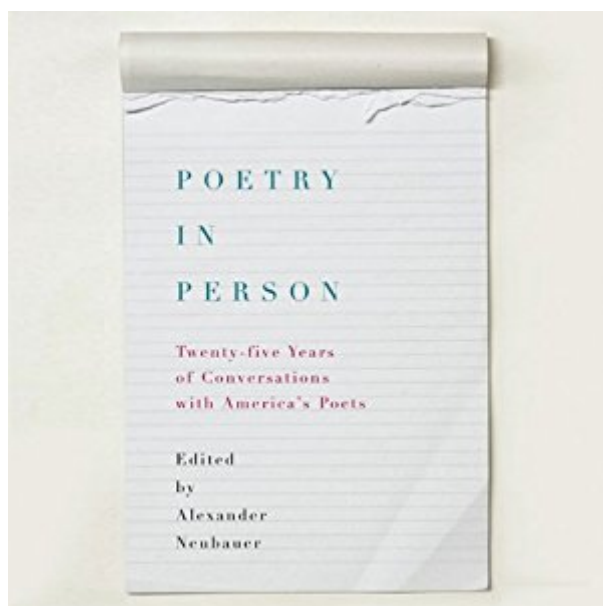


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# Poetry In Person: Twenty-five Years Of Conversation With America's Poets



## Synopsis

This first audio edition of *Poetry in Person: 25 Years of Conversation with America's Poets* (Knopf, 2010), invites listeners into an intimate classroom with eight acclaimed poets: Robert Pinsky, James Merrill, Lucille Clifton, Edward Hirsch, Paul Muldoon, Muriel Rukeyser, Eamon Grennan, and William Matthews. Full of compelling, in-depth conversation about manuscripts and drafts by the poets themselves, plus readings of the finished poems, these historic recordings offer one of the most detailed portraits ever produced of how poems are actually made. Based on "one of the ten best nonfiction books of 2010", this audio version of *Poetry in Person* opens the door to a class run by Pearl London between 1973 and 1998, at the New School in Manhattan's Greenwich Village. London invited scores of poets to bring with them "notes jotted down on the back of an envelope, or worksheets of any sort, even doodles," for a course she said was concerned "essentially with the making of the poem, with the work in progress as process - with both the vision and the revision." Poets accepted her invitation one after another, word of mouth spread, and for 25 years her class became home for Nobel Laureates, National Book Award and Pulitzer Prize winners, U.S. Poets Laureate, and dozens of poets at the cusp of their emergence in letters. After London died in 2003, three boxes of cassette tapes were discovered in a closet in her home, containing recordings of a hundred conversations with poets. Eight of those conversations can now be heard as they happened in this first audio edition of *Poetry in Person*. Audio Production: Jonathan Binzen.

## Book Information

Audible Audio Edition

Listening Length: 5 hours and 59 minutes

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## Customer Reviews

I approached *Poetry in Person* as one would one's Saturday night dose of castor oil. Not pleasant,

but necessary. After all, I am a poet. I read and write a lot of poetry. I talk to a lot of people about poetry and encourage many people to become poets. So I should do this, right? No problem. From the very beginning, these interviews provided real insight into the poets' thinking. These were not the dulling and boring slog through metrics and personal biography of the "What made you want to become a poet?"-type I'd anticipated. They were real people saying real things about their work--and, if nothing else, you'll come away from this book with a new appreciation of the enormous amount of work that goes into making a poem. Every interview is rewarding. Two other things. I just finished reading a collection of interviews by a generally younger group of poets who, to my surprise, all mentioned a real debt to Elizabeth Bishop. This somewhat older generation turned constantly to the essays of Auden and Eliot and the essays and poems of Stevens for auctoritatis and, yes, they referred to the work of Elizabeth Bishop (who was a near contemporary to some of them); but the touchstone poet they most referred to was Rilke, especially the Duino Elegies. Also, I should not wrap this up before I praise the index of this book. This invaluable index was clearly not farmed out to someone in the third basement of the publishing house. Some real work was put into this index by someone who appreciated the goldmine of information presented between the covers of this book. Not only are there the references to poets, which you'd expect, but there are also references to such poetically important topics as "anger in poetry," "form," "line breaks," "rhyme," "rhythm," "revision," and a hundred others, sorted alphabetically by the name of the poet commenting on them. At last! A useful index in a truly useful book.

If you are a poet or a reader of poetry, Neubauer's book belongs in your experience. By that I mean, if you want to inhabit a poem and feel its texture against your psyche, the dialogues between teacher Pearl London and twenty-three of our best modern poets are invaluable aids. One of the featured poets, Derek Walcott says about discussion of his process " I've never done this before. Please do me a favor when you leave this room, don't tell anybody, O.K.? It's not meant as an example of how to write, or how you get a poem. I'm just trying to go into an operation: it's open-heart surgery and you're all looking."This rare combination of personal revelation and professional artistry in action establishes this book's uniqueness in a field saturated with commentaries and suggestions about what makes a good poet and/or poem. These poets, most of whom are alive, tell us of their world and how it reflects in their choices of poetic subject, format, language right down to line structure and punctuation. The degree of intimacy available as a result is a bit like viewing an M.R.I of a poem with the creator as both guide and interpreter.

Inspiring collection of interviews by a dedicated teacher of poetry-writing who has persuaded working poets to come to her classroom. Check the Table of Contents for an index of great modern poets who visited. This book provides a valuable insider's view of how a poet thinks and works. An important piece from each writer-guest is published. I suggest that one read a selection daily, as a poetry-devotional. Not nightly, because the ideas and feelings ignite the reader. For bed-time reading, I prefer a cozy mystery novel. "Poetry in Person" will wake you right up.

What a thorough Wow! Thank you Pearl London - I never knew your class, but thank you for this glimpse into it. What a class it must have been! Thank you Alexander Neubauer for this selection and these editings of the conversations between Pearl and individual poets on their craft and artistry. How welcome and at ease the poets must have felt to talk as openly as they seem to have! Thank you poets for what you said and for what you left us to imagine, for your descriptions of your thinking! What a wonderful book for a poet to read! What a wonderful book for someone new to poetry to read!

Open this handsome volume to any page and you will be absorbed into insightful and intriguing discussions of the creative process of some of the greatest poets working during the last forty years. An acclaimed teacher at the New School in New York invited acclaimed poets to her class, where they discussed their writing in depth. The sessions were taped, rediscovered in recent years, and several dozen elegantly edited with introductions that give helpful context. The result is a work that will inform not just any reader of poetry but anyone fascinated by the creative act.

Pearl London's poetry class interviews are an excellent source for studying the craft of writing poetry. I consult these pages frequently.

I bought this book for a paper I was writing on Louise Gluck, and ended up reading and liking the whole thing. I love all the different bases that the book covers. First of all, the informed, spontaneous conversation between a writer and a careful reader--which reminded me of that collection of interviews from the Believer, "Writers talking to Writers." And then the workshop aspect of it--of students being about to ask the writers directly about their work and their process. And then, finally, the drafts that the poets bring in with them to the workshops (many of these are included in the book), that show the evolution and the fluidity of the poems. Added to all of this are the author's short but illuminating introductions to the poets; I wasn't familiar with some of them, but he did a

great job putting them quickly in context. All in all, a really great book!

This is a marvelous book with rich insights into the process of writing poems and poets' views of their own work. I'm a neophyte poet but I'm sure it would be a treasure for anyone who writes or reads poetry.

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