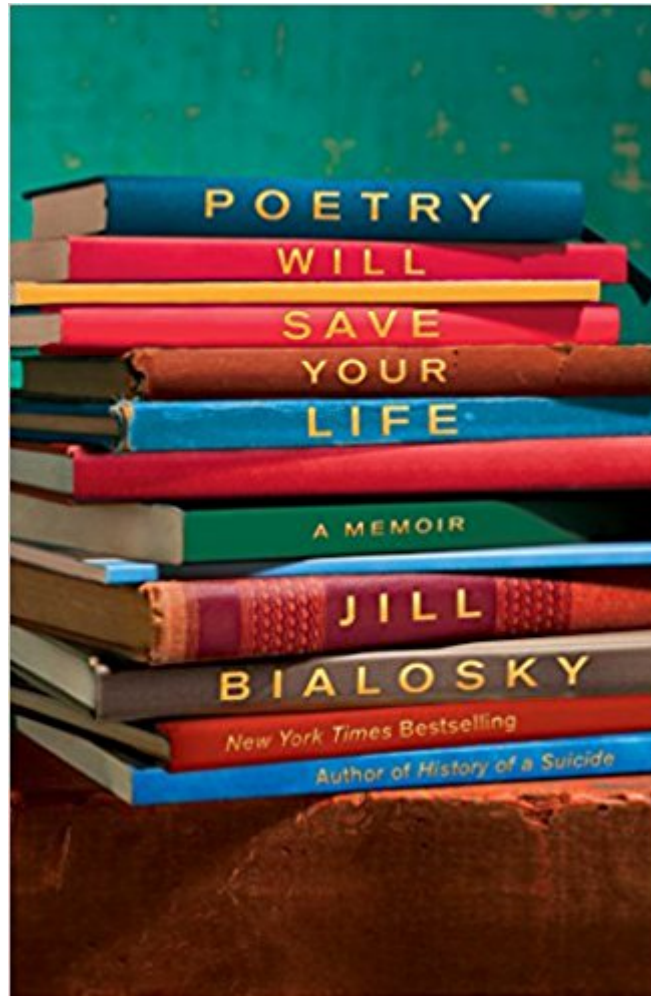




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# Poetry Will Save Your Life: A Memoir



## Synopsis

“Bialosky’s erudite and instructive approach to poetry [is] itself a refreshing tonic.” • “Wisdom and deep compassion...make [Bialosky’s book] a tremendous asset both to readers and other writers.” • The Washington Post An unconventional and inventive coming-of-age memoir organized around fifty-one remarkable poems by poets such as Robert Frost, Emily Dickinson, Wallace Stevens and Sylvia Plath, from a critically acclaimed New York Times bestselling author and poet. For Jill Bialosky, certain poems stand out like signposts at pivotal moments in a life: the death of a father, adolescence, first love, leaving home, the suicide of a sister, marriage, the birth of a child, the day in New York City the Twin Towers fell. As Bialosky narrates these moments, she illuminates the ways in which particular poems offered insight, compassion, and connection, and shows how poetry can be a blueprint for living. In *Poetry Will Save Your Life*, Bialosky recalls when she encountered each formative poem, and how its importance and meaning evolved over time, allowing new insights and perceptions to emerge. While Bialosky’s personal stories animate each poem, they touch on many universal experiences, from the awkwardness of girlhood, to crises of faith and identity, from braving a new life in a foreign city to enduring the loss of a loved one, from becoming a parent to growing creatively as a poet and artist. In *Poetry Will Save Your Life*, Bialosky has crafted an engaging and entirely original examination of a life while celebrating the enduring value of poetry, not as a purely cerebral activity, but as a means of conveying personal experience and as a source of comfort and intimacy. In doing so she brilliantly illustrates the ways in which poetry can be an integral part of life itself and can, in fact, save your life.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"An emotional, sometimes-wrenching account of how lines of poetry can be lifelines." (Kirkus) "A delightfully hybrid book: part anthology, part critical study, part autobiography. . . . candid and canny. . . . Bialosky's erudite and instructive approach to poetry [is] itself a refreshing tonic." (Chicago Tribune) "A lovely hybrid that blends [Bialosky's] coming-of-age story with engaging literary analysis. . . . Adults and mature teens will find much to love in this book, which demonstrates how poems can become an integral part of life. It also suggests, on every page, the wisdom and deep compassion that make [Bialosky's book] a tremendous asset both to readers and other writers." (The Washington Post) "An intimate rendering of a poet's passion for words." (Publishers Weekly (Starred Review)) "Unusual and affecting using 51 poems, ranging broadly from nursery rhymes to a Shakespeare sonnet, [Bialosky] sets out to demonstrate how reading and remembering poetry can provide a kind of salvation. . . . Like the weather and politics, the human condition isn't altered by poetry, but this lovely memoir poignantly and credibly shows how it can inspire our acceptance of life." (Hilma Wolitzer East Hampton Star) "An intimate discussion not only on how to read poetry, but also on how to love poetry. . . . Bialosky convinces us that poetry is alive and ready to breathe with us through love, loss, joy, pain and the immensity of experience life brings us." (Christian Science Monitor) "This is the only textbook you will ever need on poetry. It tells you not only how to read poetry, but why to read it, lovingly illustrated by portraits from Bialosky's life so intimate that every passage feels like a private gift, tenderly crafted for the reader's memory, to be cherished for years to come." (Hope Jahren, bestselling author of Lab Girl) "Poetry Will Save Your Life is one of the most moving memoirs I've ever read, but it's so much more. Bialosky does something miraculous: as she shares stories from her life, she shows how specific poems can help all of us make sense of our own lives and the world. Here are classic and contemporary poems that help us see and hear one another more clearly; that speak to us in times of loss and grief; that guide us through our every days. If you've always loved poetry, this book will captivate you. And if you want to love poetry, then this book will open worlds. Poetry Will Save Your Life is itself a life-saving book." (Will Schwalbe, New York Times bestselling author of The End of Your Life Book Club and Books for Living) "Time and again she proves her thesis of survival through the arts. But it

is not a work of an essayist but one of a person who believes in the power of art to connect us in our shared humanity." (New York Journal of Books) "Poetry Will Save Your Life is a remarkable and compulsively readable book, one that combines the poignant moments of lived life and the reflected life of words in a wholly original way. Jill Bialosky writes with as much pristine skill about her personal story as she writes about the poems that nurtured and inspired her. The intersection of art and life has rarely been so vividly rendered." (Daphne Merkin, author of *This Close to Happy*) "This charming and captivating book ties each moment of the author's development to the transformative verses she read. She allows these poems to organize her deliberate candor about a complex and compelling life." (Andrew Solomon, author of *Far From the Tree*) "Jill Bialosky writes with a sincerity that would have made Dickinson herself weep. She fights to keep poetry from being lofty and academic, she takes it out of the clouds and brings down to earth. Having an expert guide you to a subject with the humility and enthusiasm of a beginner is as moving as her prose in which she reminds us that she has also been a woman who needed saving, and poetry swept in and gave her back a pulse. She achieves something remarkable in that it feels as though she is revealing herself for our sake, the readers: basically what all the best poetry strives for." (Mary-Louise Parker, author of *Dear Mr. You*) "Empathic, wise, humane, and consoling, Jill Bialosky's *Poetry Will Save Your Life* is an engrossing celebration of poetry for any curious reader. Bialosky tells us about the poems that have kept her company over the years--and along the ways she joyfully illuminates both poetry and life itself." (Meghan O'Rourke, author of *The Long Goodbye*) "Unusual and affecting. . . . Using 51 poems, ranging broadly from nursery rhymes to a Shakespeare sonnet, [Bialosky] sets out to demonstrate how reading and remembering poetry can provide a kind of salvation. . . . Like the weather and politics, the human condition isn't altered by poetry, but this lovely memoir poignantly and credibly shows how it can inspire our acceptance of life." (Hilma Wolitzer (East Hampton Star)) "Bialosky's attention to detail and love of language serve the reader well. This is a book to savor." (Library Journal) "Should you be looking for proof that poetry is balm for the wounded soul, you're likely to find it here." (The Forward)

Jill Bialosky is the author of four acclaimed collections of poetry. Her poems have appeared in *The New Yorker*, *The New York Times*, *The Kenyon Review*, and *The Atlantic*, among others. She is the author of three novels, most recently, *The Prize*, and a New York Times bestselling memoir *History of a Suicide: My Sister's Unfinished Life*. Jill was honored by the Poetry Society of America for her distinguished contribution to the field of poetry in 2015. She is an editor at W. W. Norton &

Company and lives in New York City.

My wife Joni and I have read Jill Bialosky's previous novels and books of poems -- we believe she is one of the most talented authors writing today. This book, her latest, is beyond even our expectations. Poetry is not accessible to everyone, however the world needs more poets and poet advocates such as Jill. Her observations will appeal to every good reader and her art is both thoughtful and exquisite. Importantly, you need not be an adventurous reader -- her art form and this book is accessible and pleasurable! We loved it and already have given it as gifts to our friends. Thank you Jill.

The most intimate book I have ever experienced on the intersection of poetry and memory. Beautifully intertwined and nuanced musings about poems many of us know well and Bialosky's own life, this memoir makes poetry matter in such a personal way that it's hard to imagine daily life without poetry in it. Immensely readable and engaging for those who've never encountered a poem in their lives as well as those who already feel as passionately about poetry as the author.

Finally, someone who feels the same and sees things the same. Things happen and remain in memory. To me, life has been a series of songs, music and sounds that to this day speak of a time or event. Its nice to know that someone else feels the same and expresses it in written form.

A beautiful and moving memoir about how meaningful poems can be. This book made me want to not only spend more time reading poetry but made me want to read Jill Bialosky's poems.

I just finished Poetry Will Save Your Life by Jill Bialosky. It's a captivating memoir that features poems like a personal playlist to her life. Powerful and honest and lucid.

Reading Jill Bialosky's memoir is a powerful emotional experience that brought me into the folds of all stages of her life. It has a sense of passion and vulnerability that makes the heart race. I loved the beautiful selection of poems that ran like a therapeutic thread through grief and joy. This is not only for poetry lovers it is for anyone interested in the courage of self discovery. I loved it !

There were times in the reading of this book that I wanted to build an extensive library of poetry and

immerse myself in it. The author's personal stories are often dark. The book seems to end abruptly. In the end, the book was both more and less of what I thought it would be.

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