

AMERICAN LIFE IN POETRY

A FREE COLUMN FOR NEWSPAPERS BY TED KOOSER, THE POET LAUREATE OF THE UNITED STATES

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American Life in Poetry: Column 027

BY TED KOOSER, U.S. POET LAUREATE

In this lovely poem by Angela Shaw, who lives in Pennsylvania, we hear a voice of wise counsel: Let the young go, let them do as they will, and admire their grace and beauty as they pass from us into the future.

Children in a Field

They don't wade in so much as they are taken.
Deep in the day, in the deep of the field,
every current in the grasses whispers *hurry*
hurry, every yellow spreads its perfume
like a rumor, impelling them further on.
It is the way of girls. It is the sway
of their dresses in the summer trance-
light, their bare calves already far-gone
in green. What songs will they follow?
Whatever the wood warbles, whatever storm
or harm the border promises, whatever
calm. Let them go. Let them go traceless
through the high grass and into the willow-
blur, traceless across the lean blue glint
of the river, to the long dark bodies
of the conifers, and over the welcoming
threshold of nightfall.

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