

Poet Jodie Hollander



Tell us a bit about yourself.

My husband and I are in Flagstaff for the fall term. I'm working as the poet-in-residence for the Museum of Northern Arizona. I always knew I wanted to be a poet; it was just really a matter of mustering the courage to give it a shot. In 2008, I decided to return to graduate school. I enrolled in a writing program in England, and it was there that my career as a poet really began.

What are the responsibilities of a poet-in-residence?

I'll be giving readings, teaching poetry workshops and writing new poems about the beautiful Colorado Plateau. I'll also be attending museum functions, learning as much as I possibly can about the rich history of the region, and helping to spread the word about the wealth of wonderful offerings at the museum.

Last year you released a collection of poems, *My Dark Horses*. What do these poems reveal about yourself?

The book is a sort of poetic memoir that traces my unusual childhood experience of growing up in a family of professional classical musicians. My father is a pianist, my mother a cellist, my sister a soprano and my brother a violinist. I spent much of my childhood lying underneath my father's piano, observing the practice sessions and the unique family dynamics. To learn more, I recommend picking up a copy of the book!

Do you have a particular process for writing?

I like to be in a quiet place, usually disconnected from media and the bustling world. My little studio in the forest at the museum is really an ideal place to work, and I can't wait to write some new poems. I tend to write slowly and methodically. Typically a poem undergoes 40-50 drafts before it's finished, and poems can take months, years, even decades before they are finished! I have learned I must be patient.

What is most difficult about being a poet today?

It's challenging to earn a livable wage as a poet, so most of us poets take on other jobs, which can make finding time to create new work a real challenge. One of the greatest gifts of this fall residency is that there will be blocks of uninterrupted time and space to explore some new ideas. I'm really looking forward to sharing my work and passion for the craft in Flagstaff, a place that really celebrates and values the arts.

Which poets do you admire?

Robert Frost, Donald Justice, Sylvia Plath, Philip Larkin and Louise Bogan, to name a few.

How does someone begin writing poetry?

Many of us had poems read to us as children, and many of us studied and wrote poems in school. So usually when adults return to poetry, it feels quite familiar and natural. There is no right or wrong way to start writing poetry. I tell people to begin with a prompt, a free write, or trying to mimic a poem they admire. In the beginning, the most important thing is to read as widely and deeply as possible, and then practice as much as you can and see where the process takes you. 🏔️