let's ride
the air today
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Poems from the Dillon County Total Arts Program

    Poetry and Creative Writing Component

Edited by Joanna Cattonar and Shaun Farragher

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South Carolina Arts Commission
Columbia, South Carolina
During the 1976-77 school year, Dillon County brought professional artists in music, poetry, dance, theatre, and crafts into its schools and communities. Through Total Arts Programming, the Dillon Area Arts Council and the three school districts worked cooperatively to make the arts and quality arts experiences accessible to persons of all ages throughout the county.

By making songs, dances, plays, weavings, pots, poems and stories, participants discovered and reaffirmed their own creativity. Students frequently continued making art during "free" time after school and often parents, some of which were participants in afternoon or evening workshops, came to schools during the day to assist artists in the classrooms as volunteer aides or apprentices.

Two poets - Joanna Cattonar and Shaun Farragher - came to live and work in Dillon through this Total Arts Program. Students at the county's four primary schools worked with Shaun Farragher for one week each. Ms. Cattonar conducted classes with older students at Lake View and The Learning Center for two weeks each and at Latimer and Gordon Elementary Schools, four weeks each. Junior high and high school students and interested adults met in after-school and evening writing workshops conducted by each of the poets.

The writing included in Let's Ride The Air Today is some of the most representative from these school and community workshops.

Other work by Dillon County students is published in Things That Move The Silence, an anthology featuring photographs and writing from all the South Carolina Total Arts Program Sites: Elloree, Greenwood, Dillon County, Lancaster County, Chester, Fort Mill, and Oconee County. Interested persons may request a copy at no charge from the South Carolina Arts Commission.
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National Endowment for the Arts
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Dillon School District #2
Dillon School District #3
Dillon Area Arts Council

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*work from Latta High School is also included; due to a change in scheduling during the gas shortage, Mr. Farragher worked in the school for several days.
In these poems and stories you are about to read you will hear children's voices talking about experiences and feelings that cover the whole spectrum - some funny, serious, romantic, irritated, thoughtful, whimsical, sad - and you will hear them very much as I did in the classroom this past semester.

I try to react as much as possible during the class hour, asking the same kind of question time and again - "-and then what happened?" "-would you say it just this way?" - in search of the unforgettable image, the natural turn of phrase, the unconscious and unself-conscious revelation that is the essence of art. I encourage students to bring to bear who they are and what they may do outside the classroom, dream-images, early memories, felt experience, word play. And I've been continually surprised and delighted by what they have done in response to assignments I've given that probably seemed, in the ordinary context of schoolwork, unconventional and maybe a little weirder: I have asked them to listen to records, to follow a mind-trail of associated words, to draw a design and get into it any way they could think of - they "fell," they "drifted," "ate" their way - and then described where they found themselves.

For example, Karen Sweat's "Rainbow" came about after she drew a multi-colored picture one morning at Lake View School. She went to the middle of her drawing and brought us back a rainbow.

Although space limitations have prevented sharing more work with you, I'm sure that the stories and poems that appear in the following pages amply illustrate the range and depth of artistic talent to be found throughout the schools in Dillon County. I think you're going to enjoy hearing these voices - for their vitality and freshness - and for the self you'll recognize in them.

Joanna Cattonar  
Co-Editor
The writing in Let's Ride the Air Today shows us that the mixture of real and imaginary images extends our senses. If we can see in our mind's eye "clouds walking on Main St." or "snow like squirrels sitting on trees," perhaps next time we look at a squirrel or Main Street, we will see it differently.

Our imagination adds to what we know. The creative person wants to learn because she or he needs the information to continue to explore the imagination. It's a circle that supports the lifelong need to learn.

My role in the classroom as an artist is to help children towards self-mastery so that they may reach their own identity. What a poet or artist does when working in schools is more than the stimulation of good poems or the discovery of the gifted writer. We work as all educators to help children gain greater self-confidence and a positive self-image.

Art is not a luxury but a way by which we affirm our humanity. It is our link to all our history and roots. I have enjoyed working and living in your community. You have made me feel at home. I want to thank all the teachers and children for all their wondrous poems and stories. I want to encourage them and you to see more and to write new poems so your dreams will help you find yourself, and a life's work that you love as much as I love mine.

Shaun Farragher
Co-Editor
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Shaun Farragher
Co-Editor
COMEON BABY!

Once I had a dream
One day I saw the clouds
walk on Main Street.

They said,
COMEON BABY--
Let's ride the air today.

Katheryn Cromartie
Grade 3
East Primary
**BUTTERFLY**

A butterfly can't bite.  
It flies outside  
and has little butterfly friends.

James Eagle  
The Learning Center

**THE APPLE TREE**

Dreams about  
children  
picking apples off it  
and red birds  
making nests inside  
and woodpeckers  
pecking holes in its trunk,  
but most of all  
it remembers  
the apple blossom smell

Annie McCall  
Grade 6  
Gordon Elementary
MARCH

March is like a floating swan
Who has come out of the dawn.

Bonnie Bethea
Grade 5
Gordon Elementary

THE TULIP

The tulip grows high in the sky.
A man keeps watering it.
Every day a bird comes and
looks at the tulip
and the man looks at the tulip
and it keeps on growing.

Carl Snead
The Learning Center
JANUARY THROUGH OCTOBER

January feels like a snow bird eating bird feed
February feels like a plane without wings
March feels like a vacant lot
April feels like a kid's new bicycle tearing up
May feels like a sailboat sinking
June feels like a mushroom being squashed between your toes
July feels like a splash of cold water hitting your body
August feels like babies crying
September feels like a cold summer day
October feels like Paul Revere riding down a road

Wesley Skipper
Grade 5
Lake View Elementary

EASTER LILY

Easter lily
Easter lily
I know your like, Easter lily.
I know you hide, Easter lily,
every day

Shirlean Williams
Grade 5
Gordon Elementary
POEM

The daisy
was all pretty
and the winter
came and broke it.

Clyde Bailey
Grade 2
East Primary

THE RAIN IS

The rain is
raining on the sun
and the turtle
is getting the birds.

The monster is
stealing
the sun
and eating the birds.

It's dark.

Jerry James Robinson
The Learning Center
HEAT WAVES

When I look into the waves of heat I see a ghost in my dream.

Shannon Brooks
Grade 3
South Primary

I FEEL LIKE A BONE MY DOG’S CHEWING ON

I am buried at a graveyard your spirit comes up
scares people to death in Hell You scare them to be quiet.

Judy, Robert Lenny, Tim
Grade 3
South Primary
RAINBOW

In the middle of a rainbow
I walk   I walk   I hear a great voice
It is my father calling me home
Come home   Come home, Karen

Karen Sweat
Grade 5
Lake View Elementary

I feel like ants are crawling
all around inside of me,
and I could run until it stops.
Big worms start crawling through
my toes. And then that night time
comes. I can't sleep. It feels
like birds inside, and they sing
and they sing and they sing.

Rhonda Hamilton
Grade 3
South Primary

POEM

If I was a rock
I would roll around the world
and nothing could stop me.

Doug Moultrie
Grade 3
East Primary
DAYS OF THE WEEK

On Sunday I feel like a preacher
On Monday I feel like a wash cloth
On Tuesday I feel like a broken screw
On Wednesday I feel like I'm swimming
On Thursday my voice feels like a broken record
On Friday I feel like a dusty chalkboard
On Saturday I feel like Babe Ruth

Douglas Jackson
Grade 5
Gordon Elementary

A MARTIAN IN THE MAGIC MIRROR

I saw a Martian in the Magic Mirror. He looked like a human person, but even so we can't see things that he can see.

He can look inside people and see bones and guts and inside your brain he can see a brain. Inside the brain he can see things moving around, the things that make you think -- little machines that look like adding machines. And he can see in your ear and he sees little machines that make you hear -- they look like typewriters.

Christine Jones
The Learning Center
MAGIC MIRROR

I looked in the magic mirror
and I saw me as a heart.
I was red and had an arrow through me.

Linda Washington
Grade 4
Lake View Elementary

WHAT'S GOING ON INSIDE

I feel like I want to hit myself
like a flying tree
I want to burst in pieces
just like lost butterflies.

Frank Strohlein
Grade 3
East Primary
WHEN I'M LONESOME

I feel like a busted-up train
I feel like a hungry pig
I feel like a wild horse
I feel like a mean witch
I feel like a rotten pear
I feel like a dying rose
I feel like a dead poem

Donna Summerford
Grade 6
Gordon Elementary

BAD FEELINGS

I feel like a melted piece of plastic
I feel like a wild bull
I feel like a shot-up hog
I feel like a zig-zagged word

Darren Johnson
Grade 5
Lake View Elementary
LION'S MOUTH

I feel like a boy who was born in the lion's mouth.

Anonymous
Grade 4
Gordon Elementary

SOMETIMES

I feel like a bar of candy with a bite out of it.

Deborah Hines
Grade 4
Gordon Elementary

HEART

I feel like a heart in the middle of a road.

Shirley Gibson
Grade 5
Lake View Elementary

I feel like a pearl that has just been eaten by a goat.

Christopher Galloway
Grade 6
Latimer Elementary
DUMB PICTURES

I got in a picture
I killed a bird
I don't know why
I felt like a nerd
I jumped out to stay and
I felt gay
Everything alive left from the picture.

Drawing and poem by Geoffrey McLean, Grade 2,
Stewart Heights Primary
I feel like a bull's pulling my hair.
He knocks me deep into the water,
then my heart beats sick 
like a condemned man
throwing bombs in me
then my knee breaks.

Stephanie Janell Huggins
Grade 3
South Primary

FEELING HAPPY

I feel like a happy deer running through the woods. 
I feel like a happy rooster crowing in the morning. 
I feel like a happy wolf on the mountain howling.
I feel like a happy pony running down the road.
I feel like a happy goat bumping into the barn.
I feel like four cows bumping their heads together.

Jimmy Ray Carmichael
The Learning Center

I feel like a tick 
that's going to burst in my heart 
and a bionic woman, she's in my skin. And a "goldman" crawling 
in my octopus legs around him. 
And I turn him into a "Booboo, ahhhhhhhhhh."

Denise White
Grade 3
South Primary
GUM DROPS OF RAIN

I feel like rain inside, wet
I would fill up with water
that doesn't have any color
Like a watermelon I'm gonna
burst up, I'm so fat, bubbly,

Gum drops of rain

It drowns me
I have a rainbow.

Debby, Shirley, Terry, Mary Ann
Grade 3
South Primary

AN APPLE TREE. A BUTTERFLY

I feel like an apple tree swinging
in the wind and turning round and round.

I feel like a butterfly flying in
the air with flowers on my mind.

Regena Townsend
Grade 5
Lake View Elementary
COLOR IS DREAMING

Color is dreaming
Red is dreaming I wish I could color everything
Green is wishing I do not want to color anything
Orange is wishing it had a birthday
Blue is dreaming it could fly
Brown wishes it could swim
Yellow wishes it could learn
Black is dreaming I wish I was dead
Purple is dreaming I wish I was long gone

Jeffrey Scott
Grade 5
Gordon Elementary

INSIDE MY HEAD

Inside my head
is a big round thing
with holes in it,
a chair, some
ketchup, some
blood, a big bottle of
Coca-Cola and a
mouth full of teeth,
two big ears
and a pipe that
goes through my ears
ear to ear.

Billy Ray Rogers
Grade 3
Lake View Elementary
I GOT A TV SET FOR A BRAIN--
GROUP POEM

There is a horn inside
a bunch of pipes beating together
bones clinking
there is a car driving in me
into my legs, it stops.
A man gets out and goes to my shoes
GOODNIGHT
He dreams about a giant,
He jumps up
He busts up
He looks like a monkey grinning
like a clown pretending he's a chicken
He wakes up and goes to inside his brain
gets inside the mouth
that tongue was so good
like jello-ice cream
The giant knocks on the inside of Richard's head.
And Richard dreams and goes for a drive
to a creek
inside of his own arm.
He shakes,
tickles his feet,
his eyes go around like Alfalfa;
his legs tremble;
he falls down, wakes up inside
his own eye ball.
Richard blows up the moon through the sky to Pluto
on Mars,
it all blows down to pieces, the end of Richard's
mustache, and he finally goes inside his own ear
then to Venus, then to the sun,
Richard burns up to ashes
to ashes.

Mrs. Bell's Class
Grade 3
Latta Primary
THE OLD MAN

There was an old man who was ninety-two. He couldn't even tie his shoe. Once he had a dream he was sitting on ice cream and when he woke up he was holding a cup.

Christy Pelt
Grade 4
Latimer Elementary

There was a crooked man that had seven fingers And drew a straight picture of a cow spitting out milk.

And the cow turned into a Thanksgiving dinner, And then the lady turned into a haunted house, And the haunted house turned into a bony lady stuck to a steel board.

Keith Hare
Grade 3
Stewart Heights Primary
THE DREAMING HORSE

Once there was a horse that dreamed he was poor. So when he woke up he told himself he was poor. He called his mother. He said, "Mother open your door. I have to tell you that we're poor."

"Oh, no we're not. Go back to bed. You had a nightmare."

So he closed the door and went back to bed.

Jeffrey Singleton
Grade 4
Gordon Elementary

THE SUN'S DREAM

I dream I saw some little girls outside playing. I saw the little children's Mama calling them to come in to take a bath. I saw an apple tree and I want some apples. Then the little children come outside and get me some apples. They get a long distance truck and they give me some apples. They say, Here's your apples, little sun. And I say, Thank you. You better go back into the house or your Mama will beat you!

Millie Ann McCoy
The Learning Center
MY DREAM

I have a dream
that I was babysitting
and the baby cried
(the baby was hungry)
the Momma came home and fed it

...the house caught on fire
and I went and got the baby
out and took it home...
and brought it upstairs
and fed it and changed its diapers.

It had no name,
but I named it Mary Ann Smith.

I gave it a bath
and when my mother came home
she didn't like it.
But I said it didn't have a home
so she let me keep it.

I put it in a buggy
and took it to the cemetery
just to take it for a walk...

Adrienne Lee
The Learning Center
CHASING ME

A ghost was chasing after me while I was flying a kite. I got some hot water and put it on his head and he started burning up!

He went after me again and I started running.

I hid in the woods and the ghost tried to find me, but didn't.

Tammy Locklear
The Learning Center

KING KONG'S HAND

I went into King Kong's hand. It felt furry. I could look down and see land. Soon he got mad because I pulled his hair out and he growled at me. I kept hanging on to him. He looked at me big-eyes. Soon he dropped me on land. When I got down my bones were broken all up.

Marcia Rouse
Grade 3
Lake View Elementary
POEM

The very first day I went to school it snowed
I couldn't get inside,
The whole school was filled with snow.

Rene Hamilton
Grade 3
East Primary

MY DRAWING: HOUSE, TREE, SKY

My house is a fool
It dreams the whole day
But the tree is lovelier
than the house
But the sky is dead old
The sky is dead

Annie Johns
Grade 5
Gordon Elementary
TRIPS

One day I went to the moon.
I saw a Martian with no head.
I ran away. I came back. I saw
another Martian. Then I saw a
two headed man. I said in my mind
WHAT IS THAT. He said, you better
go to earth before I kill you. I
ran all the way to earth. It was
two million years to get there. I
was out of air. The man with two
heads got there before I. He said,
"You better go to another planet."
I went to Mars. It was about 9 million
years before I got there, and I did
not see the man with two heads anymore.
Then, I heard a noise. The man with two
heads was there! He said, "You go to
another planet!" So I went to Jupiter.
It was 6 years before I got there,
and I was safe again. I went home.

Jennifer Bethea
Grade 3
Latta Primary
THE PREGNANT ROCK
A GROUP POEM

I am a pregnant rock. I had little rocks and the rocks had a tree, and the tree had a skunk and then a snake—All of us are married to the earth. I am the earth. I feel like a loaf of bread, soft like marshmallows. It's marshmellow. It tastes good to my babies. I put dogs & cats in the sky and then it rained beasts, it became ice and snowflakes. The ice turned into fish. Volcanoes started to roll and airplanes started to fly, everybody shooting at each other and then everybody shot at me and each other and then all were dead except me, the pregnant rock. Everything was quiet.

Ms. Richardson's Class
Grade 3
Stewart Heights Primary

SPINNING GLOBE

If I was a globe I would spin around and around like a spinning octopus. Then I would stop and throw myself in the fire alone and I would go up the chimney and I would float in the air and I would go to a graveyard and turn into a ghost and kill everybody and then I would die and I would rise from the dead like Dracula.

Ben Jackson
Grade 3
Latta Primary
THE EAGLE SAVED THE DAY--
A GROUP POEM

I float on the steel eagle's back
The eagle saw a fish
and went zooming down
and he missed it and he got
a steel rock. Bullseye
500
He broke his steel throat
airplanes shot at him
but they couldn't do much
because the bullets bounced off
his back, the eagle flew
and grabbed his plane,
and he said,
YOU LEAVE ME ALONE
and the plane crashed and
it blew up everything and
a man came out staggering
with naked clothes
and where the plane crashed
the earth and the sky shook
and it was like death,
a volcano,
houses began to fall
and Eagle flew too low
his wings, his nose, his legs,
everything started to fall off.
He falls apart and Jeff went
out there and fixed the eagle up
and then the eagle flew up--
and the ugly sun made the eagle hot
he looked like squash mixed with peanut butter
the eagle melted into an old shining ball
he splashed into the ocean
and the water went so high
the waves beat up
the water went off the edge of the land
the earth flooded,
the eagle saved the earth
by digging through the planet
to make the hole
empty the water to China
and that's how the eagle
Like Noah
saved the earth.

Jeff and Mrs. Lane's Class
Grade 3
Latta Primary

KING KONG

King Kong swallowed the sun
the air smelled like something burning
King Kong on fire,
but he dashed on water,
and said to sun
if you don't leave me alone,
I kill you,
King Kong shot the sun
and the sun burnt his legs two times,
and then King Kong
ate the sun again forever,
They cut King Kong open,
they cut the sun open,
They got the sun,
killed it.

Ronnie Wright
Grade 3
Stewart Heights Primary
My dream is about the number 8.

Eight is a lucky number. The eights in my dream are red, blue, black, white, purple and grey. Eight Land is in Germany - it is filled with eights. The houses are made of eights. Then a blue whale eats the beautiful city. Then someone builds a fire and the smoke makes him sneeze and he sneezes the Land of Eight out of him.

Ricky Bilsky
Grade 5
Latimer Elementary

DREAM (a drawing)

I am dreaming about the water with blood in it and no one can go swimming any more and it is running all over the world and the brown dirt is coming to the water with the blood in it.

Shirley Paige
Grade 4
Latimer Elementary
SKY DREAMING OF RAIN

The sky is dreaming of rain
because the sky is going broke

out with rain

it wanted to rain for a week already

Belinda Bethea
Grade 5
Latimer Elementary

SKY DREAMS

The sky dreams
that it could be down on earth
like a person working in a factory
making clothes

Lightning dreams
about not hurting people

Andy Godbolt
Grade 5
Latimer Elementary
MY DREAM (her drawing)

My dream
is about clouds
and a green grass
and a house
a playground
a sliding board, a merry
go round and a see saw and
birds in the sky.
God is in it too.
God is in the Left Hand side. He has a white robe on and He is on the swing set.
And at night He is in my bedroom
at night and He hears me at night praying

Dolly Turbeville
Grade 5
Latimer Elementary
I am the sea.
I would sway and sway.
Things at the bottom of me.
People came in me—
   Fish, rocks, boats, lots of things.

It is really beautiful.
The trees started growing in me.
The rocks started growing in me.
Everything just kept on.

Then it was stopped. I was gone.
Then the earth cracked.
It was a terrible sight.
Then a big herd of buffaloes stomped on me.
Birds were flying away.
Animals were going away.
They hit the trees and everything.

Then I was there again.
Then it was beautiful,
   just like before.

Ginger Cashwell
Grade 3
Stewart Heights Primary
CREATION

Once there was an earth
and the earth fell apart
and some people died.
And there was a sun
and the sun fell apart,
two little boys were in the moon
and the boys got hurt.
and then there was mars and mars fell apart,
Two women fell in mars,
and they died
because they had a flu.

Nancy
Grade 3
Latta Primary
MAGIC SNOWMAN

Once there was a head. He ran away and made a sun, then the sun ran away and made a moon, and the moon ran away and made an earth.

The earth couldn't run away so he cried and cried and a magic snowman named Herman came along and said, "What's the matter?"

"I can't run away like the others."

"Well," the snowman said, "I'll make you some people." and the earth was so happy that he jumped up and down so much that he busted wide open.

Robin Jackson
Grade 3
Latta Primary
EARTH GOING AROUND THE MOON

The earth moves around and around,
Then it stops;
All the planets stop;
Something strange is going on.

It didn't move for a very long time.
Then everything started
It went faster and faster
Then it stopped.

The planets all came together.
Everyone started to fight.
They fought with guns,
They fought with cannons:
Bang! Bang! Boom! Boom!

Fire and cannonballs everywhere.
I hid in a ship until it was over.
The planets started pulling apart,
They were all apart.
Everything started moving again.
I was happy from then on.

Ginger Cashwell
Grade 3
Stewart Heights Primary
AFTER A PAINTING
BY GENE DAVIS—

Flashing like strings
Disappearing into space

Rene Hamilton
Grade 3
East Primary

MY CREATION

One day my Levis ran away
They broke in half.
They turned into the earth
Then, they split into ten parts
They changed into a sun...
And some clouds.
There was one rock
It was very sick.
It changed into dirty crabs.
Then some fish.
Then there were eight more planes
then there was water.
And then there was the good earth.

Monica Coleman
Grade 3
Latta Primary
THE DOG WAS MAGIC, OR--
LONELY EARTH

There once was earth and he was lonely and he wanted a friend. So he saw some leaves on the ground and a dog came and the dog was made out of a leaf, and it was cut in two, into roots and dirt and cotton. And the earth got a friend. It was the dog. And the dog did not like the earth, so the dog wanted to be magic and he was magic. And the dog got him a friend. It was the sea and big monsters came out of the water. It was dinosaurs and elephants and snakes and big bugs and the dinosaurs busted open and made a sun, and the sun busted open and made planets. Pluto was too cold and Mercury was too hot, and so the earth was just right, and the magic dog made gas and the gas exploded and then there were people and the dog disappeared and the people made animals.

Heidi Skipper
Grade 3
Latta Primary
BULL HEADED WOMAN

The earth was rich and fertile then God made two cave people, who were Adam and Eve. Eve was a wicked and bull-headed woman. She believed in the devil. The devil told her to eat the apple from the unforgotten tree, and she ate it. The Lord turned them both into Martians. He gave them a rocket and told them to get off, and Adam and Eve created the sun and the planets and even another planet earth.

Sandra Page
Grade 3
Latta Primary
REAL AND CRAZY RAIN

You feel soggy and soaked,
flat and weak and sad and ugly
and the rain falls down like stripes,
like rainbows, different faces, colors,
like a bordeau holding your
rainbow hair back
and the rain hard against the window
looks like a jail house,
makes

BANG BANG
CHUCK CHUCK

like a drum
BOOM BOOM
like thunder
BOOOOOOOOOOOOM!

And if that thunder don't quit
I am gonna have a heart attack

the light hitting the window
busted it open--

and a trader came and cut the gold rain,
shared it
with each man,
and they went and stole the bank,
which was the rainbow.

Mrs. Lucius' Class
Grade 2
Stewart Heights Primary
AN ANGEL FLYING

An angel flying
two Valentines
two roses
and a rainbow

The angel is flying to church
The Valentines say Happy Valentine
The white roses -- when you smell them you want them --
(and)
The rainbow is raining.

Pamela Denise Armstrong
The Learning Center

SNOW

Snow comes from
squirrels sitting on trees.

Ashley Walters
Grade 3
East Primary
WHEN MY DOG WAS LITTLE

When my dog was little
She ran and played
We had lots of fun
But now she's no more fun at all
Because she has children

Sarah Pouncey
Grade 6
Latimer Elementary

GROUP POEM

I am a tree
I stand in one place forever
My hair brushes the clouds,
A woodpecker pecks a hole--
Inside, I would be sap turned into honey
A bear climbing a tree
He gets so full he falls,
the beards eat the bear--
The bumble bee drinks the ants,
A lumberjack cuts me down
I'm old and wrinkled,
nothing left
after it all.

Ms. Burchette's class
Grade 3
East Primary
EXPLORING

I went
exploring
in the flowers
and I fell.

It felt
ghostly in the flowers.

I could hear the ghosts
of people who made me feel bad.

Diane Harley
Grade 4
Gordon Elementary

SHE

I dream of her
I wish she was here
I feel like a fool
Crying for fear that she hates me

Jim Brown
Grade 6
Gordon Elementary
MY ADVENTURE IN THE SOUP BOWL

Me and my girlfriends fell in a soup bowl. It was weird. It had a bunch of words floating around. My girl got scared. I got scared and started hollering. All of the words said

LOVE  KISS  everything

Then my friends saved us.

Freddie Smith
Grade 4
Gordon Elementary

GOOD LUCK

If a dog smiles at you you will marry a rich man

Diane Crawford
Grade 6
Gordon Elementary
SUGAR

I am not talking about the sugar you eat.
I am talking about love.
My girlfriend's lips taste like sugar
Her cheeks look like cherries and
Her hair is black and beautiful.
When I kiss her it blows my head
'tcross the Pacific Ocean.

Andrew Page
Grade 5
Lake View Elementary
MY GIRLFRIENDS

I found my three girlfriends
As pretty as can be
They looked like a dream
I turned into steam
And then into a stream
As nice as can be
Flowing through rocks
And dodging fish

Freddie Smith
Grade 4
Gordon Elementary
LOVE

Love sometimes is an ugly word
Especially when it doesn't want to be heard
One day I was walking down the street
Thinking of someone I would like to meet.
All of a sudden - out of nowhere
There popped up this ugly boy who looked like a bear.
Once he said, "I love you."
I said to him, "I know you do,
but do you think that I love you?"
You talk about someone running and running wild
I've never known someone to run so fast
as a child

Carolyn Campbell
Grade 6
Latimer Elementary

MY FRIEND

I got a friend that's so ugly she
became famous - she was the best
in the pest business

Keith Wiggins
Grade 4
Latimer Elementary
JUST US THREE

An old man came to my house. He asked my Name, so I told him. He Talked to my Mother.

No one was there but us three. On that Monday he died.

Now he is in the ground. Yes, we prayed for him to go to heaven.

Greg Hamilton
Grade 4
Lake View Elementary

THE SLEEPING GIRL

Once there lived a lazy girl who never did anything but sleep. Her mother tried to get her up, but the girl socked her in the nose! So the mother cried. Then her son tried to get her up. And she slapped him and he cried. Then the dog tried to get her up, and she kicked him and he cried. So the dog went to get his master, the son's sister. She went in there and she had a hot pan ready to burn her with. Her sister tried to hit her, but she got burned by the hot pan. And she never went to sleep again.

Irene Norman
Grade 5
Latimer Elementary
There once was an old old wicked eye that never closed. And the man who had that old eye was a man who worked in a circus.

Poem and drawing by Michael Gasque,
Stewart Heights Primary
THE LION

Once there was a lion
Who had a brown face and purple hair
and a red neck.
One day the sun was shining,

Worms started coming down from the sun,
And then it started to snow fish and snakes.

And then it started raining babies
And it started to rain airplanes,
And then it started to snow on me!

One afternoon a monster came up from the ground
It was a fat one, too
He had stripes all over him,
And he had gray hair and a big fat belly.

And the next day a flower was growing,
and it was so pretty.
I picked it and put it in a flower pot
in my house by my window,
And one day it died.
And I cried and cried!

Rochelle Graves
Grade 3
Stewart Heights Primary
MISS FOOL,  
THE FOOL OF THE DEVIL

I am Miss Fool, the fool of the devil  
I be above the sun. I made the sun  
I like to take good people and burn them  
I am the fool, the fool. I hate people,  
I like to burn them up,  
I hate them, I hate them,  
I am the devil, devil, devil!!  
I hate them,  
I do I do I really do  
I hate people that's why  
I am the fool,  
the fool of the devil.

Tamia Bethea  
Grade 3  
Latta Primary

GUILT

God  
Undoes  
Indecency  
Leaving  
Trash

David Scott  
Grade 5  
Gordon Elementary
SOMEONE IN MY MIND

Someone in my mind
I think of something in
my mind It is so big I wish
I could hide it

Bridget Sirlena Burden
Grade 4
Latimer Elementary

MOTH

I am a strange moth
that flys in the air
I spin the hurricane.

Tracy Bethea
Grade 3
South Primary

EVERYTHING IS WORKING!

My brain is working
my heart, beating my lungs.

Rene Hamilton
Grade 3
East Primary
INSIDE

Do you know what is inside of me?
There is an Indian playing a drum.

Ashley Walters
Grade 3
East Primary

TO FEEL

like worms coming from my nose
an octopus swimming in the sea
I feel like a mummy waking up
a snail creeping in my heart—
Something crawling inside me,
like a foul ball beating my head
I feel like silver men
growing silver in my eyes.

Angela Turbeville
Grade 3
South Primary
GROWN UPS ALWAYS SAY

Wipe your feet
Always be neat
When you eat

Take out the trash
Do you want taters
or corn beef hash?

Feed the dog
Wash the dishes
And don't make any more wishes

Ann Carter
Grade 5
Lake View Elementary

A FUNNY FEELING

I have a funny feeling inside me.
I wonder what it is.
It's so funny I laughed.
I guess I keep it to cheer me up when I'm down.
Here it comes again. hahaha

Paula Barfield
Grade 4
Lake View Elementary
RAINY DAYS ARE DREARY

How sad I feel to see it rain
Cause I know Mom will complaint.

Each time I come in the door
Mom yells don't track mud on the floor.

I go sit in my room
and read all afternoon.

Candice Bullock
Grade 5
Lake View Elementary

THE BOOK

I am a book. You can read me.
One day I was in a schoolroom,
someone picked me up to read me
and when they did, it hurt.
Suddenly, she begins to open me.
So I jumped out of her hands,
and jumped back into a box
and she ran after me.
So I flew out the open window.
So she jumped behind me.
So I ran away and now I bet you
the book looks like a pile of rags.

Nancy Jackson
Grade 3
Latta Primary
THREE MEMORIES

MY THIRD BIRTHDAY

It was the first time I went into a Restaurant in Columbia. I ordered a coke. The lady brought it to me. Then I turned around. BAM! It fell. I thought I had killed it. But it was still alive.

Teresa McKenzie
Grade 5
Gordon Elementary

WHEN I WAS A KID

When I was a kid I got kissed and held by every person, Mother, child that came along. But of course I didn't like it. So when I didn't like it I would start to cry. But when I started to cry I would get a bottle in my mouth. And I didn't like that either.

Jeffrey Simpson
Grade 5
Gordon Elementary

WHEN I WAS A BABY

When I was a baby in my little cradle and I didn't want to sleep, My daddy spanked my legs. So I would hold my breath and turn blue.

Pam English
Grade 5
Gordon Elementary
I had a Grandmother who passed away and when she did I felt very sad. And the reason she died was her heart. It kept on beating and then it stopped and then it started beating again.

Now I miss my Grandmother. I miss her very much.

She showed me how to plant peas when I was young. She showed me how to plant flowers and corn and tomatoes and things like that.

I miss her very much.

Ray Galloway
Grade 6
Latimer Elementary
POPCORN MACHINE

Words came
like a pop corn machine
I can't stop

Chris Paul
Grade 3
Stewart Heights Primary

MY FEELINGS

I feel like beating Mr. _______ in the head
and cutting out his liver, gizzard, and chittlerlings.
I feel like panicking, but Mrs. _______ said not
to panic. I won't panic. But I will cry.

Anonymous
Grade 5
AFTER A SLIDE OF A PAINTING
BY JULES OLITSKY—

A hand
in the sky
reaching for the sun
I grab, take it
around and around.

Donna James
Grade 3
East Primary

MY HAND

My hand is like a star sitting in a chair.

Allen Hayes
Grade 4
Lake View Elementary
LITTLE TURTLE

Little
turtle
eat
the
eggs
get
the
net
from
under
the
tree--
don't
say
a
word
about
the
egg

Lynette Hood
Grade 2
East Primary
I HAVE A PET TURTLE

I have a pet turtle. He got a big shell. He likes to go under the water and he snaps sticks and he loves worms and bugs. And he likes tadpoles and rats. And he loves snake-skin. He lives and loves.

And he got a big old tail and he got big old feet...and two eyes and one mouth and two noses and two ears. And he stays in the water. We feed him biscuits and meat and bones and milk.

He got on a log and he slipped and fell in the water. And I laughed at him. And he went somewhere. And he did never not come back again.

One day I saw him on the road and I took him and put him in the water.

And he got on the log and slipped and fell in the water again.

Wayne Campbell
The Learning Center
AN ANT

An ant can crawl
Nobody told him that he couldn't crawl
No one has seen him, but
I have seen him before because he has
Eaten at my house

Zenia McLaughlin
Grade 6
Gordon Elementary
A BEE. A FLOWER

A bee in a flower
sounds like an electric razor.
The father bee goes and gets the honey
and brings it back to his sugar pie.
If the sugar is too sweet, she will jump
on her feet.
He brings the honey to Queen Bee
Just so he can get a kiss and a big hug.
The leaves of a flower are the arms.
The sprout is the legs.
Queen Bee hugs him with the leaves.
She kicks with her stem.

Kenneth Leonard
Grade 4
Gordon Elementary
AFTER A SLIDE OF A PAINTING
BY GENE DAVIS

A zebra with colored stripes,
"Quit Licking me!"
NO-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o
Came from a blinking stripe.

Stan Gibbons
Grade 3
East Primary

THE LEOPARD

His spots won't wash off;
He eats birds;
His teeth are little white hearts.

Shirl Carter and Sylvia Allen
Grade 5
Gordon Elementary
FOX

He's the slightest thing you ever saw,
Prancing along on his bright red paws,
Tricking dogs every day.
Why, he didn't mean to get in their way
His tail, prancing in the air,
With his bright red, snow white fluffy hair.

Robbie Snipes
Grade 6
Latimer Elementary
ACROSTIC POEM

The birds come and sing
He walks in the grass and sings there too
Even before summer he's singing his song
And when I wake up I look out the window and see it's Spring
People walk in the streets in the evening
Riding bicycles too
In the afternoon I go outside and walk my dog
Look at the birds there singing away
Singing sweet songs, and I ask them can they sing Dixie
On the trees they sing
Now they're on the rooftop singing all day
Good-bye they'll sing when it's time to tuck in

Sheila Manning
Grade 4
Gordon Elementary
A FLOWER WITHOUT WATER

At first I felt like a flower without water, then, at the end of the week, it was a flood on me.

Michael Leslie
Grade 3
Stewart Heights Elementary

BLUNDERMAN

Blunderman
Blunderman
Blunderman
Blunderman
I
like
Blunderman

Randy Dempsey
Grade 3
East Primary
CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS

If I were Christopher Columbus
I would have destroyed the world.
I would be the President
I would be dead by now
I would be bossen everybody,
I would have pretty slaves
I could save money.

Scotty Paul Allen
Grade 3
East Primary

JUNK MAN

He lives in a junkyard.
His eyes are like headlights on a car.
His nose looks like an old rusty car.
His mouth is bigger than a crane.
His legs can reach to Mars.
His arms are like shock absorbers.
His neck is like an antenna on a car.
He can talk louder than a CB radio
and when he runs, he sounds like
an old rusty car.

Bern Lewis
Grade 4
Latimer Elementary
MOTORCYCLE RACE

Motorcycle motors!
Oh when you bear down
The town sounds like a growling hound
Oh but the town is really like a pound Roaring.
Come to this town so I can show
You around. Then I
Can rearup again
Laying you out flat on the ground,
Every day any way.

John Gray
Grade 6
Latimer Elementary
CREATIVE WRITING FROM
LATTA HIGH SCHOOL AND
THE COMMUNITY WORKSHOPS
LATTA

Latta is like a small matchbox
close within itself.
In morning it's like over crowded,
all of it,
oise and lost schools,
At night,
it's like a peaceful
river
coming to a stop.

Isaiah S. Willis
Grade 10
Latta High

CHANGES

Changes.....Changes.....Changes
Things are not so real
An eye on the universe
What do you see
the sun burning
like a coal,
closer.....closer. I am almost dead
OOO.....AH, what pizazz
Then what is like a dying daisy
invaded by creatures from another place.
Looking into a mirror.

Ray Alls
Grade 12
Latta High
RAILROAD CROSS LIGHTS

Railroad cross lights
big red eyes
freak people out at 4 everyday
It stands like a robot
blinking,
daring you to come further
It stands alone
although yellowed from age
its long crayon like arms
color your mind.

Wendy Pelt
Grade 11
Latta High
LATT A

Latta, are you really alive?
When you wake up in the morning, it is quiet
you can hear a dog barking about a mile away
If you ever notice ants running
It's children going to school.
In the winter it is dead,
deader than dead.
You can walk a mile and just see two people
The fall is like coming from the dead,
You can start living a little,
Everybody's trying to catch up--
June is the best time of year,
no more school for a while,
Children running in the street,
the people next door are rushing
some people from the city come around,
When school starts, you are just like a deer
hibernating

Latta is really alright in a way,
but I wouldn't want to live there for the rest
of my life.

Alvin Cade
Grade 11
Latta High
AFTER JULES OLITSKY
--a slide show

My trip through space
saw a sky
who was a dictator

His friend, the tunnel,
acted as he did,
selfish and mean

Violence studied in the long battle

I sought peace
through the emptiness
of a hole,
but it failed.

Michael Roberts
Grade 12
Latta High
A NUMBER NINE
(After Jules Olitsky)

The bottomless pit
Sun falling from sky to earth
Look down a hole--
A number nine
a step into the future
red ball thrown in the mud
the way we will act
when the world ends
being outside
sunburned out
the end of the earth
the look at death.

Lori Grainger
Grade 10
Latta High
"At the earliest end of winter"

my white dreams
only sheets
where is the snow
I see only
wind--

papers snatched from books
my beautiful aspects of winter
have been disappointing
now there are no thoughts from me

for the summer melts cold winter.

Kymeone Matthews
Community Workshop
Grade 9
Dillon Junior High
THE SUN GOD ON THE LOTUS

Once breathing
eyes of satin
lips parched
skin peeling
upon an altar

Kymeone Matthews
Community Workshop
Grade 9
Dillon Junior High

NOW IS REST

Sky circle large apple
The sky not knowing
strange force taking over
while the daisy blooms dead

Rainbows reach the earth
When all is scared away
Now is the time for rest

Cathy Price
Grade 9
Latta High
"The stars of the great bear drift apart"

held loosely by powdered skulls
dust upon a greenless earth
wild stallions
roam in the valley of the dead man's eyes
each star surrounded, alien,
sneaking from the bear.

Kymeone Matthews
Community Workshop
Grade 9
Dillon Junior High
"The universe expands and contracts like a great heart"

we are drawn by its cold
never ending blackness
veiled across a woman's face

her wings closing upon
a woman in red

her mouth closes,
the atom of the man suspended--
exploding, a force none can measure

the idea attempted countlessly
by a yard stick,
it never stretches far enough.
DOWN THERE

after the Book of Kells

swinging from the chandelier
forward, backward
looking down
the colors run dry
their threads twinned together
until they unweave--
They make her feel
as if they would grab her inside.
the rug below--
the circular, snail like patterns
move around
squinting with the sun

her eyes, puddles of water,
heavy lids, velvet lashes
slowly, painlessly

she has it all.

Kymeone Matthews
Community Workshop
Grade 9
Dillon Junior High
A bird with eyes like enormous balls of fire and wings like silky, black fans perched on a tree, watching a hairy monster with beady eyes climbing a limb.

Debra Cantey
Grade 11
Latta High

"These are the gardens of the desert, these"

these replicas individual grains clustered like the universe poems weaved in protection of the gods, like many molecules one large mass a regiment of sand grains, an army waiting the battle, These are the gardens of the desert, these.

Wendy Pelt
Grade 11
Latta High
For years I tried to get my husband to teach me how to change a tire. Always his answer was the same, "If you have a flat, drive until you can get to a safe place to have it changed. You have no business trying to change one yourself. A tire is much easier to replace than a head." He felt that a woman was not always safe with strangers who stopped under the guise of giving aid.

One day as I was leaving my Mother's home, I backed over my nephew's bicycle. He had ridden up behind my car and instead of leaving his bike standing upright, had just dropped it down behind the car. Of course, when I started to leave, I could see nothing in my way so you can imagine my consternation when I realized what had happened. With the bicycle lying on its side, the kick stand had been sticking straight up and punctured the tire and tube. The wheel of the bike was bent into a "U". Tire, tube, and bike were ruined.

There was no one near to change the tire for me. Mom lived in the country far from a service station and I would have to drive for ten miles or more to get home. I also knew that I still had to prepare the evening meal for my husband and son. Time was passing in a hurry. So, although I had had my orders, I decided that right then and there was a good time to try my hand at tire changing.

I had never jacked up a car and it was some experience trying to figure how the pieces of the jack went together so that it would fit under the car properly. After I finally succeeded in getting the car jacked up, the next thing was the lug bolts. Some great big lug of a man had put them on so tight that I almost never got them loose. I tried kicking the wrench with my foot to break the seal loose and had no luck at all. I finally got a hammer and by banging
with all my strength managed to break them loose enough to get them off. I was huffing and puffing as though I had been running a flat foot race.

I didn't have much trouble getting the torn up tire off after getting the lug bolts loose; but getting the spare out of the trunk of the car was another story completely. This was a mean job. I weighed 107 pounds, fully dressed, and the spare felt as if it weighed as much as I did, if not more. I pulled and tugged with all my might and when I did get it out of the trunk, I felt as if my arms were being pulled out of my shoulder sockets. When I tried to lift the wheel in place on the axle of the car, I couldn't do that and turn it so that the holes were in the right place at the same time. It was try and try again before I had any success. I wasn't sure if the spare had any air in it so I almost held my breath when I let the jack down. All seemed well. So with the torn up tire and jack in place in the trunk, I set out for home.

I drove home feeling really proud of myself because I felt that I had really accomplished quite a task, and had done an excellent job at it. Not for anything would I have admitted to my husband just what a chore it had been.

When I got home, much to my surprise my husband didn't erupt as much as I had expected. He listened to my excuse for being late without too much comment.

"You'll have to have a spare before you go to work tomorrow," he stated quite calmly. "I'll go get one while you are preparing supper."

His brother had a Service Station across the river from our house. If you took the short cut through the river swamp, it was only about fifteen miles. If you went the main road, it was about twenty-five or thirty miles.

The swamp area on each side of the river was called Buck Swamp. It was wide and dark. The trees overlapped enough in places that you could hardly see the sky. Day time travel on the river road was scary enough. Night was
worse. The road was not paved and was sandy and narrow. There were no houses from one side of the swamp to the other. It just wasn't a good road to travel alone at anytime. This of course, to save time, was the road that Bill took.

With one eye on the clock, I was scurrying around trying to get my supper cooked so that there would be no waiting when Bill got back. I figured that I had pushed my luck far enough and for the balance of the evening I had better walk very carefully.

Does he sound like a bear? Well, he wasn't really, but he surely could make noises sometimes . . . And when he acted with the studied calmness that he had used before he left the house, I knew that an explosion could very easily follow.

Sometime later, I'm not sure how much, the phone rang. When I answered, I thought surely that Donald Duck was calling. Wa---nk--Wa---nk--Wa---nk!! I had to hold the phone away out from my ear.

I knew immediately who was calling, but it was some time before he quieted down enough for me to know why he was calling.

"Tell Buster Bill (our son) to take the pickup and come get me," he roared.

"Where are you?" I asked him.

"In the river swamp!" he whooped.

"In the river swamp? Why there? What's wrong?" I tried to keep my voice calm and matter-of-fact, hoping to ward off any more of an explosion than I had already heard.

"That tire you changed! The whole blankitty---blank---blank---blank---blank---blank---wheel is off in the river swamp. You
didn't tighten the lug bolts enough and the blankitty-blank--wheel ran off!"

"If the tire ran off in the river swamp, where are you calling from?" I questioned cautiously.

"From the Puckett Place, and I walked every step of the way. If you hadn't been so smart, none of this would have happened."

I knew that the Puckett Place was the first house on the other side of the swamp.

"Don't fuss at me," I told him. "You should have had gumption enough to check my work before you drove off. You knew that it was my first experience at changing a tire."

Of course, that remark plus the fact that he had walked several miles through the dark river road to a phone didn't help matters any at all. It was dark by the time he had started walking and he didn't have a flashlight with him.

If I had been along, I'm sure he probably would have carried me back to the river and dunked me.

When Buster Bill reached him they had to find the wheel that was out in the swamp. (Did you know that a wheel will continue to roll in a forward motion when it comes off the axle?)

It isn't very easy to find something like a wheel in a swamp in the dark with nothing but a small flashlight to see by. Of course, the fact that the swamp was snake infested, mosquito infested and briar infested did not make the job any easier. It was also summertime and the weather was hot. Combine hot summer weather with sizzling inner heat and you have a perfect combination for blowing a fuse.

And then--when they had fished the wheel out of the swamp--they found that it was ruined. There were four great big round holes where the lug bolts had worn
through the rim. Not only a tire gone, but a wheel also! The good time was on the bad rim—the bad tire on the good rim. Things were really piling up and I was on my way to being beneath it all.

The two offending objects had to be carried to the service station, in the pickup, to be repaired. The car, still stalled in the swamp was waiting patiently on three legs. It, of course, could not be moved until the men got back with the wheel and tire. The road was narrow enough so that if anyone else came by they had a hard time getting past the stalled car.

It was getting rather late when everything was taken care of and the men got home.

I really don't remember very much of what was said when they got home. I don't even remember if the meal that I had prepared was eaten. When I think back to that night, I draw a complete mental block about our conversation—except for a very careful replay of what took place in the swamp.

The next morning, when I went out of the house to go to work, the holey wheel had been very carefully positioned against a pecan tree. It was placed in such a way that I could not walk out my front door without seeing it.

"You're not planning to leave that wheel there are you?" I asked my husband.

"Don't you dare move it," he warned me. "It's there to remind you not to try changing a tire, ever again. You'll learn to leave well enough alone."

I don't remember that the word obey was in our marriage vows, but I'm sure that Bill thought it was.

When I moved away almost two years later, that rim was still there, propped against the trunk of that pecan tree.

It has been over fifteen years since all of this took place and I've never been tempted to change a flat tire.
again. I'll take my chances with that kind soul who says, "Having trouble, Lady? Never mind, I'll change it for you. A woman has no business trying to change a flat." I'll be glad to take him at his word.

ABOUT THE POETS IN RESIDENCE

JOANNA CATTONAR worked as Poet in Residence in Elloree, Oconee County and Dillon County Total Arts Programs during the 1976-77 school year.

She holds a B.A. Degree in English from Vassar College and an M.A. Degree from Cornell University. She has taught writing courses at Western Michigan in Kalamazoo and at New Mexico Highlands University in Taos.

Formerly a resident of Taos, Ms. Cattonar came to South Carolina for the first time last Spring to tape programs for SC-ETV's Writer in Residence Program. These tapes, which will be aired during 1977, include Ms. Cattonar's reading her own work and reading stories for young people by other writers.

SHAUN FARRAGHER, a graduate of Columbia University and recipient of the M.A. Degree in Creative Writing from the City College of City University of New York, worked as Poet in Residence in Dillon County and Greenwood Total Arts Programs and as visiting poet in Clinton and Laurens schools during the 1976-77 school year.

He has been active since 1973 in Poets in the Schools Programs in New Jersey and Pennsylvania.

Mr. Farragher is widely published in magazines and anthologies; his most recent book, Narratives of the New Netherlands, will be published this year by the Hudson River Press.

Both poets' residencies in South Carolina are sponsored by the South Carolina Arts Commission and funded by the National Endowment for the Arts and participating school and community sponsors.
PHEASANT: from the El Capitan

--by then I had swallowed the Prairie
a day long feast of manifest
destiny sunk to my teeth
in staring--

    when it flew
at me, broke, and stood wild
in the Kansas furrow and burned
the blue dim glint of my heart
captured and roared out of its dim blue dreaming
as if you had touched me again
the long long searched for,
the unhunted

    found

Joanna Cattonar

(Note: published in Open Places)
FINDING THE RIGHT WORDS

The sky pours out
Like water, stars
twist finbacked
in a net of trees
my thought pours
out like skysurf
all my words
rush the net
fish glimmer
eyes wide to darkness
every word
every star
an eye

Joanna Cattonar

(Note: published in somewhat different form in Niobe)
I wrote "Grandfather Tom" to make my grandfather live for other people. The writing of the poem helped me rediscover how I should try to live.

In an early draft of the poem, I wrote, "Tom, you never graduated from any school/you drove a trolley car and a bus/you taught me how to love." I didn't use this line in the published version of the poem, for a poem should show, rather than say, its meaning. This line says what was in my mind when I wrote the poem. Each series of images shows how I remember his gentleness, and how he helped me become my own person.

A real part of poetry and its teaching is this internal search for the conversation of the self.

I stumble through the twigs
to reach your grave

I need some talk,
some bits of string,
some knots untied

I remember our home -
the dog I rode when three,
the daffodils, crocus,
forsythia, mock orange

the blue bachelor's buttons
strung through your lapel

each June I see again the
red porch with the paint
and oil smell,
I think of lemons

I loved your green swinging couch
as I sit among the graves
the rains begin
then

I was eight
standing by the Chesterfields
near your favorite chair

often, I would watch you
walk down our hill,
newspaper under arm,
and then,
the snow began,

and we sled and sled
until we wet our drawers

we fell home
and you made some tea,
smoked a cigarette,
and then
we wrestled

and you read to me of mars
or saturn's men
until I yawned asleep,
your white hair
blurred by the motions
of your fingers tucking
me under grandma's quilt

as I leave your grave
the rain stops,
and we walk up that hill
on your last day.
then, the bus came,
took you away,
and you waved smiles through the glass,
and the roar of the bus stopped,
and we could not touch

I am never able to walk down that hill
and not see you with your newspaper
under your arm,
and the silence each Christmas
is sad even when the family gathers
with new children