

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 748

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

This column has often emphasized the importance of poetry that notices what's right under our noses, and this poem by David Mason, the former poet laureate of Colorado, who is currently living in Tasmania, is a good example of what you can see if you stop to look. Mason's most recent book of poetry is *The Sound: New and Selected Poems*, from Red Hen Press.

Are We Still Here?

Between the woodpile and the window
a line of small black ants is moving,
some to the north, some to the south.

Their constant industry is admirable,
as are their manners when they pause
in meeting to exchange a touch.

I must have brought their home inside
for fuel, heating my small house.
And if it burned I too would move

along all points of the compass rose,
touching my neighbors on the path.

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