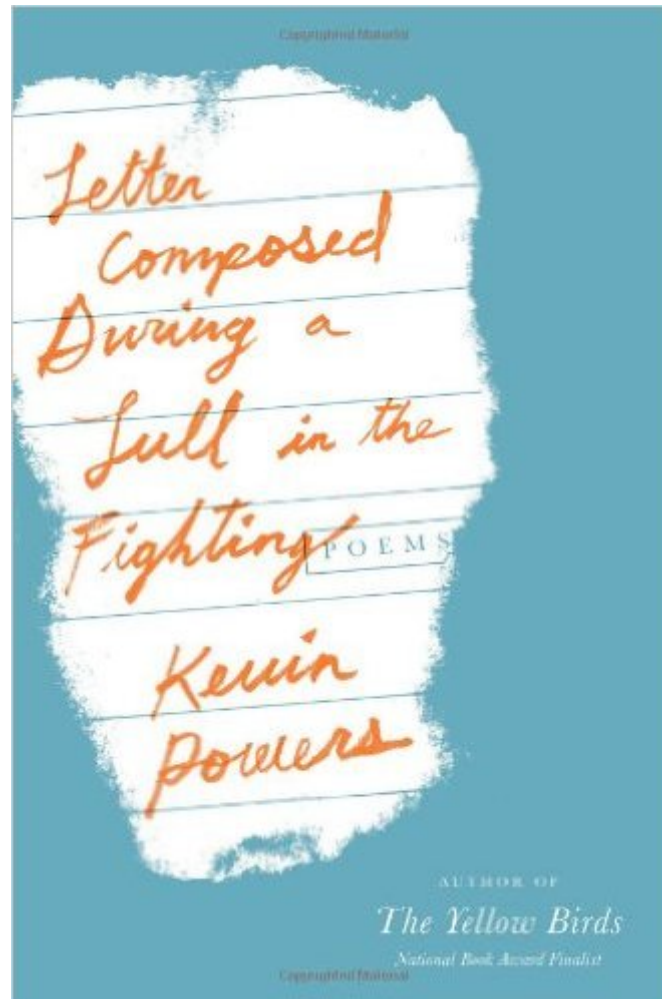


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# Letter Composed During A Lull In The Fighting: Poems



## Synopsis

The award-winning author of *The Yellow Birds* returns with an extraordinary debut poetry collection. National Book Award finalist, Iraq war veteran, novelist and poet Kevin Powers creates a deeply affecting portrait of a life shaped by war. *Letter Composed During a Lull in the Fighting* captures the many moments that comprise a soldier's life: driving down the Texas highway; waiting for the unknown in the dry Iraq heat; writing a love letter; listening to a mother recount her dreams. Written with evocative language and discernment, Powers's poetry strives to make sense of the war and its echoes through human experience. Just as *The Yellow Birds* was hailed as the "first literary masterpiece produced by the Iraq war," this collection will make its mark as a powerful, enduring work (Los Angeles Times).

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Kevin Powers has given us a fine novel of interrelated stories, *The Yellow Birds*, and a slender volume of relentlessly somber poetry, *Letter Composed During a Lull in the Fighting: Poems*. Each complements the other: the poems read like a gloss on the novel, the novel - which I read first - seems in retrospect a commentary on the poems. Powers' poetic project is foreshadowed in the first piece and expanded upon in the following two selections. I defy anyone to read these three short poems and not continue through the remaining 88 pages (as I said, slender). The key is in the final three lines of the first, "Customs."...I can tell you exactly what I mean. The world has been replaced by our ideas about the world. This perspective Powers expands upon in his second poem,

which is also the title of the book and which I reproduce in its entirety: I tell her I love her like not killing or ten minutes of sleep beneath the low rooftop wall on which my rifle rests. I tell her in a letter that will stink, when she opens it, of bolt oil and burned powder and the things it says. I tell her how Pvt. Bartle says, offhand, that war is just us making little pieces of metal pass through each other. The third offering, "Great Plain," makes even more plain the Powers' philosophical perception that, yes, there's a big world out there, but even as we swan through it, we interpret it, and we use words to record those thoughts and the accompanying sense impressions, and it's the words that afterward linger in the air and await discovery by others.

"A Letter Composed During a Lull in the Fighting": is a thoughtful magnificent four part poetry volume based on Kevin Power's deployment in Iraq as an Army machine gunner. Power's is a literary award winning author for his novel of the Iraq War "The Yellow Birds": released in 2012. The aftermath following war stretches out in the vastness of the Texas highways, in "Customs". The book title "A Letter Composed During a Lull in the Fighting": is another opening poem, which briefly describes a letter to his girlfriend and a quote from Pvt. Bartle. "Great Plain": describes a Nebraska prairie, in the mind of a combat sniper relieved he doesn't have to shoot a little boy cresting a hill. Several poems were written of his mother and were very well done. "Blue Star Mother": a deeply compassionate expression of his mother catching a dream of a fallen soldier, being strong enough to handle it. "A History of Yards": is of a promise made to her to be safe and not fear. The violence and inhumanity of war are recalled in vivid detail in Part 2: "Death Mother and Child" and "Field Manual". The longer poems, "Improvised Explosive Device": the blast of destruction, metal, fragments, then words.. though these words have wires coming out of them, they are safe and sometimes best forgotten. "Photographing The Suddenly Dead" and the shorter poem "Separation": recalls memories and effects of PTSD. "After Leaving McGuire Veterans Hospital for the Last Time": a soldier receiving therapy found peace thinking of the curvature of the coast, shoreline, and sea. I was reminded of a boyfriend stationed at Ft. Dix, before his deployment to Viet Nam in 1972, also my father in law who was stationed at McGuire AFB, (1959-1971).

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