

# 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 150

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

There's a world of great interest and significance right under our feet, but most of us don't think to look down. We spend most of our time peering off into the future, speculating on how we will deal with whatever is coming our way. Or dwelling on the past. Here Ed Ochester stops in the middle of life to look down.

### What the Frost Casts Up

A crown of handmade nails, as though  
there were a house here once, burned,  
where we've gardened for fifteen years;  
the ceramic top of an ancient fuse;  
this spring the tiny head of a plastic doll—  
not much compared to what they find  
in England, where every now and then  
a coin of the Roman emperors, Severus  
or Constantius, works its way up, but  
something, as though nothing we've  
ever touched wants to stay in the earth,  
the patient artifacts waiting, having been lost  
or cast away, as though they couldn't bear  
the parting, or because they are the only  
messengers from lives that were important once,  
waiting for the power of the frost  
to move them to the mercy of our hands.

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