

THE CRETIN AT THE POETRY READING

The Cretin walked into a room where a poet was reading her poems very loudly. The cretin clutched his ears and thought about poetry. "Poetry is what hurts my ears," he said. Then, being a rather intellectual Cretin, he generalized: "Poetry is a way of experiencing pain."

The poet heard him say this, so she began reading her poems very softly. Eventually the Cretin took his hands away from his ears. He listened for a moment and thought some more about poetry. (He was a very open-minded Cretin.) "Poetry is also a way of soothing my ears," he said. "Yes," he continued, "poetry is a way of experiencing pleasure."

The poet heard what he said, and she lost her temper. "Damn it," she said, "poetry has nothing whatsoever to do with making you feel pain or pleasure." The Cretin couldn't understand this.

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