How fascinated a young person can be with the secret lives of his or her teachers. I left junior high—middle school today—more than sixty years ago but still I occasionally wonder about the private lives of my algebra teacher, my science teacher, my English teachers, whose deep and abiding privacy I would have done anything to break through. Here’s a poem by Fleda Brown from her University of Nebraska Press selected poems, *The Woods Are on Fire*.

**Fayetteville Junior High**

What happened was, when we weren’t looking
Mr. Selby married Miss Lewis.
We tried to think of it, tiptoed Mr. Selby,
twirling the edges of blackboard numbers
like the sweet-pea tendrils of his hair,
all his calculations secretly
yearning away from algebra, toward
Miss Lewis, legs like stone pillars
in the slick cave of the locker room,
checking off the showered, the breasted,
flat-chested. All this, another world
we never dreamed of inside the bells,
the changing of classes:
Selby and Lewis, emerging
from rooms 4 and 16, holding hands
like prisoners seeing the sky after all those years.
The drawbridge of the hypotenuse opens,
the free throw line skates forward,
the old chain of being transcended
in one good leap, worn floor creaking
strange as angels. In homeroom, the smell of
humans, rank, sprouting, yet this hope for us all.
Kooser, served as United States Poet Laureate Consultant in Poetry to the Library of Congress from 2004-2006. We do not accept unsolicited manuscripts.

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