



Sturminster Newton Literary Festival

Valerie Bridge

We interviewed Valerie Bridge, the judge for the poetry competition. An accomplished poet herself with work published in several of the poetry presses, anthologies and novels, Valerie has agreed to select the winners and to assist us with getting them published.

Valerie has a degree in Russian and an MA in Creative Writing and leads a creative writing group in Sturminster Newton. For many years she taught languages in schools and creative writing in local colleges. She has run poetry competitions and organised the subsequent publishing of entries to showcase the winning poems and the work of many runners up. Valerie has two collections of poetry published: *A Somersault of Doves* (2013) and *Air Dumplings and Paper Cutlets* (2001) both published by George Mann Publications. A third book is on its way.

“I’m looking for something fresh, presented in a natural, non-pretentious voice” says Valerie. The theme for the competition is ‘Water’ and Valerie is hoping that entrants will explore and play with the topic. Entries can take a literal approach and be about water or experiences with water through to using water as a metaphor, “Allow your thoughts to flow!” says Valerie.

Valerie has several tips for success. She suggests you use your own voice, and use everyday speech as this makes it easier to transfer your thoughts to paper. A good way to start a poem is to write down the first three words that pop into your head. Choose one of these and write two lines about it. “Then scratch it out and start again! Once you’ve done this a few times your mind will be buzzing, your ideas more focussed and the poetry will come more easily.”

If the idea of writing poetry is new to you, it might help you to imagine that you are writing a pop song or rap lyric. It can be funny or serious, familiar or profound. And remember, poetry doesn’t always have to rhyme.

Valerie is emphatic that people shouldn’t be put off entering because they worry about their skills with punctuation, spelling and grammar. “Shakespeare couldn’t write properly,” says Valerie, “It’s what it sounds like, the feelings it evokes in the listener, that counts, not how it looks on the page.”

We’re all looking forward to seeing the competition entries, and Valerie in particular. “I’m sure we’ll have some great poetry that really stands out.”



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