

How to Read a Love Poem to Your Valentine

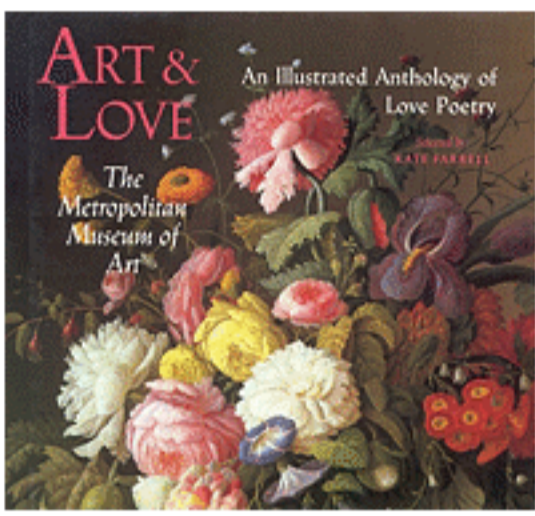
Posted by Karma Bennett · February 6, 2015 at 10:00 am



So you have a special Valentine, and you want to do something adorable to make this Valentine's Day one she'll remember forever. Or perhaps you have your sights set on a guy, and you want to let him know he's the one. Poetry has been the trick to woo choosy lovers for as long as humans have been stringing words together.

Poetry is meant to be read aloud, just as music is meant to be listened to. And if you are trying to make a bold statement, your love needs to hear the words coming out of *your* mouth. Your voice gives them meanings. Sure, it can be scary—but facing that fear and doing it anyway shows the kind of moxie that makes the ladies swoon.

Choosing the Right Romantic Poem



Great love poems thoughtfully paired with 140 works from the Met.

When getting to know a poem, read it once to yourself, and again out loud. The best poems have wit and double-entendre that aren't so easy to catch the first time. If you read it twice and it doesn't stir anything in you, move on. The right poem is one that makes you think, *Yes! That is how I feel!*

Once you've found one you like, get to know it. Look up any words you don't understand. Read a bit about it, to make sure you understand the poem's intent.

How to Read Your Love Poem Aloud

After you've chosen your poem, practice reading it several ways: loud and exuberant, soft and slow. Find the point in the poem that should be the loudest, and the point that should be read the softest. Vary your range. Read it out loud enough times that it feels familiar. Remember, in the heat of the moment you'll be nervous; preparation helps. As you practice, the poem may surprise you, showing you new meanings you hadn't noticed at first.

The biggest mistake people make when reading poetry is in following the meter with their voices. Instead, when reading the poem, try your best to avoid a sing-song voice. If you hear your voice going up at the end of lines, try to catch that and avoid it. Poetry may have a common history with music, but it's performance is more like acting. Do not stop at the end of a line, read each sentence as if you were speaking naturally. With some classical poetry, you may have to read the poem several times to find the most natural pacing of the sentence. Reading poetry this way lets the music of the poem show itself. You need not draw attention to it.

Setting the Stage for a Romantic Poem

Wait until you are alone with your sweet. This should be a personal, intimate experience. Though it makes a big statement to declare your love before a crowd, you will speak with more courage and confidence if you are alone.

Wait for the right moment. If things are rushed, or you are on your way somewhere, your Valentine will be distracted and not ready to listen.

Unless you are fortunate enough to have your lover snuggled up next to you under the sheets, it is best to stand. This signals that something is happening, something to be paid attention to. That being said, stand close by. Close enough, that if you speak softly, you will still be heard. Close enough to reach out, should the mood strike, and caress.

Preface your poem with a brief intro, just so your paramour knows to stop and listen. But don't launch into an explanation, let the poem do the talking. "I want to share something with you," or, "This makes me think of you," will suffice.

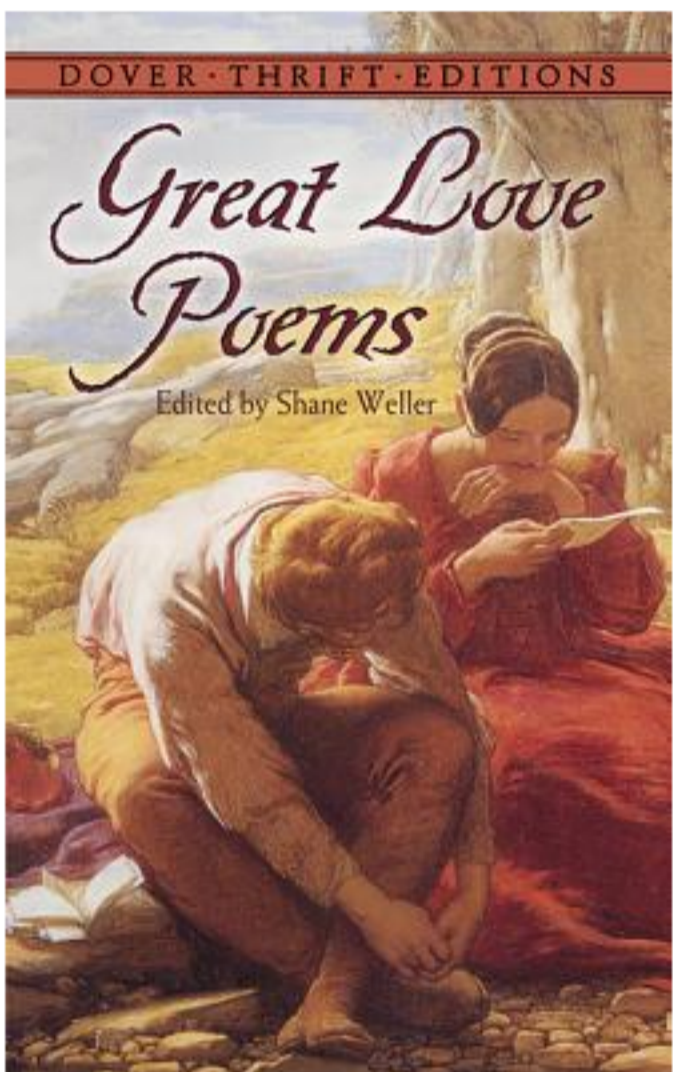
If you trip up on a word, just keep going. It's OK to make mistakes. Showing your vulnerability is part of what makes poetry romantic.

Make eye contact. Note the parts of the poem which particularly remind you of your Valentine. Use these particular points you've marked as a cue to make eye contact. Generally speaking, read the poem as if it were simply a letter that you wrote to your love, not something written for someone else. If the poems says "Oh!" utter a warm sigh, rather than pronouncing a hard letter "O."

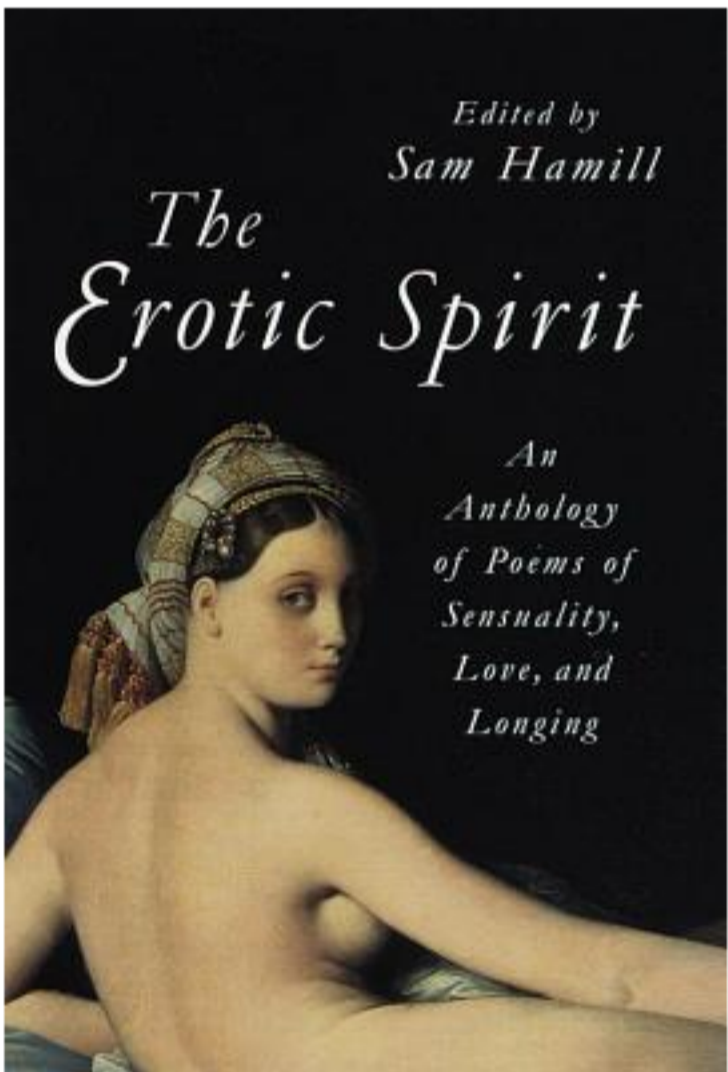
Go slow. Because poetry is a short form, each word is chosen with tremendous care. Savor each word, and your love will have time to listen. This is a moment of indulgence. Like love itself, though your heart may race, it will be over before you know it.

When you're done reading, do not speak right away. You have let the poetry speak for you, do not ruin it with explanations or trifles. Now is the time for action. Get a little closer. Sit with your Valentine, or offer a kiss on the hand. Let your love direct the conversation with his or her first words. Perhaps your darling will launch into an epic conversation about literature that will have you laughing until dawn. Or perhaps there will be no room for words, only kisses.

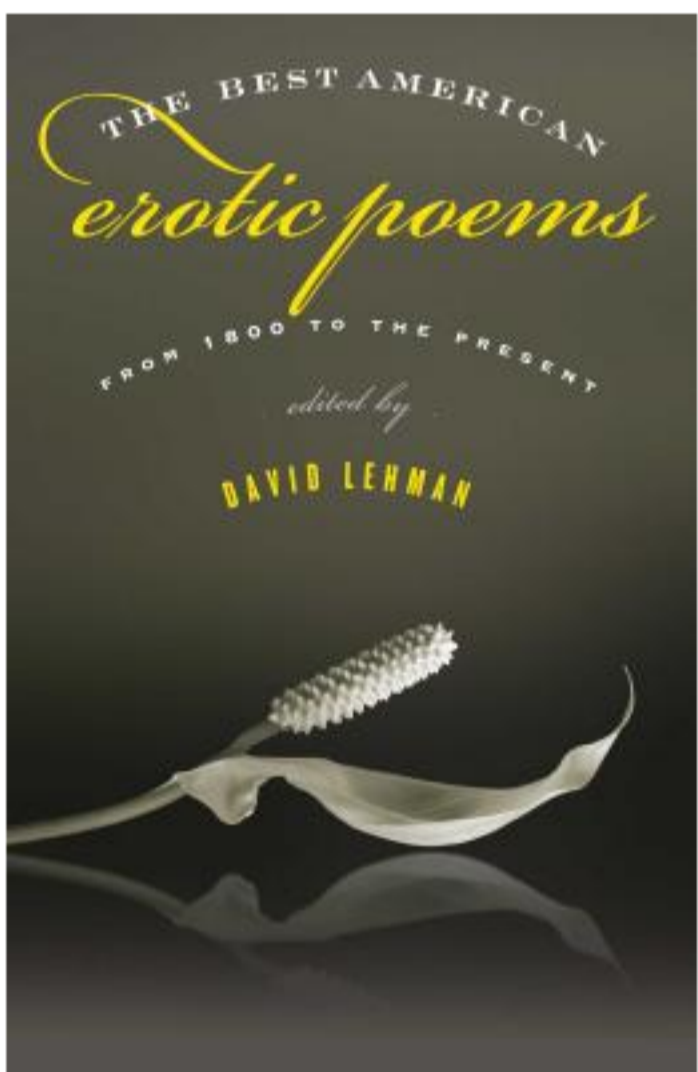
Next week, I'm going to share with you some classic love poems that have wooed many a damsel over the decades.



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Karma Bennett
Loves nachos, Oakland, and books.

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