

# 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 257

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

Often when I dig some change out of my jeans pocket to pay somebody for something, the pennies and nickels are accompanied by a big gob of blue lint. So it's no wonder that I was taken with this poem by a Massachusetts poet, Gary Metras, who isn't embarrassed.

### Lint

It doesn't bother me to have  
lint in the bottoms of pant pockets;  
it gives the hands something to do,  
especially since I no longer hold  
shovel, hod, or hammer  
in the daylight hours of labor  
and haven't, in fact, done so  
in twenty-five years. A long time  
to be picking lint from pockets.  
Perhaps even long enough to have  
gathered sacks full of lint  
that could have been put  
to good use, maybe spun into yarn  
to knit a sweater for my wife's  
Christmas present, or strong thread  
whirled and woven into a tweedy jacket.  
Imagine entering my classroom  
in a jacket made from lint.  
Who would believe it?  
Yet there are stranger things—  
the son of a bricklayer with hands  
so smooth they're only fit  
for picking lint.

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