

# 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 269

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

It is enough for me as a reader that a poem take from life a single moment and hold it up for me to look at. There need not be anything sensational or unusual or peculiar about that moment, but somehow, by directing my attention to it, our attention to it, the poet bathes it in the light of the remarkable. Here is a poem like this by Carolyn Miller, who lives in San Francisco.

### The World as It is

No ladders, no descending angels, no voice  
out of the whirlwind, no rending  
of the veil, or chariot in the sky—only  
water rising and falling in breathing springs  
and seeping up through limestone, aquifers filling  
and flowing over, russet stands of prairie grass  
and dark pupils of black-eyed Susans. Only  
the fixed and wandering stars: Orion rising sideways,  
Jupiter traversing the southwest like a great firefly,  
Venus trembling and faceted in the west—and the moon,  
appearing suddenly over your shoulder, brimming  
and ovoid, ripe with light, lifting slowly, deliberately,  
wobbling slightly, while far below, the faithful sea  
rises up and follows.

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