because of its saucy and Anglocentric tone. (Aug. 17) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

The author, a noted novelist, comedian, and actor, doubts his new book will make it onto school curricula, and that's a shame. Of all the poetry guides you're likely to read (and there are a ton of them out there), this one's probably the most entertainingly written and downright useful. The book is full of technical terms--spondee, enjambment, trochee--but these are explained so cleverly and so clearly that we very quickly can use them as though we've been doing so all our lives. The book is an education not only in the mechanics of poetry but also in its history. And, naturally, it's full to bursting with the author's delightfully impish wit: "The above," he writes at one point, "is precisely the kind of worthless arse-dribble I am forced to read whenever I agree to judge a poetry competition." Fry's legion of fans will get an enormous kick out of it, and English-lit students will learn more from this one book than they will from a stack of more traditional textbooks. David PittCopyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

This book has proven its worth tenfold! As a student of British Literature, I have often found myself a bit anxious when it comes to writing about poetry. Mr. Fry has come to my rescue countless times with this book. His clear descriptions and gentle encouragement have turned my fear into appreciation. It is intelligent without being verbose. Even if you have no intention of writing poetry, students and the casually interested will reap benefits from this book. I can't think of a better teacher than Stephen Fry and am indebted to him for helping me in my hour of need.

This is a wonderfully witty book. If, before I retire, I teach creative writing again, I'm using it as my text. It fairly brims with wit and wisdom. My only quibble's with the fact that, when Fry criticizes Hardy's use of the word "hue" in "The Convergence of the Twain," he does so in what appears to be blissful ignorance of the fact that "hue" does not have to mean "color." I don't think it's fair of Fry to pick on Hardy for having known more about the word "hue" than Fry does. All this hue and cry about "hue," however, is small potatoes up against the delight that Fry offers us page by page in this sterling book.

I LOVED this book. I am reasonably new to poetry, having only been reading and writing it extensively for a couple of years. I've looked on-line for "how to write better poetry", which is well worth doing, however, Stephen Fry takes all the results from all the google searches and condenses it down into a superbly ordered and explained treatise on why he likes poetry and how poetry is written, analysed and discussed. All of it told in an accessible, witty and fun way. Typical Fry. I have been hanging out with poets for years. I discuss their work, I discuss my own work, but we rarely, if ever, discuss meter. Most poets I know and talk to barely know what meter is... it's that thing that the high school teacher glazed over, because she didn't understand it herself and that was just one of the things on the curriculum that has to be taught on the way to sanitizing poetry out of the students (I generalize - that was my poetry experience. If you had better, I envy you!). Fry makes it front and centre. Poetry and meter are linked and understanding meter will make you a better poet. I believe this strongly. His overviews of the different types of rhyme (he has at least 4), poetry form and all his examples are lots of fun to read. I was particularly taken with the villanelle form, which Fry confessed, was the form that led to him writing this book in the first place. I borrowed this book from the library and took it on holiday with me. About half way through, I fought to get an internet connection and ordered a copy, which is now sitting in front of me. It is now my poetry reference and one I go to often.

I never read that much poetry, maybe because, like a lot of others I remember being made to read it in school and it seemed dry, boring and irrelevant. School textbooks and lessons seem to have a way of kicking all the life and energy out of literature no matter how good or influential it is. So to me this book was a kind of antidote to that. Stephen Fry has written a charming and entertaining book on poetry and how it works. It's a fun read and it is also a serious book about poetic devices and techniques. He explains in detail the principles of rhyme and meter, gives examples and challenges the reader to try it for themselves which was and fun and instructive. His tone in the book is very

direct and it has the feeling that he's talking to you personally. Like listening to a clever friend sharing their expertise with you. Lots of examples included with some commentary from the author. I never really understood meter in poetry before and now I'm reading it in a new way. And I'm enjoying it. I highly recommend this entertaining sometimes challenging book.

It's been a long time since my last poetry class, and I'll have to confess that even back then my attention sometimes wandered. Stephen Fry is a writer, comedian, and actor. He was the comedy partner of Hugh Laurie (‘House’) for years, and if you saw the recent *The Hobbit: The Desolation of Smaug*, he played the foppish Master of Laketown. His writing talent shines here, and the *Ode Less Travelled* is a wonderful review (or introduction, if you never studied poetry) to the mechanics of poetry. Fry covers most of the basic components of poetry, and offers wonderful examples from great and lesser-known literature, as well as his own hilarious constructions. The book is designed as a tongue-in-cheek workbook, where you are encouraged (ordered?) to try the various techniques yourself. If you have an interest in poetry, or wonder why some people do, this book is a delightful learning tool.

I love reading and writing, and sometimes I succeed in creating cute little poems for my penpals. However, I really wanted to learn more about poetry: how to understand it, how to read it, and most importantly, how to write it. Mr. Fry explains things in a way that everyone can understand. He does not demand perfection from the get-go; rather, he shares his own regular poems to show us how easy it can be. It's quite a step-by-step process. I really appreciate the effort he's given to make us understand poetry. There are nice exercises that will expand your scope of poetry, and I, for one, really enjoy doing them. That being said, I recommend that you buy a hard copy of the book. I have the Kindle version (for Kindle Touch), and in order to do all of the marking up that is requested, I must copy the poems into a notebook before marking them up. It's a bit time-consuming. This is definitely a 5-star book for learning to write and to read poetry.

Best introduction to prosody I've found. Fry introduces technical concepts of form, rhyme and meter in an accessible and paced fashion that allows the neophyte to acquire the information more thoroughly than other prosodic manuals. I'd recommend it to any beginner.

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