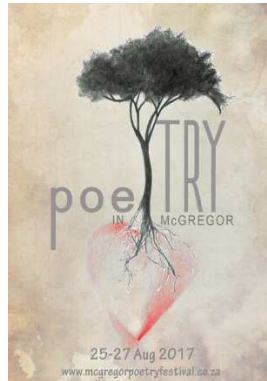


# Emotiverse, Poetry in 50 Words or Less

## Workshop by Peter Vinton



### **Synopsis of Workshop:**

Brevity is often celebrated in many writing disciplines. But does brevity have a place in poetry? Or should we allow our creative spirit to run free and create poems that can span several pages?

Peter Vinton has created a new genre of poetry, namely “emotiverse” and has published a series of books in this genre. With this new genre, the accent is on saying, in 50 words or less, what we as poets traditionally say in hundreds of words. Limiting ourselves to 50 words demands a level of creative innovation that we are not typically used to.

In this workshop, Peter Vinton will take the participants through the steps required to think in short stanzas, that may be as short as one short sentence. He will provide participants with a practical toolbox of principles, techniques and the different creative thinking that is required to create poetry in this challenging genre. Peter will also take his audience through the power of the word-picture confluence and how pictures, combined with emotive words, forges a level of reader engagement that words alone are not always able to capture.

Peter will take the audience through a practical journey of creative writing that starts with the writing of traditional poetry and ends with how the participants can begin to write their own emotiverse creations, which may open up new avenues for seasoned and aspiring poets who may want to extend their poetic skills and poetic writing ability.

### **Workshop Notes:**

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## Emotiverse, Poetry in 50 Words or Less

Being a Workshop, we will explore and create together today.

- To kick us off, let's reflect on what exactly poetry is. It naturally means different things to different people, and be unique for each of us. Whether you write for profit or pleasure, only read it or even hate it – poetry has been an important literary form for Millennia.
  - If we consider one of the first great epics of poetry, Homer's Odyssey. And then the more modern Peter Vinton Odyssey. Written Millennia apart, they are very different, but, also similar.
- What do we regard as “good” poetry or “bad” poetry?
  - This is, again, totally subjective. Someone who hates poetry may think all poetry is “bad,” and someone like me thinks all poetry is “good.”
  - Consider movie genres. We all like or dislike certain genres. Very few people like movies across the spectrum.
  - Similarly, for poetry we all have our genre or format that resonates with us.
- The 2017 theme for McGregor is “Rooted in Heart” and this is a wonderful theme.
  - e.e cummings said “since feeling is first.....” and this is very true of poetry and us as poets.
  - Poetry by its very nature is rooted in emotion. And our hearts are at the centre of our emotions.
- Poets usually feel very deep emotions and have something deep inside that needs to be said. And it is usually deeply emotional once it makes it into our writing. Poets “feel” and have a way of expressing that feeling in a way that others do not understand.
- Poetry rooted in heart is not an “intellectual discussion.” It may be sparked by, but is much more than a simple thought. Poetry is sparked by powerful emotional impulses for it to be any good.
- Poetry puts emotion and feeling into words. And into sounds, as is the case with Haiku poetry (we can discuss this later). But feeling alone cannot and does not make a poem. That feeling and that emotion has to be distilled through your heart first. And, like a good Whiskey, it sometimes needs to be distilled more than once to refine it sufficiently.
  - Refine your poetry first by distilling the emotion through your heart and you will write better poetry.
  - And if you keep rooting it in your heart, you will move beyond the harsh words that may detract from your efforts.

- Good poetry can take time, efforts and determination to find its way onto paper. Having a talent for writing is obviously also a great help. It needs that time to distil through your heart.
- Anger is often one of the dominant emotions in the unpublished poetry I have seen. A deep-rooted anger is often a poetic catalyst. Damaging anger is very real in us as poets. My own work also has an element of anger in some of the verse.
- Yet, it is a mistake to write “angry poetry.” I see so many examples of the raw anger on paper, and without it having been distilled, makes for, well, angry poetry and not good poetry. That is why I urge you to distil your words through your heart first, and not to write the raw anger you may be feeling. Distil it three times if necessary. My friends tell me the “triple-distilled” Whiskeys are just better than twice-distilled.
- Angry poetry holds you back from unleashing the talent inside. The deep emotion of anger means it is not rooted in heart, even if it is your heart that is hurting. When you move beyond the anger to acceptance and forgiveness it is your heart and not your anger talking. Root your poetry deep in your heart, distil your anger and you will find a great improvement in your ability to write. Unless, of course, you like writing angry poetry. Let your distilling heart do the talking.
- It is hard to sit down and write poetry. But, it becomes easier when you sit down, open your heart first and let the distilled emotion come through. There may still be tears. I had plenty of those while writing my books. Channel those feelings rooted deep in your heart in a measured way.
  - Consider the line *“I am very angry because you left me and now I still see your cheating face in the mirror every morning....”*
  - As opposed to *“Since you left, the mirror holds the reflection of our futile love, etched in the shadowy glimpse of your face.....”*
- The first draft of your poem is usually just the raw material from which a good poem could flow. Have you distilled it yet? Is it rooted in heart or in raw anger? Once distilled and rooted in your heart is when you can call it a poem.
- Writing good poetry is a skill. A craft. And a craft demands practise. Lots of it. And when you have distilled your words through your heart, your craft will allow you to put together something that others will want to read.
- I am often asked about Rhyme and how to apply it in poetry. How important is Rhyme?
  - In music, it is almost always used, but, may not be essential to your style of poetry.
  - My own poetry seldom uses Rhyme.
  - A rhyme is not a poem and trying to find rhyming words may take away from the effectiveness of the message in your poem.
  - Poetry that expresses your feelings and comes from the heart, won’t always rhyme.

- “Show and Tell” is fine, but, show, don’t tell is better! We saw above that anger is often a dominant emotion in poetry. Show it, don’t say it.
  - Consider – *“I am so angry with you for leaving me ....”*
  - As opposed to – *“The loss of your love left me feeling deeply ...”*
  - Unless, of course, the anger is your whole point and you don’t want it any other way, since you simply just have to express your anger. But then it’s not poetry.
  
- Exercise: Word Usage – How to say something more elegantly.
  - *“S/he has left me all alone....”*
  - *“My love departed / crept away / vanished / stumbled away / ambled out of my life....”*
  - *“Love lost, such a cost....”*
  
- Coleridge described poetry as *“the best words in the best order.”* My own corollary says *“the best words to describe the situation in the order that best tells the story.”*
  - To get the best effect – swop words / lines / stanzas until it looks right.
  - Try cutting out entire lines or Stanzas if that improves your poem. Don’t be scared to prune excess words / lines.
  
- How many Stanzas should my poem have?
  - That depends on what you are trying to say. Did you get your message across?
  - What is the fewest number of Stanzas needed to get your message across?
  - “Epic” poetry is not very accessible.
  - Juxtapose Homer’s Odyssey with Peter Vinton’s Odyssey.
  - Less is more.
  - Suggestion vs. the whole picture. Learn from photographic techniques.
  
- The above has taken you through a number of techniques for crafting your poetry. It is time to illustrate “Emotiverse” as a poetry genre.
  - “Emotiverse, quite simply, is poetry in 50 words or less.
  
- Is there really an optimum length for a poem? No, individual style, technique, taste and preference all play a part in shaping the length.
  - In the modern “Twitter Age” messages are typically much shorter than they used to be.
  - We have become accustomed to being bombarded by fast-changing messages that are short. Attention spans have shrunk. Your work competes with so many other forms of media competing for eyeballs. I believe brevity is more effective in getting a message across.

- Exercise: Cutting Homer's Odyssey to Size.
  - If you had to describe Homer's Odyssey to an alien in 140 characters or less, what would you say?
  - Would you be able to?
  - Example – "*Homer went on a life-changing Odyssey and when he returned he was a better person*" 77 Characters.
  
- Exercise: Cutting Your Favourite Poem in Half.
  - If you had to cut your favourite poem by a ¼ or 1/3 or ½ how will it affect the poem? Better or worse?
  - Let's discuss why it would improve (or not) your poem.
  
- If time allows:
  - Let's do a general discussion on poems and the ideal length of poems.
  - When do you believe brevity is better and when is it not?
  - Does brevity improve your word choices?
  - Any other poetry topics of interest.
  - General discussion.

Thank you for attending this session and I wish you every success with your own work.

Peter Vinton.