



## Poet: Ingrid Keriotis

Ingrid Keriotis taught at Modesto Junior College for thirteen years. Her first book of poetry, *It Started with the Wild Horses*, is available from Finishing Line Press at [www.finishinglinepress.com](http://www.finishinglinepress.com). When it comes to writing poetry, she believes in Richard Hugo's advice: "You owe reality nothing and the truth about your feelings everything."

### Empathy

Can the wildness in all of us  
that sometimes shouts or scorns  
show itself instead  
in ecstatic love

for rain-washed leaves,  
great grey mountains on the horizon,  
every child's gaze?

Wildness is ours  
when we grasp each other in night-time  
fervor,  
when we surrender our bodies,  
let them drop slowly  
into dreams.

Once asleep, I travel roads I'll never see,  
search for oil-streaked birds  
by a sullied sea, crouch with mothers  
in darkness beneath the mahogany trees  
of another continent.

Close your eyes.  
Be awake in another's body for a moment,  
feel her blood as it circles  
through intricate veins.  
Look: when it falls, it blooms  
red, just like yours.

### Remedial

He wrote about what it felt like  
when her fist hit the skin of his face.  
The girl beside him described  
how her stepfather had pushed  
in spite of her resistance  
and one young man said his mother  
called him every bad name he had ever  
heard  
and some that were new.

These people  
were supposed to have been parents,  
parenting.

I had expected to teach the topic sentence,  
the use of a transitional phrase,  
how to write an essay so smooth  
it could flow logically  
to a natural end.

When I left for home,  
I could not bear  
to carry my bag beside me  
so instead I hugged it close,  
desperate to keep their stories  
out of the rain.

### Up Late Reading Wendell Berry

I can't sleep. Why not start being alive  
right now at 12:30 a.m.  
with Berry's wood drake and wild things,  
his day-blind stars and still water?

And I'm up late with  
all the times I've kissed you  
all the grassy hills I've wandered  
days of soaking rain  
coming from an open palm of sky,  
the utter allure of an egret  
hunting in the marsh  
at the side of a busy highway.

And how about this?  
That the sun hasn't disappeared for good  
that a page of words can feel  
like a lover with a soft mouth

That a book can open everything  
when just a minute ago  
you were alone  
in all the world.

### The Orchard

"You went from parched to overflow in the  
blink of an eye." -Anne Lamott  
Like wood catching fire  
on a bed of smoke,  
almond blossoms suddenly appear  
and every time I foolishly think  
I can capture the moment.

This is what stuns me most  
as I stand at the roadside:  
that each year I think it will be different.

That I might be able to hold that sight  
full in my chest:  
the sun and breeze, even the wild impulse  
to climb on top of my car for the best view  
and the mad dash across a two-lane  
highway  
with my camera.

Rising up from green valley and grey  
trunk,  
the precise blur of thousands of white  
petals  
pulses in me,  
the full catastrophe of spring.