

AMERICAN LIFE IN POETRY

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

From your school days you may remember A. E. Housman's poem that begins, "Loveliest of trees, the cherry now/ Is hung with bloom along the bough." Here's a look at a blossoming cherry, done 120 years later, on site among the famous cherry trees of Washington, by D.C. poet Judith Harris.

In Your Absence

Not yet summer,
but unseasonable heat
pries open the cherry tree.

It stands there stupefied,
in its sham, pink frills,
dense with early blooming.

Then, as afternoon cools
into more furtive winds,
I look up to see
a blizzard of petals
rushing the sky.

It is only April.
I can't stop my own life
from hurrying by.
The moon, already pacing.

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