

AMY KITCHENER'S "ASK THE EXPERTS"

WHAT IS THE RIGHT WAY TO ENTITLE YOUR POEMS?

Following are seventeen titles selected at random from poems submitted to our recent poetry contests. Note the variations in presentation. In your opinion, which titles are presented appropriately? Which, if any, are totally wrong? What's the right way to title your poems? Read these samples and think about it.

Maturity !!! <b>Bottom Line</b> Title: Learning's Illusion "The Cycle of Hands" Geneticsbedamned small ritual	MICE ARE NICE  SPARE PARTS  SPACE RESERVED *****	"Over the hills" (haiku) 20?'S <b>POVERTY AMONG POETS</b> <u>A MILITARY TRIBUTE</u> untitled #3 POEM 375 RUNNING
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Since such a wide variety of title styles reaches us, we decided to ask several experts: What are the rules for preparing properly entitled poems? Highlights of their responses shed light on this important aspect of poetry to be presented to an editor for consideration as well as to contests in which your title might make the difference between winning, losing or being disqualified, meaning you lose your entry fee with a poem that probably wasn't even read.

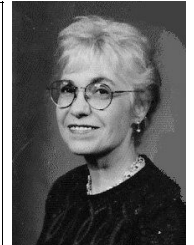


**EMERY L. CAMPBELL – 1999 National Senior Poet Laureate. Member of Georgia State Poetry Society chapter, National Federation of State Poetry Societies. Author of "This Gardener's Impossible Dream" (a collection of poems).**

"My practice, for what it is worth, is to underline the title of a poem and to capitalize only the substantive words in it, not to include "in," "of," "the" (unless it is the first word in the title), "a," "an," etc. of that ilk. I think to capitalize it entirely would look wrong, but who am I to pontificate?"

**LEE ANN RUSSELL—Author of "How to Write Poetry—Ballad to Villanelle" (textbook of Yvonne Nunn's Cyber-college of Online Poetry). President of Springfield Writers' Guild chapter of Missouri writers' Guild. Award-winning poet/photographer.**

"My preference is in 12 point font (like the poem), TITLE IN ALL CAPS, but not bold or underlined. My second preference is Title in Upper and Lower Case. Imagine publishers have their preference and publish accordingly. If guidelines or contest rules don't state anything about titles, I guess it's poet's preference. I know one contest that will disqualify titles in all caps, underlined, or bold.



**TOM PADGETT—First president of Missouri State Poetry Society. Former Chancellor of the National Federation of State Poetry Societies. Retired English professor and adviser to various poetry groups and faculty members. Author of numerous chapbooks.**

"When I type a title in caps and lower case, I leave the articles and prepositions such as 'a' and 'the' in lower case and start all other words in capitals. If you use a not-all-capitals format, capitalize the first and last word. Do not capitalize all other articles [a, an, the] and prepositions under six letters. When used as prepositions, long words like 'through' are capitalized; short words like 'above' are not. When used as adverbs, words like 'Through' and 'Above' are capitalized.

Confused? Don't worry about how you prepare your titles when you submit poetry to our contests. We'll reset them to be consistent with our format. Poems in the GOLDEN WORDS chapbook containing the winners of the Senior Poets Laureate competition are always ALL IN CAPITALS., but in the lists of winners in the newsletter and online, as well as in the chapbook's index, they're set in capitals and lower case letters, italicized inside quotation marks, in order to make titles easily distinguishable from the biographical data about their authors. *To ease your confusion, remember Tom Padgett's advice: First and last words of titles are always capitalized.* Names of poet are always capitalized. Remember, too, the trite old adage: *There are exceptions to every rule.* In poetry, perhaps it translates to: *It's Poet's Choice!*

*Poetry should be fun...But it's hard work...At least for me... A. L. Baker*