

# POETRY NOW!

## "Best Thing" poem

### My Overalls

The best thing is their color,  
old-night or early-dawn.

No, the best thing is their limpness  
when I hoist them on.

No, the best thing is their looseness  
like the soft skin of a pup.

No, the best thing is their buckles  
like a suitcase snapping shut.

No, the best thing is their perfume  
of cows and hay and dung.

No, the best thing is their many holes  
to let in all the sun.

© Tony Johnston, from *Once in the Country: Poems of a Farm*, G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1996.

*Tony Johnston (1942- ) is the author of over 70 books for children. She worked as a fourth grade teacher and also as an assistant to Ursula Nordstrom, the legendary Harper Children's Books editor. She now lives and writes in San Marino, California.*

### **Poetry Idea**

I call this a "Best Thing" poem, because it captures all the little details that make something your favorite.

1. Read Tony Johnston's poem above, and notice all the details she lists that are her "favorites" about overalls. Which ones would be your favorites? Which ones not?
2. Choose a person or thing to write about. It can be anything, from a hockey puck to your grandma. Think carefully about specifically WHY you love this thing/person. The more specific you can be, the better the poem will be.

3. Start your poem: "The best thing about \_\_\_\_ is . . ." (As always, you do not HAVE to start your poem this way. Start it whatever way you want! This is just a suggestion to get you going.) "The best thing about my hockey puck is the way it fits in my hand, like a smooth stone."

4. Keep going, arguing with yourself: "No, the best thing is its blackness, like the underside of a storm cloud." Your poem does not have to rhyme!

5. List as many things as you can, using comparisons (or metaphors) to give your descriptions power. Save the most meaningful detail for last: "No, the best thing is its many dings and cuts from my stupendous slapshots."

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