

Shallow

Mike earned a living in construction but lived to write poetry. He had several books published but, despite the music in his writing, he wondered whether he had anything to offer more than clichés. How shallow was he? What was he, deep inside? Did he have a deep inside?

He avoided clichés (or thought he did,) but recognized them in his work. Readers loved the clichés even as he despised them—but sweet dreams and happy endings were what most everyone wanted—Mike included. It felt shallow. It was no happy ending if his poetry was shallow crap. If...he was shallow crap.

How could he go deeper? Was his career holding him back? If so, from what—what deep inner thoughts did he have? His big message in his poetry? Understanding what happened around you, change what you must, accept what you cannot. Hardly a new revelation.

Could he reinvent himself? Perhaps become a profoundly tragic figure and write about that?—people found tragedy meaningful—but tragedy's ultimate message: avoid mistakes. Big deal. Perhaps he could do something inspiring—but was not thinking that way shallow? About what others thought? Did it matter? If he devoted his life to helping others, how would he know it was not performative? Did it matter?

Mike considered that asking such questions—didn't that mean he was not shallow?

Mike decided to remain true to himself and continued to write poetry: now he deliberately added clichés. He never avoided the truth, writing about it obliquely. His readers were happy, that made him happy.

He decided happy was not the same as shallow and continued his wading into deeper waters.