



Lee Bennett Hopkins

“The best part of writing poetry is . . . trying to pare down thoughts in a few—but wonderfully, magically, chosen words.”

Getting to Know Lee Bennett Hopkins

Lee Bennett Hopkins has written many poems and books for children and adults. His poetry autobiography, *Been to Yesterdays*, won a Christopher Award and a Golden Kite Honor. To encourage other poets, he created the Lee Bennett Hopkins Award for Children’s Poetry and the Lee Bennett Hopkins Promising Poet Award.

Mr. Hopkins has written and collected poems about many topics. His poetry books include *Marvelous Math*, *Spectacular Science*, and *Lives: Poems About Famous Americans*. His book for teachers, *Pass the Poetry, Please!* has been in print for over 25 years.

Lee Bennett Hopkins has received the University of Southern Mississippi’s Medallion for “lasting contributions to children’s literature.” Mr. Hopkins lives in Westchester County, New York, and Cape Coral, Florida.

Poet to Poet: Tips for Young Writers

Finding Ideas for Writing

We have talked a lot about where we get ideas for our writing. Lee Bennett Hopkins says,

“Ideas seem to just come—at the most unexpected times. Something inside my head seems to say: ‘Write a poem about me! I need attention!’ So I try to do the subject justice—be it a watering can or a sparrow.”

Isn’t that interesting, an idea seems to ask him to write about it. Mmm, I wonder if you’ve ever felt that an idea was just tugging at you, wanting you to write about it. Let’s think about that this week. Let’s pay attention to the ideas that come to us and see if any of them seem to be asking us to write.

Advice for Young Poets

Lots of poets have given us advice about becoming a better writer. Several of them said we needed to read lots of poems if we want to write poems. Lee Bennett Hopkins says that and more.

“If you want to write poetry, READ poetry. And practice, practice, practice. Do not accept first, third, or even fifth drafts. Writing is REWRITING. Learn your craft as you would if you wanted to be a baseball player or a rap singer.”

So, we need to read lots of poems and notice what the poets are doing. We do that each week, don't we? That means we are growing as poets every week, as we read more poems and study how the poet did his or her work. And did you hear Mr. Hopkins's other suggestion—we need to write a lot?—"Practice, practice, practice," he said. Did you notice what he said about baseball players or rap singers? They don't get to be really good unless they practice. Well, that is why we write so many poems ourselves. We are growing as poets each week.

Poems in *Climb Inside a Poem*

**"Tooth Truth"
"Why? Why? Why?"**

Read More by Lee Bennett Hopkins

Days to Celebrate: A Full Year of Poetry, People, Holidays, History, Fascinating Facts, and More
Greenwillow, 2004

Wonderful Words: Poems About Reading, Writing, Speaking, and Listening
Simon and Schuster, 2004

Sports! Sports! Sports! A Poetry Collection
HarperCollins, 1999

Alphathoughts: Alphabet Poems
Boyd's Mills Press, 2003

Questions: Poems (I Can Read)
HarperTrophy, 1994

Best Friends
HarperCollins, 1986