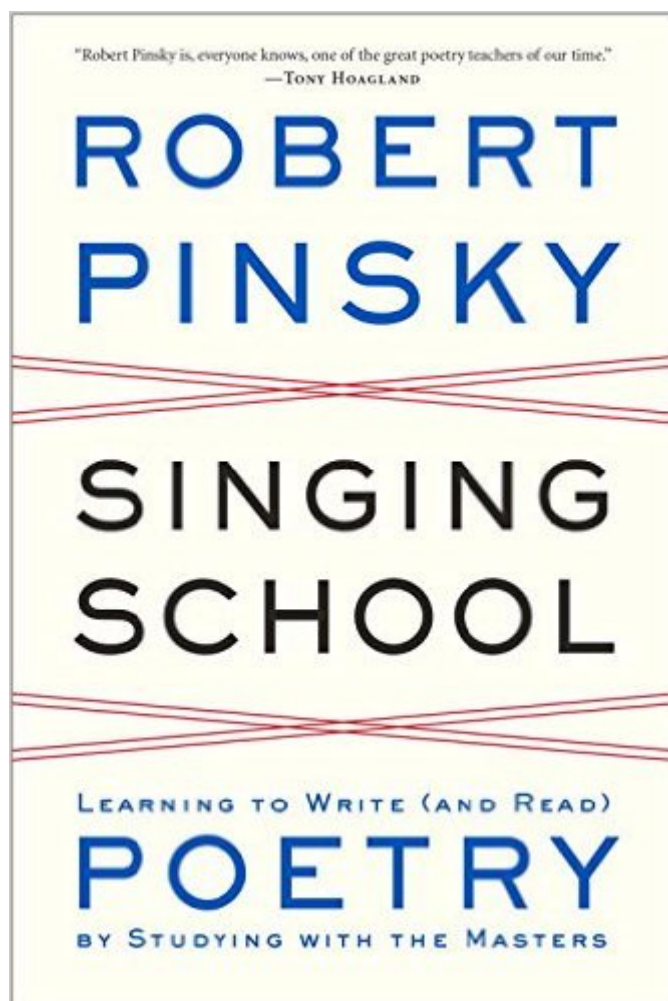


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# Singing School: Learning To Write (and Read) Poetry By Studying With The Masters



## Synopsis

âœMagnificent . . . poems to inspire [with] brief and brilliant, offhand notes about how to read them.âœ • Alan Cheuse, NPR Quick, joyful, and playfully astringent, with surprising comparisons and examples, this collection takes an unconventional approach to the art of poetry. Instead of rules, theories, or recipes, Singing School emphasizes ways to learn from great work: studying magnificent, monumentally enduring poems and how they are madeâœ in terms borrowed from the âœsinging schoolâœ of William Butler Yeatsâœ™s âœSailing to Byzantium.âœ • Robert Pinskyâœ™s headnotes for each of the 80 poems and his brief introductions to each section take a writerâœ™s view of specific works: William Carlos Williamsâœ™s âœFine Work with Pitch and Copperâœ for intense verbal music; Emily Dickinsonâœ™s âœBecause I Could Not Stop for Deathâœ for wild imagination in matter-of-fact language; Robert Southwellâœ™s âœThe Burning Babeâœ for surrealist aplomb; Wallace Stevensâœ™s âœThe House Was Quiet and the World Was Calmâœ for subtlety in meter. Included are poems by Aphra Behn, Allen Ginsberg, George Herbert, John Keats, Mina Loy, Thomas Nashe, and many other master poets. This anthology respects poetryâœ™s mysteries in two senses of the word: techniques of craft and strokes of the inexplicable.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Caution: This review is clunkily structured according to the "three golden rules for book reviewing" presented by Pinsky himself in an article for Slate a few years ago. He received the rules in an anonymous sheet of guidelines from his publisher, though he describes them as Aristotelian and

essential. They are as follows: 1. The review must tell what the book is about. 2. The review must tell what the book's author says about that thing the book is about. 3. The review must tell what the reviewer thinks about what the book's author says about that thing the book is about. A good review would amount to a deft integration of the three topics; be forewarned that, due to constraints of time and sloth, this is not such a review.

1. What the Book is About

Singing School is about learning to read like a poet. The book is not an instruction manual; it is an anthology of great poems. The poems represent a broad range of eras, backgrounds, and styles, suggesting that there is no particular feature that makes a poem great; there are as many ways to be great as there are great poems. Each poem is preceded by comments from Pinsky intended to guide the reader's attention toward a particular feature of the poem that makes it great. Sometimes the comments include a writing prompt intended to help the reader to explore, rebut, imitate, answer, or otherwise respond to the feature or the poem. The poems are also grouped into larger sections, with further comments by Pinsky introducing each section. The sections are titled "Freedom," "Listening," "Form," and "Dreaming Things Up." In the back of the book, Pinsky includes brief biographies of each poet the book anthologizes.

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