

# 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 199

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

I'd guess that most of us carry in our memories landscapes that, far behind us, hold significant meanings for us. For me, it's a Mississippi River scenic overlook south of Guttenberg, Iowa. And for you? Here's just such a memoryscape, in this brief poem by New Yorker Anne Pierson Wiese.

### Inscrutable Twist

The twist of the stream was inscrutable.  
It was a seemingly run-of-the-mill  
stream that flowed for several miles by the side  
of Route 302 in northern Vermont—  
and presumably does still—but I've not  
been back there for what seems like a long time.

I have it in my mind's eye, the way  
one crested a rise and rounded a corner  
on the narrow blacktop, going west, and saw  
off to the left in the flat green meadow  
the stream turning briefly back on itself  
to form a perfect loop—a useless light-filled  
water noose or fragment of moon's cursive,  
a sign or message of some kind—but left behind.

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