

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 733

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

I like this poem for the way it portrays the manner in which we study the behavior of others and project our own experiences onto their lives. It's the second poem we've published by Jeanie Greensfelder, who lives in California, where she's (of course she is!) a psychologist. It's from her most recent book, *I Got What I Came For*, published by Penciled In, in Atascadero, California.

Taking Turns

I pass a woman on the beach.
We both wear graying hair,
feel sand between our toes,
hear surf, and see blue sky.
I came with a smile.
She came to get one.

No. I'm wrong.

She sits on a boulder
by a cairn of stacked rocks.
Hands over her heart,
she stares out to sea.
Today's my turn to hold the joy,
hers the sorrow.

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