

Ethan Goffman

This is a Poem Because I Say It Is

This isn't a poem because it has rhyme or meter or line breaks or figurative language or breathtaking, heart-stopping epiphanies or anything normally associated with poetry. The muse isn't singing here, there are no profound imaginative leaps, no negative capability, no emotion recollected in tranquility, no words singing out despair, desire, ecstasy, no voyages to far-flung lands or to the frozen sea within. Nothing but dry words, brittle as twigs in a drought ready to burst into flame in the unlikely event that lightning strikes or if some careless camper unleashes a spark, leading to vast forest fires that all of humanity's exertion and ingenuity can't quench. Nothing poetic is here. Nevertheless, it's still a poem. It's like Humpty Dumpty said, but on a larger scale: "When I use a word, it means just what I choose it to mean — neither more nor less." When I write a poem, it is just as poetic as I want it to be, regardless of form or content. This is a poem because I say so!