

# *Ideas* in **Things:**

## **INTRODUCTION**

The poetic mantra of William Carlos Williams, the great twentieth century poet, was “Say it—no ideas but in things.” Williams focused on the concrete particulars of the world as the basis for his vision as a writer. Although my students don’t end up writing like Williams—no one will ever match his style, diction, or perspective—they learn from him about the need for a poet to focus on “things,” on real people and objects and events.

Student poets are drawn to broad topics: snow, love, autumn, music, war, nature. But the strongest student poems, theme-wise and craft-wise, address specific moments and objects, not universal ideas or feelings. The details of a particular writer’s particular experience touch our senses, involve us, and create a feeling of shared meaning.