

Abandoned Farmhouse

Ted Kooser

He was a big man, says the size of his shoes
on a pile of broken dishes by the house;
a tall man too, says the length of the bed
in an upstairs room; and a good, God-fearing man,
says the Bible with a broken back
on the floor below the window, dusty with sun;
but not a man for farming, say the fields
cluttered with boulders and the leaky barn.



A woman lived with him, says the bedroom wall
papered with lilacs and the kitchen shelves
covered with oilcloth, and they had a child,
says the sandbox made from a tractor tire.
Money was scarce, say the jars of plum preserves
and canned tomatoes sealed in the cellar hole.
And the winters cold, say the rags in the window
frames.

It was lonely here, says the narrow country road.
Something went wrong, says the empty house
in the weed-choked yard. Stones in the fields
say he was not a farmer; the still-sealed jars
in the cellar say she left in a nervous haste.
And the child? Its toys are strewn in the yard
like branches after a storm - a rubber cow,
a rusty tractor with a broken plow,
a doll in overalls. Something went wrong, they say.

Using Kooser's poem as a model, write your own description of a house or room you have lived in or visited. Read the suggestions below before you begin.

Note agreement of subject and verb. As you put your model together, pay especially close attention to the plural or singular noun(s) used. It may be especially tricky when the verb is listed first. Also, remember the use of "and" or "or" when joining nouns together; they can cause subject/verb problems.

Note the specific description ("the jars of plum preserves"). Try to be as specific as possible. Think about the reader attempting to paint exactly what you have described. Make each word be exactly the one you want to use.

Use stanzas that point out separate things - parents, siblings, rooms in your house, the house you live in, the property the house is on, the neighborhood your house is part of, or the community you live in. Try to center in on just one idea, well-developed, in each stanza. Pay attention to the punctuation of Kooser's poem.