**Poetry from Daily Life: Explore and never color inside the lines**

By Scot Young

*Today’s guest on Poetry from Daily Life is Scot Young, who grew up in Raytown, Missouri before settling in Ozark County. He has been writing since his junior and high school days. Scot says he typically writes snapshots of his life or what he has observed. He thinks that poets write for themselves and hopes that others might relate or see themselves in a different way. Two of his favorite books to work on are "All Around Cowboy" and "They Said I Wasn't College Material." A unique fact about Scot is that he earned three college degrees after he was told he wasn’t college material. ~ David L. Harrison*

I retired from education a year ago as a superintendent. Like every other superintendent I climbed the ladder. But unlike most I remained a teacher by offering my children a poetry class for the last 25 years. My last class ended last year.

In education we tend to dictate what they should be thinking, teach how to color inside the lines, that the color of the sun is yellow and that all the little desks must be in a row. Too many in education at all levels believe that, I did not.

I taught poetry in the conference room as it was more comfortable. We would start the creative writing journey learning figurative language and formula poems where you would fill in the blanks with the parts of speech. We dabbled in haiku counting syllables on our fingers. These were OK for a beginning but for the most part, boring to students.

One day one of the older students said for a poetry class you sure have a lot of rules and he was right. From that moment on they set out to tell their own story by writing several poems a day. Some days we hit the walking trail looking for inspiration not found in the classroom. But most days we wrote our poems, they told their own story of trauma, of abuse, of struggles. We self-published with colored chalk on the school driveway, on the sidewalks and on the outside schoolhouse walls.

In a short period of time these high school students were published in two Missouri high school anthologies, appeared on the cover of one and their poems of daily life were featured in a California poetry journal. The class ended with a Zoom reading with invited poets from around the world. There were no egos, a lot of finger-snapping, some relief that it was over and a few tears, mainly from the adults. Exploring ourselves and the world of others without judgment, in this case through poetry, without ever coloring inside the lines is what education and poetry should be.

**Poetry 101**

i taught a poetry class

to your abused

broken & neglected

children and started to give

them metaphors

similes &

personification

but they knew figurative language

well enough and tried to wear

the face of normal wanting

to be like other kids

tried to hide the scars

with just inked tattoos and too much

massacre

they read their poems

of incest

of rape

of beatings

of parents in prison

of foster homes

of being hooked on meth made

down a dead end county road

of how life is not suppose

to be at age 15

    they learned that giving

human characteristics

to inanimate objects

sometimes lessened the pain

but i changed my lesson

plan when one of them said

*hey teach*

*what good is poetry?*

i suppose it is keeping

your wounds close

to the surface so they can heal

quicker

*is that it?*

on most days

it is

❖❖❖

*You can learn more about Scot Young at* [*scotyoungpoetry.com*](https://scotyoungpoetry.com/)*.*