

# I Believe



Ars Poetica by Elizabeth Alexander

Poetry, I tell my students,  
is idiosyncratic. Poetry  
is where we are ourselves  
(though Sterling Brown said  
"Every 'I' is a dramatic 'I'"),  
digging in the clam flats  
for the shell that snaps,  
emptying the proverbial pocketbook.

Poetry is what you find  
in the dirt in the corner,  
overhear on the bus, God  
in the details, the only way  
to get from here to there.

Poetry (and now my voice is rising)  
is not all love, love, love,  
and I'm sorry the dog died.

Poetry (here I hear myself loudest)  
is the human voice,  
and are we not of interest to each other?

# Poetry is ...



**Poetry is**

---

---

**Words are**

---

---

**Without  
poetry**

---

---

**Poetry is**

---

---