

## The Passenger Pigeon

by Paul Fleischman

We were counted not in thousands, nor millions, but in billions.  
Billions we were, numerous as the stars in the heavens  
As grains of sand at the sea, as the buffalo on the plains.  
When we burst into flight we so filled the sky  
That the sun was darkened and day became dusk  
Humblers of the sun we were!  
The world inconceivable without us.  
Yet it's 1914, and here I am  
Alone caged in the Cincinnati Zoo.  
The last of the passenger pigeons.

The Place My Words Are Looking For- pg. 133

## Maytime Magic

by Mabel Watts

A little seed  
For me to sow...

A little earth  
To make it grow...  
A little hole,  
A little pat...  
A little wish,  
And that is that.

A little sun,  
A little shower...  
A little while,  
And then- a flower!

by Ogden Nash

Consider the auk:

Becoming extinct because he forgot how to fly and could  
only walk

Consider the man who may well become extinct

Because he forgot how to walk and learned how to fly  
before he thinned

Ogden Nash: I Woldn't Have Missed It- pg. 97  
**I Heard a Bird Sing**

## The Grandmother

by Laura E. Richards

My grandmother is white as milk,  
    And smooth as ivory;  
She wears a little gown of silk,  
    She sings a song to me,  
Soft as the leaves that rustle down,  
In autumn when the woods are brown.

She is so old, she is so frail,  
    You'd hardly think her able  
To pull a drawer that fits so close  
    Out from her little table.  
But yes, she is; and oh, it's full  
Of goodies the most wonderful.

There's barley sugar, red and white,  
    And figgy paste and all;  
Burnt almonds for my heart's delight,  
    (I wish they weren't so small!)  
And lemon drops with sprightly zest,  
I almost think I like them best!

And "Take one!" says my grandmother,  
    "For two is one too many!  
Say 'thank you!' nicely, dear, or else  
    Next time there won't be any!"  
(For me, she means; because the drawer  
Is always full; it is the law!)

She's very small, my grandmother,  
    And very, very kind;  
But when she says, "do this" or "that,"  
    I somehow have to Mind!  
For if I didn't~ well, you see,  
I don't know what would come to me!

## What I Want

by Noni Bookbinder

When I found her poem  
on the back of a 3x5 card  
in ger rusty flowered recipe file  
I never got a new one, her hands touched it  
when I found my mother's poem  
it ripped my heart out

Ripped the scab off a ten year old  
wound. Tears flowed like blood  
as I read it, I knew she was  
*in pain.*  
Ten years isn't even ten seconds  
when it comes to the worst hurt  
you've ever felt.

Shocking evidence  
she could have been a poet!  
But she had to support us  
so talent became the  
(dreaded) Public Relations

No wonder she encouraged  
nurtured  
    pushed  
(loved!) my work  
I still hear her voice  
"Noni~ anyone can hack. Imagination  
is your gift"  
in my adolescent way, I'd say  
"Mom, anyone can drivel~ making the bucks is  
making the grade". Then she looked so sad.

Now that I am Ms. Corporat VP  
how wrong I know I was  
how sad she must have been  
giving up her dream from neccessity

I wish I could stop  
missing her in my poems, I wish  
she hadn't died in pain  
I wanna be her little girl again  
just plain old starving poet  
That's what I want!

**Every So Often**  
by Jean Little

Every so often, my father tries making bread.  
He's too impatient though.  
He puts it on top of the radiator to make it rise faster  
And I doubt if he kneads it as long as the books say he should.  
He likes to see results.  
When it's baking, the whole house smells like heaven.  
But you do have to hurry and eat it while it's fresh.  
The next day, it's almost too heavy to lift.

The mood only strikes him once every couple of years.  
Mother shakes her head and gets out of his way.  
But I sit around and cheer him on. It's exciting!

I've no idea what starts him off on bread-making.  
But I'm glad he does it.  
It makes him ridiculous, mysterious and my own particular father.

**About Poems, Sort of**  
by Jean Little

I wrote a poem about Emily and spring~ and it was right.  
Exactly what I meant was there on the page.  
I read it to Mother. Her face lighted.  
“Oh Kate,” she said, “I do like that.”

Shyly, happily, I turned to go away.  
Then I turned back.  
“Haven’t you ever written a poem?” I asked her.

She shook her head.  
“Not one,” she said calmly.

“How can you stand it . . . .  
I mean, never, ever making a special thing all your own . . . .”  
I stared at her.  
I felt as though we were two entirely different kinds of beings.

She smiled at me.  
Her face looked . . . . I don’t know . . . . unguarded.  
“I’ve had you, Kate,” she said.  
“I’ve worked over you and you’re special  
And my own.”

We were both embarrassed.  
I was surprised, too, and disbelieving.  
I stood, tongue-tied, my cheeks reddening.  
I wasn’t going to say anything.  
Then, the words just jumped out of my mouth, bang!

“I thought you didn’t want me.  
You didn’t either. I’ve even heard you say so myself.”

Her eyes went wide.  
All at once, she laughed.  
“Oh, *how* I didn’t want you!” she admitted.  
“I was so mad.  
But when I think of life without you . . . .  
I did want you, Kate.  
I didn’t know it right away, that’s all.  
Be reasonable.  
How was I to guess, ahead of time, that you were the one who was coming . . . .

Have you brushed your teeth?"  
She hasn't asked me that for years.  
She usually forgot even when I was little.

"No," I said.

I had to clear my throat before I spoke.

"Then go brush them," she ordered.

So I went.  
But it was almost as though I'd written another poem.

Or she had.