

PERFORMANCE POETRY AND WORKSHOP SAMPLER BY TERRY WOOTEN

Performing from his extensive repertoire, poet bard Terry Wooten will entertain, as well as teach how to write and use free verse poetry with a sampler of ideas and selections from his workshops.

The oral traditions of poetry, storytelling and music have been used for centuries to teach, entertain and inform. Recently we have seen a renewed interest in performance poetry through Poetry Slams and the Poetry Out Loud Program in our schools and on a national level. For the past 26 years poet bard Terry Wooten has been performing at schools, libraries and conferences, as well as being Master of Ceremonies for the Michigan Poetry Out Loud state competition for two years. He is also the builder and host of the Stone Circle, an outdoor performance venue consisting of 88 large boulders around a fire, which schools have used as a pattern and focus for their own students' writings.

In addition to his poetry performances, Terry conducts free verse poetry writing workshops where he helps students find ideas for writing and to expressing those ideas in their own voice. One of his objectives is to teach students that there are lines of poems and story ideas happening all around us, and how to become aware of them.

In poetry, word choice is especially important, so Terry teaches students how to cull out less colorful vocabulary and replace it with words that will grab a reader's attention through simile exercises, and weeding out what he calls "nerd words" and adding "power words."

Organizing free verse poetry is often confusing to students, and Terry shows his own and student poetry as examples of line structure, emphasizing where and why lines of poems should end and how the endings of lines affect the flow of a poem. He also shows them how line structure makes the body of a poem look different than a story, and during his performances, students can hear how a poem sounds different as well.

Some of Terry's workshops include:

- *The Memory Map Workshop*, where participants first draw a map of an area important in their lives, then write from those memories on their map. Terry's book *When the Bear Came Back* is an example of this workshop style.
- *The Watershed Critters Workshop* teaches students to express themselves through a science/environmental theme
- *The Elders Project*, where participants are taught interviewing techniques Terry uses in his own work to capture stories important to our histories/herstories. These interviews can be turned into narrative poems to preserve and share for generations to come. Terry's books *Lifelines*, *Child of War* and *A Book of Hours* are all examples of narrative poetry based on oral history interviews.

TERRY WOOTEN

Michigan Poet Bard

Performance Poetry

&

Writing Workshops



**THE MAGIC
IN LIFE
IS HARD TO SEE
LIKE A MOREL
MUSHROOM**

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“Terry Wooten is a fine poet in the tradition of Whitman and Williams. His work celebrates our history and our encounters with civilization. His poems show a humane and understanding heart, and a humor and wit that helps illuminate our daily lives.”

Herb Scott, Poet & Professor of English
Western Michigan University

“Terry Wooten’s talent to entertain, motivate and excite our middle school students with poetry inspires them to use their own artistic abilities in new and creative ways. His manner of presentation allows him to connect with his audience in ways that are truly magical.”

Greg Crowe, Language Arts, Rockford Middle School

“Terry Wooten is a performer of extraordinary talent, with the ability to delight audiences of all ages and backgrounds. To hear him is to experience the wonder and joy of one of the oldest and most-honored of art forms.”

David L. Russell, Professor of Languages
and Literature, Ferris State University

As Michigan’s poet-bard, Terry Wooten has a special gift for helping people relate to poetry and enjoy it. Offering more than 90 poets’ work from which his audience can select, he recites in jukebox fashion their requests --whether the audience is 5 or 50.

Terry’s oral repertoire of over eight hours includes poems by many well-known poets -- from Chaucer to Whitman -- as well as his own poetry. He is a living anthology of classic literature, folklore, children’s and contemporary poetry, presented in an entertaining and educational package. The range of his selections run rich in humor or can reflect the more serious issues of our modern times. His performances are variable, and can be arranged specifically for any group.

WRITING WORKSHOPS Terry also shares his writing experience as a published poet in a variety of writing workshops (grade 4 to adult). These workshops contain elements that touch on the *Six Traits of Writing* and *Writing First Hand*, as well as teach benchmarks of the Michigan Curriculum Framework in Language Arts, Social Studies and Science. The *Memory Map* workshop combines writing, speaking, listening and artistic components to strengthen literary skills. The *Watershed Critters* workshop teaches students to express themselves through a science/ environmental theme. The *Elders Project* is relevant to current events and turns an oral history interview into an easy to read

series of poems with the potential to expand into a play production. A culminating activity can be a school or community performance presented by the students with Terry.

STONE CIRCLE IN THE SCHOOL

Terry’s influence is evident in the many schools that have developed stone circle formats. Patterned after his own Stone Circle, he coaches schools on how to create a focus for their students’ writings. Inspired by his infectious style of presentation, Terry has sparked new interest for students by linking the written and the spoken word.

*“We are both human and a furious beast,
but poetry is words on a piece of paper.
You taught me that your brain has ideas
and all you have to do is think to get them
out! You changed something in me that
nobody’s changed in me before. I’m one
of your biggest fans.”*

Kari Charleston 4th grade, Bridgeman Elm.

Born and raised in rural, northern Michigan, Terry attended Western Michigan University, working toward a degree in Education. In 1980 he met Michigan poet Max Ellison who taught him the magic of the oral tradition.

Terry has taken his performance poetry and writing workshop program to thousands each year at K-12 schools, colleges, libraries, conferences, camps, and festivals. He has published ten books and his poems have appeared in numerous magazines and anthologies. He is a recipient of two Michigan Creative Artist Awards and presented for the Michigan’s Great Outdoors Culture Tour for five years.

Terry is also the builder of the Stone Circle, a triple ring of large boulders forming a natural amphitheater, the center firepit a hypnotic focus. The circular arrangements of boulders and setting were designed by Terry to capture the atmosphere of ancient cultures that gathered in community groups to exchange stories of everyday life and lore.

At this Stone Circle every Saturday evening, from mid-June through Labor Day Weekend, Terry is host to other poets, storytellers, musicians and an audience of young and old who stir their tales in the communal brew that this unique recipe for communication offers. Please join us under a canopy of stars and add your spark to the fire.

