



The Poetry of Impermanence, Mindfulness, and Joy

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The Poetry of Impermanence, Mindfulness, and Joy From Wisdom Books

Over 125 poetic companions, from Basho to Billy Collins, Saigyō to Shakespeare.

The poems expertly gathered here offer all that one might hope for in spiritual companionship: wisdom, compassion, peacefulness, good humor, and the ability to both absorb and express the deepest human emotions of grief and joy. The book includes a short essay on “Mindful Reading” and a meditation on sound from editor John Brehm—helping readers approach the poems from an experiential, non-analytical perspective and enter into the mindful reading of poetry as a kind of meditation.

The Poetry of Impermanence, Mindfulness, and Joy offers a wide-ranging collection of 129 ancient and modern poems unlike any other anthology on bookshelves today. It uniquely places Buddhist poets like Han Shan, Tu Fu, Saigyō, Ryōkan, Bashō, Issa, and others alongside modern Western poets one would not expect to find in such a collection—poets like Wallace Stevens, Robert Frost, Elizabeth Bishop, William Stafford, Denise Levertov, Jack Gilbert, Ellen Bass, Billy Collins, and more. What these poems have in common, no matter whether they are explicitly Buddhist, is that all reflect the essential truths the Buddha articulated 2,500 years ago.

The book provides an important poetic complement to the many prose books on mindfulness practice—the poems here both reflect and embody the dharma in ways that can’t be matched by other modes of writing. Its unique features include an introduction that discusses the themes of impermanence, mindfulness, and joy and explores the relationship between them. Biographical notes place the poets in historical context and offer quotes and anecdotes to help readers learn about the poets’ lives.

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Editorial Review

Review

"A superb collection of 125 poems, by Buddhist and non-Buddhist poets, on essential concepts in Buddhism." (*Spirituality and Practice*)

"In his clear and elegant introduction, John Brehm writes that he hopes these poems will come to be spiritual friends—and that seems to me a wonderful way to meet them... Each time you read one of these poems, a path opens to seeing more precisely, feeling more deeply. You don't have to be a poet or on any particular spiritual path to appreciate *The Poetry of Impermanence, Mindfulness, and Joy*. As Brehm reminds us, "Living in the full knowledge that everything changes changes everything. It loosens our grasp and lets the world become what it truly is, a source of amazement." (Ellen Bass, author of *The Human Line* and Chancellor of the Academy of American Poets)

"This collection would make a lovely gift for a poetry-loving or dharma-practicing friend, it could also serve as a wonderful gateway to either topic for the uninitiated." (*Tricycle*)

"I simply love this anthology of poetry. John Brehm has mined the hearts and minds of forgotten and famous alike, prompting his readers to stretch ever more gently into this ephemeral existence. These poems, ancient and modern, from East and West, point us to a poignant life, where the gateway to meaning involves learning to notice and include the ten thousand joys and sorrows along the way."

(Sarah Powers author of *Insight Yoga*)

"Words have great power to transform human consciousness. This collection of words, mindfully crafted by masters of language, amplifies the possibility of consciousness transformation exponentially. John Brehm has given us a superb selection." (Mark Brady, PhD, author of *The Wisdom of Listening*)

"Jubilant, thoughtful, startling, and pure, the poems in *The Poetry of Impermanence, Mindfulness, and Joy* remind us that every poem is a pond, and every pond a poem. Slow down. Dip your toes. See the ripples in each reflected moon. Swim a while in the deep brilliance of language, image, and sound." (Dinty W. Moore, author of *The Mindful Writer* and Director of Creative Writing, Ohio University)

About the Author

John Brehm is the author of two award-winning books of poems, *Help Is On the Way* and *Sea of Faith*, and the associate editor of *The Oxford Book of American Poetry*. His poems have appeared in *Poetry*, *The Southern Review*, *New Ohio Review*, *The Sun*, *The Gettysburg Review*, *Gulf Coast*, *The Writer's Almanac*, the *Norton Introduction to Literature*, and many other journals and anthologies. He lives in Portland, Oregon, and teaches for Literary Arts and Mountain Writers Series in Portland and for the Lighthouse Writers Workshop in Denver, Colorado.

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