

Poetry

I too, dislike it: there are things that are important beyond
all this fiddle.

Reading it, however, with a perfect contempt for it, one
discovers that there is in

it after all, a place for the genuine.

Hands that can grasp, eyes

that can dilate, hair that can rise

if it must, these things are important not because a

high-sounding interpretation can be put upon them but because
they are

useful; when they become so derivative as to become
unintelligible, the

same thing may be said for all of us—that we
do not admire what

we cannot understand. The bat,

holding on upside down or in quest of something to

eat, elephants pushing, a wild horse taking a roll, a tireless
wolf under

a tree, the immovable critic twinkling his skin like a horse
that feels a flea, the base-

ball fan, the statistician—case after case
could be cited did

one wish it; nor is it valid

to discriminate against “business documents and

school-books”; all these phenomena are important. One must
make a distinction

however: when dragged into prominence by half poets,
the result is not poetry,

nor till the autocrats among us can be

“literalists of

the imagination”—above

insolence and triviality and can present

for inspection, imaginary gardens with real toads in them,
shall we have

it. In the meantime, if you demand on the one hand, in defiance of their opinion—
the raw material of poetry in

all its rawness, and

that which is on the other hand,

genuine, then you are interested in poetry.

Credit:

From *Others for 1919: An Anthology of the New Verse*, edited by Alfred Kreymborg. This poem is in the public domain.

About this Poem:

"Poetry" was published in *Others for 1919: An Anthology of the New Verse* (Nicholas L. Brown, 1920), edited by Alfred Kreymborg.

Author:

Marianne Moore



Born in 1887, Marianne Moore wrote with the freedom characteristic of the other Modernist poets, often incorporating quotes from other sources into the text, yet her use of language was always extraordinarily condensed and precise

[Read more](#)

Date Published:

1919

Source URL: <https://www.poets.org/poetsorg/poem/poetry>