**Poetry from Daily Life: Poetry + math = no wrong answers**

By Laura Purdie Salas

*This week's guest on "Poetry from Daily Life" is Laura Purdie Salas, a native Floridian who's spent her entire adult life in Minnesota. Laura is an award-winning children's author and poet who's written more than 135 books. Poetry is Laura's favorite thing to write, and nature and everyday observations are her favorite topics. Laura's a former 8th-grade teacher with a monstrous sweet tooth. She likes to eat cupcakes, knit, doodle, and play kalimba. (She claims to not be great at any of those things except the eating of cupcakes!) ~ David L. Harrison*

**Equation Poems**

Life + Math Symbols = Poetry?

One of the things I most love about poems is how short they are. We can easily tuck them into our busy lives. Stuck in line at the post office? Waiting for your kid’s ballet lesson to be over? Just read a poem — or write one!

The shortest poetic form I love to write is the equation poem. For this kind of poem, you use math symbols to show the relationship between two things. Here are a few examples from my book, "Snowman - Cold = Puddle: Spring Equations."

      riverbank + otters = playground

      talons + pond = fast food

      breeze + kite = ballet

While zipping through daily life, I frequently see or read something that leads to an equation poem. It might be a fact: a meteor strike led to the extinction of almost all dinosaurs. That one became:

      meteor + dinosaurs = goodbyyyyyyeeeeee

It might be a thought about how one thing reminds you of another.

      cold + breath = cloud

It might be about emotions or opinions or concepts.

      Laura + winter + hot cocoa = heaven

      pizza/friends = sharing

It might be a moment of insight into what's crucial about some place or activity or thing.

      sunshine + swimming = summer

The beautiful thing about equation poems is that, as short as they are, they still reveal something about the poet. If you ask 10 different people to name the two essential things about summer, you'll likely get 10 different pairs of words.

      blueberries + sailboats = summer

      long days + sleeping in = summer

      family reunion + roller coasters = summer

Well, you get the idea!

Equation poems often make me think about how interdependent we are. How every thing affects every other thing. When you put two things together, you come up with a brand new third thing. Or maybe you're taking something away and seeing how the absence of one thing changes the experience of another thing.

      cold - snow = ugly

The absolute best thing about equation poems is that they have no wrong answers, unlike actual math problems. They're also short enough to jot down on a sticky note or type into your phone. And once you start writing them, you might find them popping into your head unbidden. That's because you're looking at the world a little more closely than before. And that's poetry. Looking a little more closely, and then sharing what you see.

I hope you'll give it a try! And I can promise you right now that all your equation poems will have exactly the right answers!

*Many of Laura's picture books have nature topics, such as "Zap! Clap! Boom!" and "Lion of the Sky: Haiku for All Seasons." Her two 2024 picture books tread a new path. "Oskar's Voyage" is an adventure story about a tiny chipmunk who gets trapped on an enormous Great Lakes freighter. And "Line Leads the Way" is the story of shapes, the treasures a library offers, and embracing imperfection. Visit Laura at laura@laurasalas.com,* [*https://laurasalas.com/*](https://laurasalas.com/)*, or on social media at @LauraPSalas.*