

# 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 279

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

Rhyming has a way of brightening a poem, and a depressing subject can become quite a bit lighter with well-chosen rhymes. Here's a sonnet by Mary Meriam, who lives in Missouri. Are there readers among you who have felt like this?

### The Romance of Middle Age

Now that I'm fifty, let me take my showers  
at night, no light, eyes closed. And let me swim  
in cover-ups. My skin's tattooed with hours  
and days and decades, head to foot, and slim  
is just a faded photograph. It's strange  
how people look away who once would look.  
I didn't know I'd undergo this change  
and be the unseen cover of a book  
whose plot, though swift, just keeps on getting thicker.  
One reaches for the pleasures of the mind  
and heart to counteract the loss of quicker  
knowledge. One feels old urgencies unwind,  
although I still pluck chin hairs with a tweezer,  
in case I might attract another geezer.

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