

AMERICAN LIFE IN POETRY

A FREE COLUMN FOR NEWSPAPERS BY TED KOOSER, POET LAUREATE OF THE UNITED STATES, 2004-2006
AMERICAN LIFE IN POETRY © 2006 THE POETRY FOUNDATION WEBSITE: WWW.AMERICANLIFEINPOETRY.ORG CONTACT: ALP@POETRYFOUNDATION.ORG

American Life in Poetry: Column 095

BY TED KOOSER, U.S. POET LAUREATE, 2004-2006

Literature, and in this instance, poetry, holds a mirror to life; thus the great themes of life become the great themes of poems. Here the distinguished American poet, John Haines, addresses--and celebrates through the affirmation of poetry--our preoccupation with aging and mortality.

Young Man

I seemed always standing
before a door
to which I had no key,
although I knew it hid behind it
a gift for me.

Until one day I closed
my eyes a moment, stretched
then looked once more.
And not surprised, I did not mind it
when the hinges creaked
and, smiling, Death
held out his hands to me.

Reprinted from "ABZ: A Poetry Magazine," No. 1, 2006, by permission of the author. Copyright © 2006, by John Haines, whose most recent book of poetry is "Of Your Passage, O Summer," Limberlost Press, 2004. This weekly column is supported by The Poetry Foundation, The Library of Congress, and the Department of English at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. We do not accept unsolicited manuscripts.

American Life in Poetry ©2006 The Poetry Foundation
Contact: alp@poetryfoundation.org
This column does not accept unsolicited poetry.