

## PROMPT #3

# Poems of Witness



### “The Lost Breath of Trees”

Change and loss are significant themes in place poems. But unlike Richard Blanco’s very personal encounter with change, the late Colleen McElroy steps back from the change she’s documenting in “The Lost Breath of Trees” and assumes the point of view of witness.

In a poem in four parts, she enters a chronological review of environmental changes she has seen. Although her presence as a witness is acknowledged — *if I remember well the first to go/was the old growth Ponderosa near the school* — she reports on the external, keeping the internal to a minimum. Yet we sense her deep personal investment in dramatic change through her imagery and frequent personification of nature (roots that are as stubborn as the gnarled toes of an old man struggling across the road, trees that sigh).

#### **Prompt:**

Using the point of view of an observer, write a poem that reports a history of change in a place that you care about. Persuade us to care about the change as much as you do.

#### **Length:**

Allow the length of the poem to develop organically.

#### **READ: “The Lost Breath of Trees”**