**Poetry from Daily Life: Mining childhood memories, stitch by stitch**

By Irene Latham

*This week’s guest on “Poetry from Daily Life” is Irene Latham, who lives on a lake in rural Alabama. Family legend claims she's been writing since age 4, when she crayoned love poems — for her mother. She’s still writing love poems, for all ages. Two books that she loved writing are a collection of 181 “found” poems called "This Poem is a Nest" (Wordsong, 2020) and "The Mistakes That Made Us: Confessions from Twenty Poets," co-curated with Charles Waters (Lerner Publishing, Fall 2024.) When she's not writing, you can find her making music with her cello, named Lady Godiva, because the cello's sound is smooth, sweet, and bold — like chocolate. ~ David L. Harrison*

**Poetry makes the world a better place**

I'm the daughter of a seamstress. As a child I wrote poems — secretly, in the dark — to the hum of a sewing machine. When I woke, my mother's stack of plain fabric had been transformed; it was now a pantsuit, everyday dress, or a gorgeous tucked-and-gathered Easter frock hanging from the door frame. Other mornings I woke to find the hem of my pants let out, so they better fit my growing legs. Or, a missing shirt button had been replaced. My mother repaired things, making them more useful. And she created beauty using such ordinary objects: fabric, pattern, thread, sewing machine.

Poetry is simply another kind of sewing. We poets stitch together words and ideas. Often we use a pattern of some sort. Metaphors are threads. We spend lots of time making adjustments, searching for the perfect fit, the just-right phrase. We hum, just like that sewing machine, working, working. On good days (or nights), we look up and find we have created something beautiful. Here is a poem from me that brings together my childhood memories of my mother sewing and the big idea of how to make the world a better place.

**Mending**

And this is how

we shall remake

the world:

like a seamstress

with pins in her mouth,

steady fingers

coaxing thread,

a hum forever

in her throat

as stitch by stitch

the fabric is fitted,

                     gathered—

until what was once tattered

now dances across the floor.

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Perhaps your mother too, was a seamstress — or a physician or chef or mail carrier. Whatever your childhood memories, you can mine them for poems. Then share your work, your words, your recollections and connections with others. It's this kind of tender devotion that will make the world a better place. I can't wait to learn what you discover and create!

*Irene Latham is a former Alabama Poet of the Year and a recipient of the Lee Bennett Hopkins Promising Poet Award. Her books have garnered multiple accolades, including the Scott O'Dell Award for Historical Fiction, a Charlotte Huck Honor Award for Outstanding Fiction, and a Caldecott Honor Award. In addition to her many books in print, you can find hundreds of free poems on her website* [*https://www.irenelatham.com/*](https://www.irenelatham.com/) *inspired by pieces of art in her weekly*