

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 230

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

It's been sixty-odd years since I was in the elementary grades, but I clearly remember those first school days in early autumn, when summer was suddenly over and we were all perched in our little desks facing into the future. Here Ron Koertge of California gives us a glimpse of a day like that.

First Grade

Until then, every forest
had wolves in it, we thought
it would be fun to wear snowshoes
all the time, and we could talk to water.

So why is this woman with the gray
breath calling out names and pointing
to the little desks we will occupy
for the rest of our lives?

American Life in Poetry is made possible by The Poetry Foundation (www.poetryfoundation.org), publisher of *Poetry* magazine. It is also supported by the Department of English at the University of Nebraska, Lincoln. Poem copyright ©2008 by Ron Koertge, whose most recent book of poems is "Fever," Red Hen Press, 2006. Reprinted by permission of Ron Koertge. Introduction copyright © 2009 by The Poetry Foundation. The introduction's author, Ted Kooser, served as United States Poet Laureate Consultant in Poetry to the Library of Congress from 2004-2006. 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.