**Poetry from Daily Life: Memorizing is like any muscle, growing stronger with use**

By Wyatt Townley

*My guest today is Kansas Poet Laureate Emerita, Wyatt Townley, who lives in eastern Kansas. Wyatt has written poetry since childhood, from free verse to villanelles to pattern poems. Favorite book projects include "The Afterlives of Trees" and most recently, "Rewriting the Body." Wyatt is tall for her age, but short beside her 7-foot husband. She loves to look up — at her husband, at weather, at stars. Her (no longer) secret mission was to be the first poet in space. ~ David L. Harrison*

**To your health**

Some readers feel intimidated by poetry. Maybe somewhere along the way, the emphasis was placed on what a poem means. What a poem “means” is the consolation prize. Besides, nobody knows — not the teacher, not the reader, sometimes not even the author.

What matters is not what a poem means, but what it *does* to us, where it *takes* us, and how it *moves* us. One of poetry’s best features is the element of surprise — the turn with a new view around its corner.

When you find a poem that helps you, I invite you to commit it to memory. That way you can give it to others (and to yourself!) for the rest of your life. Memorizing is like any muscle that grows stronger with use — and the cognitive benefits are well documented.

My own practice is to laminate a half-dozen copies of a poem and spread them around the house wherever I tend to land: favorite chair, bedside table, back pocket. I take them on the trails and walk to their rhythms. It’s like sipping a wonderful drink, just a line or a couplet at a time, repeated until integrated. Knowing a poem by heart is a gift that keeps on giving.

At breakfast in our house, we launch the day by reading a poem aloud — a daily vitamin.

Here’s the first poem of my latest book, "Rewriting the Body."

**It’s Easy**

to enter the room

of this poem. Less

so to stay. But do

until this line

ends and begins

again, dropping

to the next stanza.

If you’re still here,

have a drink, have

the run of the place,

whatever you like

in the right glass. Clink!

And the view — take

your pick: an ocean

under a stick of moon,

or this one I’ve got

at the edge of the woods

in the softest rain

that hangs off the undersides

of branches, each drop

holding a world

about to fall. And when

it does, it isn’t

gone. Inside this book

are other rooms,

a whole house curled

inside a tree. I’ll leave

the porchlight on.

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*Poet Laureate of Kansas Emerita, Wyatt has published six books. Her poetry has appeared in venues as diverse as "The Paris Review" and "Scientific American." She was commissioned to write poems that now hang in libraries from the new Lenexa City Center Library in Kansas to the Space Telescope Science Institute Library in Baltimore, home of the Hubble. Learn more at* [*www.WyattTownley.com*](http://www.WyattTownley.com)*.*