

Who Says Rhyme Doesn't Pay?

By Brian Jud

Many poets believe selling their poetry is as hard as, well, selling poetry. But if you look beyond the bookstore you can find many sales opportunities. The information below provides ideas and examples of potential segments that could be lucrative for you. This material is meant to get you started, to give poets some hope that their craft can be profitable.

Target Readers

A basic tenet for selling anything is to first know your target market. No one can market to “everybody,” so consider the 5Ws to describe people who could buy your poetry: **Who** is the typical reader you had in mind when you wrote your poetry? Is the person male or female? In what age group? **Where** do they shop? **When** do they buy (Is your poetry devoted to a holiday or a special seasonal period?). **What** do they buy (pbooks, ebooks or audiobooks?). **Why** do they buy (Are they seeking a relaxing message? A humorous diversion?). This description can also help in your product development. For example, if you are writing poetry for seniors, you might consider publishing a large-print version.

Write a one-sentence description of your content and how your target readers will benefit from it. Use this sentence as a format: My poetry helps _____ who want _____ get _____. For example, your sentence could be, “My poetry helps children who want to be entertained have more fun from having their parents read to them.” If seniors are a target segment, your sentence could be, “My poetry helps older adults who want to enjoy their golden years by reading and discussing enjoyable poetry in groups of friends.”

Given your descriptions above, what specific things must you do to reach your objectives? It is helpful to group these activities under two major topics: 1) where you will sell it, and 2) how you will promote it. The sections below include examples to help you get started. Your own actions will vary according to your content and target readers.

Where will you sell it?

- 1) Now that you know where your readers shop, that is where you want to have your poetry for sale. Examples of retail outlets for poetry could include Christian chain bookstores that sell poetry such as Parable (<http://www.parable.com/>) and Cokesbury (<http://www.cokesbury.com/>). Do your readers travel? If so, seek distribution through airport stores for a relaxing read mid-flight. Do they shop in supermarkets? Then have your books there. The same concept applies to discount stores, gift shops and parks.
- 2) Examples of non-retail opportunities include schools, associations and libraries. These prospects require direct selling since there are no distribution partners (except for libraries) that sell books to non-retail buyers. The Academy of American Poets provides several unique opportunities and benefits for businesses and corporations. <http://www.poets.org/page.php/prmID/73> Weddings, christenings and retirements are historically good markets for poetry. Conduct an Internet search to find people who plan these events and contact them to use your poetry as a premium or to resell it. For example, the Association of Wedding Planners (<https://awphouston.org/members>) lists its members with hot links to their sites. Offer to customize poetry for their clients.
- 3) Sell your poems to greeting cards companies. See a list of companies that will pay you to write greeting cards at <https://bit.ly/2zQU3iB>

- 4) Contact Yankee Candle (<https://www.yankeecandle.com>) and get them to bundle your poetry with a candle to give their customers a soothing event. Offer to customize poems for them to help celebrate Mother's Day, Father's Day, Valentine's Day or another holiday.
- 5) Join an association to network with other poets, speak at their conferences and peruse their list of resources. Here are several examples: Visit the Alberta Cowboy Poetry Association <http://albertacowboypoetry.com/> or the National Association for Poetry Therapy <http://www.poetrytherapy.org/> Does your state have a poetry association as do Oregon <http://www.oregonpoets.org/> and Ohio (The Ohio Poetry Association <http://ohiopoetryassn.org/>) This Ohio site also lists contests, blogs, etc. for its members.
- 6) What other organizations could use your poetry to help it members or use as a fundraiser? Members of the National Institute of Relationship Enhancement <http://www.nire.org/> and the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy <http://www.aamft.org/> might you use your poetry as a membership premium or to resell to members.
- 7) Discover the library dedicated exclusively to poetry: the Poetry Foundation Library <http://www.poetryfoundation.org/programs/library> .See all their ways to advertise poetry, as well as podcasts, awards, events, exhibitions, grants and much more.
- 8) Do you have niche poetry? Find paying markets for science fiction poetry at <http://www.sfpoetry.com/markets.html>

How will you promote it?

There are many public-relations activities that can reach people in your target markets as frequently and inexpensively as possible. Most media exposure is free so you can get maximum coverage on a limited budget.

- 1) Write a one-page press release, focusing on what makes you and your poetry unique, enjoyable, relaxing and/or important. Begin it with a simple statement or question (your hook) that will get the attention of the reader. Your hook is the key concept that makes you or your poetry unique and beneficial to your audience.
- 2) Write letters to the editor or submit informative articles to magazines or newsletters. What newspapers does your target buyer read? Could they review your poetry, write about it, or publish your articles about writing poetry?
- 3) What magazines could review or write about your book, or to which you could you send articles? The Poetry Foundation (<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/submit>) pays for submissions. At Poets & Writers you can "connect your poems, stories, essays, and reviews to the right audiences by researching over twelve hundred literary magazines in our database" (<https://bit.ly/2DMbZfo>)
- 4) On what TV and radio shows could you be a guest? Choose shows that people in your target audience will listen to or watch. Visit www.radio-locator.com for a simple means for contacting all U.S. radio stations.
- 5) Who could review your book? How about *American Poetry Review*, *Critical Poetry Review Magazine* and/or *Poetry International*? Then publish your reviews at https://www.pw.org/book_review_outlets

- 6) What award competitions would be right for your poetry? *Poetry Magazine* lists awards (<http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/prizes>). Find poetry contests by state at http://www.nfsps.com/poetry_contests.htm). The Science Fiction Poetry Association has the Rhysling Awards (<http://www.sfpoetry.com/rhysling.html>)
- 7) Time the introduction of your book with special marketing periods (key dates, anniversaries, etc.) relevant to your title. Get on the air in April and talk about 30 Ways to Celebrate National Poetry Month (<https://bit.ly/1URBdLg>) and to celebrate national Poem In Your Pocket Day (April 14) Find more examples such as these at www.holidayinsights.com.
- 8) When you contact appropriate retail outlets tell them you are willing to conduct an in-store event or poetry reading. The Poetry Foundation lists events at which you may read (<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/events>)
- 9) Create an author page on Facebook where you can highlight your current and future work. Also, set up an account on Twitter to build your image as an expert, or on LinkedIn to network with like-minded people and prospects. Join groups relevant to your subject matter to build awareness of you and your writing. Follow The Science Fiction Poetry Association on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Science-Fiction-Poetry-Association-SFPA/183257651726070>
- 10) Jacqueline Suskin, a poet writing in *Readers Digest* says, “For the past four years I’ve performed Poem Store, a public project that consists of exchanging on-demand poetry composed for a donation.”

This information gives you ideas on where and how to market your poetry. Search the Internet for other options in each of these categories for your specific genre of poetry and you will soon learn that rhyme does pay.

Brian Jud is the Executive Director of the Association of Publishers for Special Sales, and the founder of Book Selling University (www.booksellinguniversity.com). He is also the author of *How to Make Real Money Selling Books*. Brian offers commission-based sales of books to buyers in non-bookstore markets. Contact Brian at brianjud@bookmarketing.com or www.premiumbookcompany.com