

AMERICAN LIFE IN POETRY

A FREE COLUMN FOR NEWSPAPERS BY TED KOOSER, POET LAUREATE OF THE UNITED STATES, 2004-2006
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BY TED KOOSER, U.S. POET LAUREATE, 2004-2006

Poetry can be thought of as an act of persuasion: a poem attempts to bring about some kind of change in its reader, perhaps no more than a moment of clarity amidst the disorder of everyday life. And successful poems not only make use of the meanings and sounds of words, as well as the images those words conjure up, but may also take advantage of the arrangement of type on a page. Notice how this little poem by Mississippi poet Robert West makes the very best use of the empty space around it to help convey the nature of its subject.

Echo

A lone
voice

in the
right

empty space
makes

its own
best

company.

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