

## two friends

lydia and shirley have  
two pierced ears and  
two bare ones  
five pigtails  
two pairs of sneakers  
two berets  
two smiles  
one necklace  
one bracelet  
lots of stripes and  
one good friendship

-Nikki Giovanni

## EMPIRE STATE BUILDING

Bright yellow moon  
pinned to the needle  
of the Empire State Building  
giant birthday candle

-Allan A. De Fina

## THE MASKED ONE

Raccoon wears a mask  
as if it's Halloween  
and tiptoes through our yard  
while I watch through the screen.

Clank falls the garbage-can lid to the ground,  
as if raccoon is saying "Trick or treat!"  
But the cans are empty, no food to be found.  
Raccoon walks away on tiny feet.

-Georgia Heard



# POETRY PACKET



## Houses

Just look down the street!  
A blue house,  
an orange house,  
a yellow house,  
a green house.  
Like a bouquet of flowers.  
The green one is ours!

## Casitas

¡Asómate a la calle y mira!  
Una casita azul  
una casita anaranjada,  
una casita amarilla,  
una casita verde.  
Como un ramillete.  
¡La nuestra es la verde!

-Tony Johnston



## LESSIE

When my friend Lessie runs she runs so fast  
I can hardly see her feet touch the ground  
She runs faster than a leaf flies  
She pushes her knees up and down, up and down  
She closes her hands and swings her arms  
She opens her mouth and tastes the wind  
Her coat flies out behind her

When Lessie runs she runs so fast that  
Sometimes she falls down  
But she gets right up and brushes her knees  
And runs again as fast as she can  
Past red houses  
and parked cars  
and bicycles  
and sleeping dogs  
and cartwheeling girls  
and wrestling boys  
and Mr. Taylor's record store

All the way to the corner  
To meet her mama

-Eloise Greenfield

## barefoot

After that tight  
Choke of sock  
And blunt  
Weight of shoe,

The foot can feel  
Clover's green  
Skin  
Growing,

And the fine  
Invisible  
Teeth  
Of gentle grass,

And the cool  
Breath  
Of the earth  
Beneath.

-Valerie Worth

## WHO AM I?

**Felice Holman**

The trees ask me,  
And the sky,  
And the sea asks me  
*Who am I?*

The grass asks me,  
And the sand,  
And the rocks ask me  
*Who I am.*

The wind tells me  
At nightfall,  
And the rain tells me  
*Someone small.*

Someone small  
Someone small  
*But a piece*

*of  
it  
all.*



## My People

The night is beautiful,  
So the faces of my people.

The stars are beautiful,  
So the eyes of my people.

Beautiful, also, is the sun.  
Beautiful, also, are the souls of my people.

*-Langston Hughes*



## A Suitcase of Seaweed

Across the ocean  
from Korea  
my grandmother,  
my Halmoni,  
has come—  
her suitcase  
sealed shut  
with tape,  
packed full  
of sheets  
of shiny black  
seaweed  
and stacks  
of dried squid.  
We break it open,  
this old treasure  
chest of hers,  
holding  
our noses  
tight  
as we release  
its ripe  
sea smell.

*-Janet S. Wong*



*K. Borner packet p.2*

## HOW TO ASSEMBLE A TOY

This is the whatsit that fits on the knob  
Of the gadget that turns the thingamabob.  
This is the dingus that fits in place  
With the doodad next to the whosiface.  
This is the jigger that goes in the hole  
Where the gizmo turns the rigamarole.  
Now slip the ding-dang into the slot  
Of the jugamalug, and what have you got?

It's a genuine neverwas such a not!

*John Ciardi*

## BEETLE

Shining Japanese beetle  
eating the rose,  
how your wings  
glisten  
like a small rainbow  
in the sun!

*Charlotte Zolotow*

## CHESS MOVES

Apartment lights  
across the sky  
make chess moves  
in the dark:

A turn of light,  
a considered pause,  
a flicker on,  
a flicker off,

into the hours  
of the evening  
the chess board  
slowly clears itself.

*-Allan A. De Fine*



## THE GALÁPAGOS TORTOISE



The last of his kind,  
one Galápagos tortoise  
wanders the island for plants to eat.

The last of his kind—  
sailors killed them for food,  
cattle trampled their nests,  
and rats ate their eggs.

The last of his kind.  
Once there were thousands.  
Now he's the only one.

—Georgia Heard

## THISTLES

Thirty thirsty thistles  
Thicketed and green  
Growing in a grassy swamp  
Purple-topped and lean  
Prickly and thistly  
Topped by tufts of thorns  
Green mean little leaves on them  
And tiny purple horns  
Briary and brambly  
A spiky, spiny bunch of them.  
A troop of bright-red birds came by  
And had a lovely lunch of them.

Karla Kuskin

## I LOOK PRETTY

Mama's shiny purple coat  
Giant-sized shoulder bag to tote  
Tall, tall shoes and pantyhose  
Big straw hat with shiny bows  
I look pretty  
I float  
I smile  
I pose

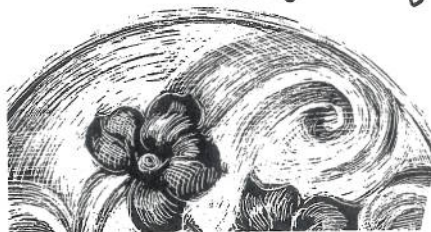
—Elaine Greenfield



## Autumn Thought

Flowers are happy in summer.  
In autumn they die and are blown away.  
Dry and withered,  
Their petals dance on the wind  
Like little brown butterflies.

—Langston Hughes



## flies

Flies wear  
Their bones  
On the outside.

Some show dead  
Gray, as bones  
Should seem,

But others gleam  
Dark blue, or bright  
Metal-green,

Or a polished  
Copper, mirroring  
The sun:

If all bones  
Shone so, I  
Wouldn't mind

Going around  
In my own  
Skeleton.  
—Valerie Worth



## Poem

I loved my friend.  
He went away from me.  
There's nothing more to say.  
The poem ends,  
Soft as it began—  
I loved my friend.

—Langston Hughes

## pebbles

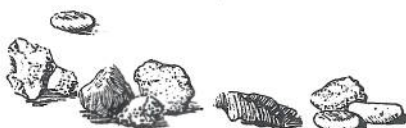
Pebbles belong to no one  
Until you pick them up—  
Then they are yours.

But which, of all the world's  
Mountains of little broken stones,  
Will you choose to keep?

The smooth black, the white,  
The rough gray with sparks  
Shining in its cracks?

Somewhere the best pebble must  
Lie hidden, meant for you  
If you can find it.

—Valerie Worth



## UNDERGROUND

silver subway star  
streaking snakelike  
sneaking, snarling

crackling in caverns  
crouching, crooning,  
cackling, coughing

people poised, pondering,  
posing, primping  
preparing

a new day outside  
the dark tunnels

—Allan A. De Fina



## MY FAVORITE FRIEND

Lillian M. Fisher

When will we meet again

My favorite friend?

You've moved away.

You couldn't stay.

The yard is empty.

Your swing is gone.

Your chair is missing

From the lawn.

I wish you hadn't moved away

My favorite friend

Who couldn't stay.

## BUTTERFLY SONG

Butterfly, butterfly, butterfly, butterfly,  
Oh, look, see it hovering among the flowers,  
It is like a baby trying to walk and not knowing how to go.  
The clouds sprinkle down the rain.

## mommies

### MOMMIES

make you brush your teeth  
and put your old clothes on  
and clean the room  
and call you from the playground  
and fuss at daddies and uncles  
and tuck you in at night  
and kiss you

-Nikki Giovanni

## daddies

### DADDIES

throw you in the air  
let you blow out matches  
tell you GET OUT THERE AND FIGHT AND  
DON'T COME BACK TILL YOU WIN  
laugh till the house shakes  
teach you how to walk and wear a hat  
and pee

-Nikki Giovanni

## SNOW

We'll play in the snow  
And stray in the snow  
And stay in the snow  
In a snow-white park.  
We'll clown in the snow  
And frown in the snow  
Fall down in the snow  
Till it's after dark.  
We'll cook snow pies  
In a big snow pan.  
We'll make snow eyes  
In a round snow man.  
We'll sing snow songs  
And chant snow chants  
And roll in the snow  
In our fat snow pants.  
And when it's time to go home to eat  
We'll have snow toes  
On our frosted feet.

-Karla Kuskin

## COUNTING



To count myself  
Is quickly done.  
There's never more of me  
Than one.



Counting bears  
Is fun by ones  
But funnier in pairs.



Counting the birds  
On the branches of trees  
Is hard on the neck  
But it's easy on the knees.



It's even harder  
Counting leaves  
Than counting tiny birds.  
They shift their shadows  
With the breeze  
Among the branches  
Of the trees  
More numerous  
Than whispered words.



Counting fingers  
And counting toes is  
A harder kind of counting  
Than counting noses.

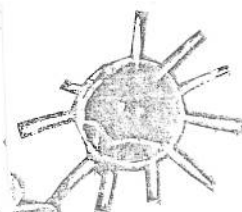
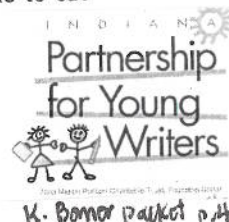


Counting rabbits running  
Rabbit races on the lawn  
Must be done while one is sunning  
And before a rabbit's gone.



Counting the stars  
As they glitter bright white  
Is lovely indeed  
And a marvelous sight  
When the air is as fresh  
As the first night in fall.  
But I always have a feeling  
That comes very softly stealing  
When my head with stars is reeling  
That I didn't count them all.

-Karla Kuskin





# Poetry Packet

## WAITING FOR BIRDS

two day old  
seed-filled bird  
feeder  
hanging from  
the porch —  
having birds come  
fills our home  
with what is  
outside  
our home:  
as much  
a part of our lives  
as the furniture  
we sit in  
food we eat  
books we write  
waiting  
waiting for the birds to come

— David Kherdian

## stars

Valerie Worth

While we  
Know they are  
Enormous suns,  
Gold lashing  
Fire-oceans,  
Seas of heavy  
Silver flame,

They look as  
Though they could  
Be swept  
Down, and heaped,  
Cold crystal  
Sparks, in one  
Cupped palm.

## Poem

I loved my friend.  
He went away from me.  
There's nothing more to say.  
The poem ends,  
Soft as it began—  
I loved my friend.

Langston Hughes

## snow

Valerie Worth

Gardens, fields,  
The far hills,  
Lie deathly  
With white winter,

Wide drifts  
And heavy deeps  
Made only of  
Each snowflake fallen,

Like these many  
Still falling, these  
Few still alive  
On my sleeve—

None anywhere  
Ever like  
This one, this  
Very one.

## WINTER DARK

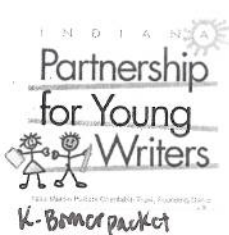
Winter dark comes early  
mixing afternoon  
and night.  
Soon  
there's a comma of a moon,  
and each street light  
along the  
way  
puts its period  
to the end of day.

Now  
a neon sign  
punctuates the  
dark with a bright blinking  
breathless  
exclamation mark!

Lilian Moore

## Why?

*Ann Turner*



Fumble-John they call him  
lives in the place with no windows,  
floors falling down,  
doorway burned black,  
sleeps on a bag,  
gets warm by the trash can,  
hardly eats—mostly drinks,  
clothes look like they left  
on the tracks and the trains  
run back and over them,  
so does the man.

And I wonder when I see him,  
Who are his people?  
Why is he here?  
How did he get  
so run over?

## Other

*Janet S. Wong*

We notice each other right away.  
We are the only two Asians in the room.  
It does not matter that her hair is long.  
It does not matter that I am fat.  
I look at her like I look in a mirror,  
recognizing my self in one quick glance.

## December

*Sanderson Vanderbilt*

A little boy stood on the corner  
And shoveled bits of dirty, soggy snow  
Into the sewer —  
With a jagged piece of tin.

He was helping spring come.

## Money Order

*Janet S. Wong*

We eat salt fish and rice,  
night after night after night,  
to save some money  
to send  
to cousins  
I never have seen

who used our money last year  
to buy a color TV,  
so they could watch  
rich Americans  
eating  
steak and potatoes.

## EATING BREAD

*Gary Soto*

The days are filled with air. A cloud  
Over a tree. A thud of mail  
In the box, and the steps of our carrier  
Descending the porch. Someone is thinking  
Of us, right now in the improbable heart,  
And it must be good: you've chewed a smile  
In your bread. "Look," you say, and I look.  
I chew a smile, and press it to yours.  
This is what we need. A slice  
Of bread, a little quiet,  
A window to sit before with our mouths full —  
The neighbor kids at baseball,  
A dog, that girl who could be your sister  
Peeling an orange at the curb.

Daughter, though we smile with bread,  
I'm troubled at not knowing what tugs the soul,  
God or love, women or love,  
And at how we can live in this world  
With the dead itching on their racks,  
A country in flames, the poor  
Crouching before their banged-up bowls.  
How can I tell you this? How can I show  
You the men who want to hurt us all the way  
To the grave. You with the hands,  
The tiny teeth, the eyes that could save us  
From ourselves, as right now.  
You point to a bird, say "bird,"  
And it lifts from a wire to a branch.  
You wave, and the kids drop their gloves  
To wave back. A dog looks up, a paper cup  
In his mouth. Little one, tell me how this happens.



## To Look

at

## Any Thing

To look at any thing,  
If you would know that thing,  
You must look at it long:  
To look at this green and say  
'I have seen spring in these  
Woods,' will not do—you must  
Be the thing you see:  
You must be the dark snakes of  
Stems and ferny plumes of leaves,  
You must enter in  
To the small silences between  
The leaves,  
You must take your time,  
And touch the very peace  
They issue from.

John Moffitt

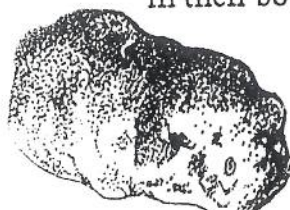
## potatoes

Because of each  
Knob and knot,  
Hump and dimple  
And dusty gnarl,

No potato is quite  
Like any other—  
Until all are pared  
Smooth and pale,

Boiled tender, and  
Mashed up together:  
A single soft beauty  
In their bowl.

Valerie Worth



## BUTTERFLY SONG

Butterfly, butterfly, butterfly, butterfly,  
Oh, look, see it hovering among the flowers,  
It is like a baby trying to walk and not knowing how to go.  
The clouds sprinkle down the rain.

Acoma

## APPLE

At the center, a dark star  
wrapped in white.  
When you bite, listen  
for the crunch of boots on snow,  
snow that has ripened. Over it  
stretches the red, starry sky.

Nan Fry

## THUMBPRINT

In the heel of my thumb  
are whorls, whirls, wheels  
in a unique design:  
mine alone.

What a treasure to own!  
My own flesh, my own feelings  
No other, however grand or base,  
can ever contain the same.

My signature,  
thumbing the pages of my time.  
My universe key,  
my singularity.

Impress, implant,  
I am myself,  
of all my atom parts I am the sum.  
And out of my blood and my brain  
I make my own interior weather,  
my own sun and rain.  
Imprint my mark upon the world,  
whatever I shall become.

Eve Merriam



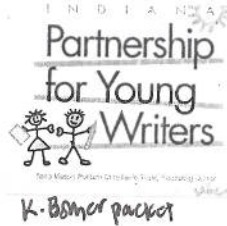
## EARTH WORMS

Garden soil,  
Spaded up,  
Gleams with  
Gravel-glints,  
Mica-sparks, and  
Bright wet  
Glimpses of  
Earthworms  
Stirring beneath:

Put on the palm,  
Still rough  
With crumbs,  
They roll and  
Glisten in the sun  
As fresh  
As new rubies  
Dug out of  
Deepest earth.

Valerie Worth

# WAR



each day the terror wagon  
passes while elevators  
hesitate between floors  
and frightened windows  
cover their eyes

the bell rings *bring out*  
*your dead bring out your dead*  
the bell keeps ringing

we are sad quiet men  
in a difficult century

we run our treacherous  
fingers through their hair  
one last time  
and trade our children  
for the most expensive  
versions of old lies

*Richard Shelton*

## City Blockades

*Lee Bennett Hopkins*

I feel so small  
standing beneath the tall  
buildings that wall  
me and the pigeons in  
from the light of the  
sky.

## Red Flower

*Ann Turner*

I went by this building,  
brown, mostly gray  
like all the city smoke  
and noise got ground  
into those bricks,  
the window glass so black  
it looked like tar.

And I thought, Nobody  
lives there—too quiet,  
too dark, too gray,  
when I looked up and saw  
one window open,  
the curtains blowing in  
and a red flower blooming.

## *I Hear America Singing*

*Walt Whitman*

I hear America singing, the varied carols I hear,  
Those of mechanics, each one singing his as it should be  
blithe and strong,  
The carpenter singing his as he measures his plank or beam,  
The mason singing his as he makes ready for work, or  
leaves off work,  
The boatman singing what belongs to him in his boat,  
the deckhand singing on the steamboat deck,  
The shoemaker singing as he sits on his bench, the hatter  
singing as he stands,  
The wood-cutter's song, the ploughboy's on his way in the  
morning, or at noon intermission or at sundown,  
The delicious singing of the mother, or of the young wife  
at work, or of the girl sewing or washing,  
Each singing what belongs to him or her and to none else,  
The day what belongs to the day—at night the party of  
young fellows, robust, friendly,  
Singing with open mouths their strong melodious songs.

## I, Too

I, too, sing America.

I am the darker brother.  
They send me to eat in the kitchen  
When company comes,  
But I laugh,  
And eat well,  
And grow strong.

Tomorrow,  
I'll sit at the table  
When company comes.  
Nobody'll dare  
Say to me,  
"Eat in the kitchen,"  
Then.

Besides,  
They'll see how beautiful I am  
And be ashamed—

I, too, am America.

*Langston Hughes*