

AMERICAN LIFE IN POETRY

A FREE COLUMN FOR NEWSPAPERS BY TED KOOSER, POET LAUREATE OF THE UNITED STATES, 2004-2006
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American Life in Poetry: Column 176

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

Hearts and flowers, that's how some people dismiss poetry, suggesting that's all there is to it, just a bunch of sappy poets weeping over love and beauty. Well, poetry is lots more than that. At times it's a means of honoring the simple things about us. To illustrate the care with which one poet observes a flower, here's Frank Steele, of Kentucky, paying such close attention to a sunflower that he almost gets inside it.

Sunflower

You're expected to see
only the top, where sky
scrambles bloom, and not
the spindly leg, hairy, fending off
tall, green darkness beneath.
Like every flower, she has a little
theory, and what she thinks
is up. I imagine the long
climb out of the dark
beyond morning glories, day lilies, four o'clocks
up there to the dream she keeps
lifting, where it's noon all day.

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