

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 238

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

Though some teacher may have made you think that all poetry is deadly serious, chock full of coded meanings and obscure symbols, poems, like other works of art, can be delightfully playful. Here Bruce Guernsey, who divides his time between Illinois and Maine, plays with a common yam.

Yam

The potato that ate all its carrots,
can see in the dark like a mole,

its eyes the scars
from centuries of shovels, tines.

May spelled backwards
because it hates the light,

pawing its way, padding along,
there in the catacombs.

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