**Column Intro:**

*This week’s guest on “Poetry from Daily Life” is Ted Kooser, who lives on an acreage near Garland, Nebraska. What would become his writing career began when Ted was in his teens. Today he is known for his conversational style, with subjects often about love, family, place, and time. A unique fact about Ted is that he and Will Cather are the only Nebraskans ever to win a Pulitzer Prize for literature. He mentions two recent books that he enjoyed writing: Valentines (poems) and House Held Up by Trees (an illustrated children's book).* ~ *David Harrison*

**Poetry from Daily Life: Ted Kooser digs into that feeling of a 'First Snow'**

*By Ted Kooser*

I’d been writing poems for quite a few years before I understood what my job was to be. I’d published a little poem called “Spring Plowing” in which I imagined a community of field mice moving their nests out of the way of the tractor and plow and into a safe place in the deep grass of a fence row. I rarely got a letter from someone who’d read something I’d written, but this time I did. A woman in Omaha sent me a note saying that she’d read “Spring Plowing” and would never again look at a freshly plowed field without thinking of those mice. And I said aloud to myself, “THIS is my JOB!” This was what I was cut out to do, to show people how to see commonplace things with new eyes.

Show a small child an oddly-shaped stone and she might say, “That looks like a frog.” That sort of playfulness is present in all children, and it’s still present and can be accessed if an adult is ready to give up taking himself seriously. If we let ourselves play we can find poems all around us. Here’s an example from me:

**First Snow**

The old black dog comes in one evening

with the first few snowflakes on his back

and falls asleep, throwing his back leg out

at our excitement. This is the night

that one of us gets to say, as if it were news,

that no two snowflakes are ever alike,

the night when each of us remembers something

snowier, The kitchen is a kindergarten

steamy with stories. The dog gets stiffly up

and limps away, seeing a quiet spot

at the heart of the house. Outside,

in silence, with diamonds in his fur,

the winter night curls round the legs of the trees,

sleepily blinking snowflakes from his lashes.

Let’s play!

*Ted Kooser has received many awards, including five Pushcart Prizes, the Pulitzer Prize, and Mark Twain Award. From 2004-2006 he served as the United States Poet Laureate. For more information, visit*[*https://www.tedkooser.net*](https://www.tedkooser.net)*.*