

# 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 278

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

Peter Everwine is a California poet whose work I have admired for almost as long as I have been writing. Here he beautifully captures a quiet moment of reflection.

### Rain

Toward evening, as the light failed  
and the pear tree at my window darkened,  
I put down my book and stood at the open door,  
the first raindrops gusting in the eaves,  
a smell of wet clay in the wind.  
Sixty years ago, lying beside my father,  
half asleep, on a bed of pine boughs as rain  
drummed against our tent, I heard  
for the first time a loon's sudden wail  
drifting across that remote lake—  
a loneliness like no other,  
though what I heard as inconsolable  
may have been only the sound of something  
untamed and nameless  
singing itself to the wilderness around it  
and to us until we slept. And thinking of my father  
and of good companions gone  
into oblivion, I heard the steady sound of rain  
and the soft lapping of water, and did not know  
whether it was grief or joy or something other  
that surged against my heart  
and held me listening there so long and late.

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