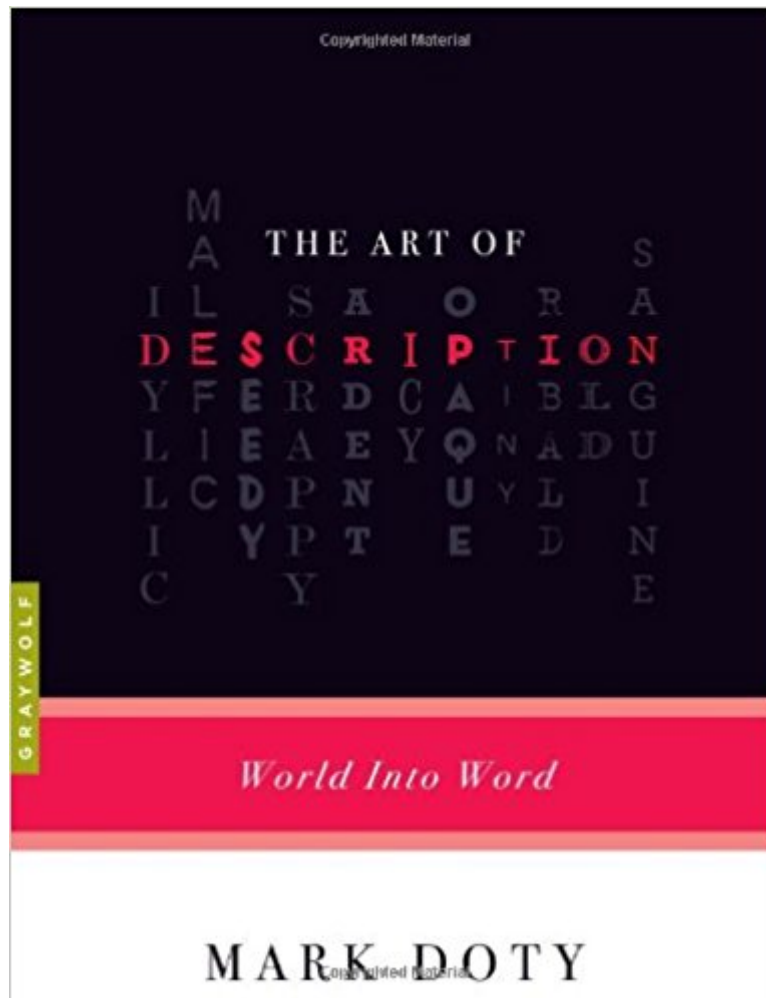




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# The Art Of Description: World Into Word



## Synopsis

"It sounds like a simple thing, to say what you see," Mark Doty begins. "But try to find words for the shades of a mottled sassafras leaf, or the reflectivity of a bay on an August morning, or the very beginnings of desire stirring in the gaze of someone looking right into your eyes . . ." Doty finds refuge in the sensory experience found in poems by Blake, Whitman, Bishop, and others. *The Art of Description* is an invaluable book by one of America's most revered writers and teachers.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

MARK DOTY is the author of eight collections of poetry, including *Fire to Fire: New and Selected Poems*, which won the National Book Award for Poetry in 2008. He teaches at Rutgers University and lives in New York.

Mark Doty spends an entire book just examining, yes, description, and it's actually a great read. More often than not, these "writing about writing" books can be long and dull, however Doty's book is short, to the point and holds your attention. This is even more impressive coming from me given the fact that the book is written mainly for poets, and personally, I don't much enjoy writing poetry. Nevertheless, I did enjoy this book and found much of the information valuable for my prose writing as well. While he does examine a number of poems, most of which I hadn't heard of before, instead of droning on in his analysis actually practices what he preaches, turning what is usually humdrum

examinations into something beautiful. Many of the things he said I sometimes found more profound and beautiful than the actual poem he was focusing on. Doty also is brave enough to share some personal anecdotes, which are often enjoyable for us readers to break up the constant analysis. In general this was an interesting and beautiful read, Doty manages to hold this picky anti-poetry readers attention for the compact but dense duration of this book.

With this collection of thoughts and essays. Mark Doty shows that not only is he a fine poet, he is also a great explicator of poetry and advocate for its craft. He argues effectively for description of the world and the inner experience of it, and the informing of each by the other. Doty also points to a critical problem with so much current poetry: "Startling, to go description-hunting and realize that I can thumb through whole books of recent poems with very little evocation of sense perception within them. Why is this the case? I declare myself here on the side of allegiance to the sensible, things as they are, the given, the incompletely knowable, never to get done or get it right or render it whole: ours to say and say. The mightiest of our resources brought to the task, to make the world real." There is a loss of faith in the ability of language to be more than solipsistic, and a concomitant loss in the craft of making things sensible in both definitions of the word: "Now everybody in creation mistrusts language, and half the poems we read make a nod toward the unsayable.

What's to be done? Language won't do what we wish it would, but we have nothing else so we have to go forward and behave as if it could do what we wanted (with some faith in the miraculous fact that it does, from time to time, give us a "Song of Myself" or a Tender Buttons, something the world wouldn't be the same without). "Perhaps we can inhabit the interesting middle ground that lies between, on the one side, giving up on referentiality altogether, and, on the other, cleaving to an outdated notion that words can be controlled, can say what we mean to say when we wish to make use of them." This is a book for lovers of beautiful words and the desperate craft of believing that their distillation in unexpected liquors still makes life more alive.

Every page offered up something worthwhile. It is more than a book on writing--it is a book on how to observe the world around us. I have not read any of his poetry but plan to now! I recommend this highly to all writers.

Very helpful book.

lovely guide to the power of imagery, movement, and description in poetry. highly practical and accessible. recommended for teachers perhaps teaching an intro college poetry course or creative writing class but i read it as a grad student and found it extremely useful, instructive, etc. go for it.

Great!

Amazing products beautiful exchange with seller product was just as described very happy

Something luminescent produces its own light, glows from within. In such creatures as deep sea fishes it involves a complex chemical reaction between an enzyme called luciferase, oxygen, and organic molecules. Here it is produced by the examples chosen by Mark Doty, his own poetic talents, and especially the always evident joy and astonishment of discovery that infects Doty as he deals with the material. The examples used are of enormous scope and variety, representing, at times, different substances within poetry. Thus we have Shelley and EE Cummings, Hayden Carruth and (briefly) Hart Crane, William Blake and Elizabeth Bishop. There are examples from Barnwell, Swenson, Galvin, Hopkins, Pound, Hull, Morling, and Wislawa Szymborska, and many more besides. Each one is a variant, a slight dappling of the patterns of description of the interior self, of polarities existing simultaneously, and/or of pieces of the unknowable found with close examinations of the world, within attempts to put those examinations into words. This book is a small masterpiece, full of nuance and subtlety. It is readable again and again for those nuances, for the interior brightness of its own writing, but, in the largest portion, for the palpable sense of sharing a deep joy that Doty brings to his task. It is a book to love, to dog ear, to spill coffee on; in short, to live with. Do not be dissuaded by others who question interpretations or found the writing dense. If you read and/or write any kind of poetry, this work of Mark Doty's will return full (and then some, I suspect) value from whatever effort you bring to it. I bought three of these "Art of" books together (Line and Syntax also) and while I liked the others, I loved this luminescent little volume. Most highly recommended.

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