

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 174

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

I'd guess you've all seen a toddler hold something over the edge of a high-chair and then let it drop, just for the fun of it. Here's a lovely picture of a small child learning the laws of physics. The poet, Joelle Biele, lives in Maryland.

To Katharine: At Fourteen Months

All morning, you've studied the laws
of spoons, the rules of books, the dynamics
of the occasional plate, observed the principles
governing objects in motion and objects
at rest. To see if it will fall, and if it does,
how far, if it will rage like a lost penny
or ring like a Chinese gong—because
it doesn't have to—you lean from your chair
and hold your cup over the floor.
It curves in your hand, it weighs in your palm,
it arches like a wave, it is a dipper
full of stars, and you're the wind timing
the pull of the moon, you're the water
measuring the distance from which we fall.

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