

AMERICAN LIFE IN POETRY

A FREE COLUMN FOR NEWSPAPERS BY TED KOOSER, POET LAUREATE OF THE UNITED STATES, 2004-2006
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BY TED KOOSER, U.S. POET LAUREATE, 2004-2006

My parents didn't live long enough to be confronted with the notion of paying for a bottle of water. They'd be horrified. Pay for water? Who ever heard of such a thing? Well . . . Here's a good poem by Kim Dower, who lives in Los Angeles, about what we go through to quench our thirst today.

Bottled Water

I go to the corner liquor store
for a bottle of water, middle
of a hectic day, must get out
of the office, stop making decisions,
quit obsessing does my blue skirt clash
with my hot pink flats; should I get
my mother a caregiver or just put her
in a home, and I pull open the glass
refrigerator door, am confronted
by brands—Arrowhead, Glitter Geysler,
Deer Park, spring, summer, winter water,
and clearly the bosses of bottled water:
Real Water and Smart Water—how different
will they taste? If I drink Smart Water
will I raise my IQ but be less authentic?
If I choose Real Water will I no longer
deny the truth, but will I attract confused,
needy people who'll take advantage
of my realness by dumping their problems
on me, and will I be too stupid to help them
sort through their murky dilemmas?
I take no chances, buy them both,
sparkling smart, purified real, drain both bottles,
look around to see is anyone watching?
I'm now brilliantly hydrated.

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author, Ted 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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