

The Average Salary of a Poet

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American poets hold all kinds of jobs to make money. Many teach. Others work ordinary jobs in the business world. William Carols Williams was a pediatrician; Wallace Stevens was an insurance executive. Few American poets are paid a salary for being a poet, and most never make any substantial money via the pen.

Poets Laureate

The Poet Laureate of the United States, the most notable position for a poet in the nation, earns a stipend of \$35,000, with an additional \$5,000 travel allowance. Various states also have a poet laureate. The average salary for a state poet laureate in 2011 was \$33,000, according to the Simply Hired job information website.

Writing Professors

Most poets who get full-time jobs directly related to poetry teach literature or creative writing at a university. According to Kristin Hahn in an Association of Writers & Writing Programs newspaper article, median salaries in 2006 ranged from a high of \$76,413 for a full professor, which usually takes years to achieve, down to \$34,712 for an assistant professor, the entry-level position at which most college professors start. Instructors, who are not on tenure track, are generally paid less. Adjuncts, part-time instructors, are paid by the course.

Contributors Copies

When poets send their work to literary magazines, if it is accepted for publication, they are usually paid in contributor's copies, each one being worth \$5 to \$10. Generally the publisher sends one or two copies of the issue in which the poet's work appears. Sometimes the poet receives a subscription to the magazine, usually worth \$20 to \$30. Few magazines pay cash for poetry. Those that do usually pay a nominal fee. However, "Poetry Magazine," which has an endowment, pays \$10 a line with a minimum payment of \$300.

Reputable literary magazines are difficult to break into. Nimrod International Journal of Prose and Poetry, for example, accepts 3.36 percent of all submissions, according to Duotrope's Digest.

Prizes

To get their books published or achieve laurels, many poets enter reputable contests run by university and literary small presses. The poet who wins usually receives an award in addition to publication. The awards range from \$500 to \$5,000, with most on the lower end of the scale. Nearly all contests charge an entry fee of \$10 to \$25, which the poet pays.