

Every year is different for the poetry judges. This year offered a smaller field of entries, but very strong work. It was a pleasure to serve as a reader for this year's poems.

So what makes a good poem? Does it have to rhyme? Does it have to dance to a musical beat? Maybe some poems do, but there's more to it.

Is the reader surprised in some way? Is the writer surprised? Surprised by what?

What if a poem offers words you want to tuck into your vocabulary to revisit and use again sometime soon?

What if a poem finds a match to your heartbeat, makes you blush, or slows your breathing?

What if it regards another with close and warm observation?

What if a poem makes you think, raises questions you had not considered before, requires that you answer to a calling?

What if it takes you on a journey to a land you have not visited before?

What if it makes you want to dance?

These poems offered all those experiences.

What if a poem does all these things at once? The only way to find out is to keep on reading and writing poems.

Congratulations to the winners of the poetry contest, and a deep thanks to all who had the courage to put words on the page.

-MaryAnn Moenck