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Poet Laureate Frequently Asked Questions

Caryn Mirriam-Goldberg

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Poet Laureate Frequently Asked Questions

What does being Poet Laureate of Kansas entail?

The Poet Laureate of Kansas is a public office which entails representing poetry and the literary arts in Kansas, and increasing literary arts opportunities and resources for Kansans.

What are your goals as Poet Laureate?

I seek to grow the presence of poetry and the literary arts in the lives of Kansans by doing what I can to lift up and make more visible what we read and write. My project, *Poetry Across Kansas: Reading and Writing Our Way Home*, includes workshops, training session for community people to lead ongoing writing circles, readings and talks. In addition, my monthly radio show, "Write For Your Life," on High Plains Public Radio offers people in the western half of our state portraits of writers, samples of their writing, and writing prompts people can try at home. I want to help more Kansans experience the power of words in their everyday lives, and through what they read and write, feel a deeper connection with their communities, their own voice and vision, and the beauty of Kansas.

Are you available for interviews?

Yes, and I'm happy to focus on whatever will best help your readers and/or listeners find greater meaning in their writing through writing and reading poetry.

What services do you offer?

Through the Kansas Arts Commission Arts on Tour program, I'm available to come to your community to give readings, talks, workshops, and also training sessions for writers, artists, community leaders, educators, etc. to learn how to facilitate an ongoing writing circle. You can apply for an Arts on Tour grant which, if funded, covers up to 40% of the cost of a program, through KAC. Please see (WEBSITE). I also travel to communities regularly to give readings, talks, workshops and even collaborative programs. As a poet, fiction and non-fiction writer, and songwriter, and as someone with ample experience both in the initial writing process and the romance of revision. I also offer workshops in the care and feeding of the writer, publishing, organizing readings and community events, and right livelihood as a writer.

How do I arrange to bring you to my community?

You contact me directly, and the best way to reach me is through email:
CarynMirriamGoldberg@gmail.com.

What are your fees?

You can see my fees for the Kansas Arts on Tour at www.arts.ks.gov, and for other events, I'm happy to negotiate what works best for all of us. To paraphrase the words of William Stafford, one of our most famous and most amazing Kansas poets, please aim to pay me as much as you can afford to honor both your budget and my work.

Can you meet with me to help me with my writing or career?

While I support everyone finding their way to their best writing, I can't meet with people individually to review poems, stories, manuscripts, or to talk with you about new directions for your writing life. The Poet Laureate position is not a salaried position, and I work full-time in addition to doing my best to help represent the literary arts and grow poetry throughout our state.

Can you come to your writing group for free?

In general, most of my “gigs” involve readings, workshops, talks and official functions in addition to the radio show I do monthly, leaving me little time to visit writing groups except in rare instances. I can come to your writing group for a fee to facilitate workshop or particular session, and/or share with the writing group leaders resources, and I want to support writing circles and groups flourishing as much as possible in our state.

You're not from around here, are you?

I was born in Brooklyn, N.Y., and lived there until I was eight and my family moved to central New Jersey, but I've been in the midwest along the I-70 corridor since 1979 and in Kansas since 1983. My family lives on land south of Lawrence where my husband's family settled six generations ago.

What are your publications?

I've been a poet for over 35 years, and I've written four books of poetry (*Landed*, *Animals in the House*, *Reading the Body* and *Lot's Wife*). I also write fiction and have two novels in the works, and I've written a memoir, *The Sky Begins At Your Feet*. Additionally, I've edited several anthologies.

What is your experience?

As I've developed my writing, I've studied poetry, fiction and memoir both formally and informally. My MA in Creative Writing and Ph.D. in English (with a focus on poetry) at the University of Kansas are accompanied by many years of reading and secretly studying (that is, I felt like their student but in most cases, they never met me) with various writers have taught me a great deal about the craft and passion of strong writing. For over 17 years, I've lead community writing groups for many populations, including adults in transition, children and teens, elders, public housing resident, the Latino community in Kansas City, people of color in other locations, men, women, people living with cancer and other serious illness, health professionals and others. I learned a great deal about facilitating such groups through extensive group facilitation training through the bioregional movement. My facilitation training and experience led me to found the only college program of its kind, Transformative Language Arts, which educates master's level students on using writing, storytelling and performance for community building and personal growth. I've also taught at the college level every semester since the fall of 1986 at the University of Kansas, Friends University, Haskell Indian Nations University, and since 1996, Goddard College.

Does Goddard, Kansas have a college?

No, and sorry for the confusion. Goddard College is a small liberal arts college in Plainfield, Vermont, and all its programs are low-residency, which means students and faculty come from all over the country for a week-long residency at the start of each 18-week semester. At the residency, students map out and plan their own individualized study, and then, once back home, work with one faculty member

one-on-one by sending their faculty member packets of their writing (creative writing sometimes but often writing about books read and research conducted). Faculty members, who work with a small group of students each semester, send back each student long, individualized letters on how to go even deeper into their studies. Almost all the students are non-traditional, and the college offers nine programs, including the Individualized MA program, in which I teach. (www.goddard.edu)

Where I can go to learn more about writing or to get one-on-one help or take classes?

I have some resources on my blog, which you can reach through my website – www.CarynMirriamGoldberg.com (just click on “blog”), including transcripts of my HPPR radio show, which feature writing exercises you can try on your own. I also recommend a resource I maintain for Goddard College – www.TLAresources.wordpress.com – which includes hundreds of websites and thousands of book titles on expressive and creative writing, and related areas. To find someone to work with one-on-one, please contact your local art center – some art centers keep lists of editors and writers who you can contact and contract with. If you're in the eastern part of the state, you can also contact The Writers Place (www.writersplace.org) in Kansas City, MO. For classes, you can check out any creative writing classes offered by local colleges and community colleges, art centers, etc. You can also start your own writing group, and together, learn more about how to bring your strongest writing to the surface (and I have resources on starting and running your own group, including an extensive guide that I'm happy to send you – just drop me an email at CarynMirriamGoldberg@gmail.com).