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## First Day

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*We can change the time and place and re-live our own "first day" at school: poetic cathartic*

# First Day

By Margie Snowden North

We board the bus warily  
amidst the distinct scent  
of white paste and newly sharpened pencils  
and Crayolas bought at  
Ben Franklin's ten-cent store.  
Revel quietly--even in our uneasiness--  
in the scholarly feel  
of an armload of new workbooks  
And a Big Chief tablet  
purchased down at Hood Drug.

The bus groans to a halt,  
feet clatter with both purpose and reluctance  
down steps,  
nervous voices chatter  
then ebb into glaring silence.

We are greeted by  
the smell of newly painted floors,  
oiled rags that made chalkboards clean,  
the fixed smile of a first-time teacher.  
Desks set in rigid rows  
awaiting occupants--  
little girls in starched prints  
and plain white petticoats,  
fellows in unbending jeans and tight oxfords.  
We sit stiffly.

Tomorrow we will get dirty on the playground,  
giggle, rip a dress belt off on the slide,  
or yell and play keep-away with a vengeance.  
But today we are caught tight,  
squeezed into properness  
by that puzzling malaise  
that always afflicted us once a year  
on the first day of school.