

Poem of the Heart, Poem of the Mind

Workshop Leader: Nicola Vulpe

Series description: The Welsh poet R.S. Thomas defined poetry as that “which arrives at the intellect/ by way of the heart”. We might also say that poetry reaches the heart by way of the intellect. In this series, together with award-winning author Nicola Vulpe, workshop participants will start by examining some poems by great poets to try to understand how these poems reach both the intellect and the heart. They will then turn to their own poems to discuss them in an open and respectful dialogue, using these discussions and in-class poetry writing exercises to develop their skills and help them write the poems they want to write, in whatever style they prefer.

Schedule of topics:

Note: This outline is only a guide. Discussions and exercises may change—in fact, probably will change—according to the preferences of the workshop participants.

Week 1. How did they do it?

- **Discussion:** Examine some great poems to try to understand how they work.
- **Exercise:** Revise a great poem to make it work less well.

Week 2. Making the poem fail

- **Discussion:** Examine one of the instructor’s poems to try to understand how it works, or doesn’t work.
- **Exercise:** Revise the instructor’s poem to make it better or worse.
- **Discussion:** Begin looking at participants poems to try to understand what the poet is trying to do with it.

Week 3. The tools: words and lines

- **Discussion:** Word order, line length, line breaks, moving lines around, moving stanzas
- **Exercise:** Apply the tools discussed to participants’ poems and discuss the effects of the changes.

Week 4. The tools: sounds

- **Discussion:** Sound devices such as rhyme, alliteration, assonance, slant rhymes (Too much of a good thing?)

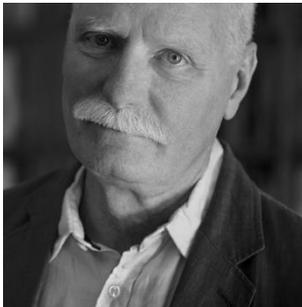
- **Exercise:** Apply the tools discussed to participants' poems and discuss the effects of the changes.

Week 5. The tools: basic arithmetic

- **Discussion:** Adding words, removing words, adding lines, removing lines, long words and short words.
- **Exercise:** Apply the tools discussed to participants' poems and discuss the effects of the changes.

Week 6. The tools & wrap up: repetition, listening

- **Discussion:** How repetition (refrains, etc.) affect a poem.
- **Discussion:** How listening to a poem helps us write poems and understand poems.
- **Exercise:** Apply the tools discussed to participants' poems and discuss the effects of the changes.
- **Discussion:** What happens next: Getting and giving constructive criticism, forming a poets' group, publishing.



Lecturer biography: Nicola Vulpe has taught literature at the University of Ottawa, and at the Universities of León, La Laguna, and Las Palmas de Gran Canaria. His recent work has appeared in journals such as *The Antigoniish Review*, *The Manhattan Review*, *Montréal Serai*, and *Stand Magazine*. He has published a novella, *The Extraordinary Event of Pia H., who turned to admire a chicken in the Plaza Mayor*, and four collections of poetry, including, most recently, *Through the Waspmouth I Drew You*, and *Insult to the Brain*, which received the Fred Cogswell Award for Excellence in Poetry.