

## PRESENTING THE POEM:

### *I Can't Forget You.*

BY LEN ROBERTS

**SETTING THE STAGE:** Today's poem tells a story of graffiti. The official, primary sense that's tapped here is the visual. But if there is such a thing as a sixth sense, I think it's what the *heart* perceives. This poem taps that sense, too.

**SOME FEATURES TO NOTICE:**

How almost the whole poem is visual  
The specific details of the visual images  
How the poet describes not only what he saw—the graffiti—but what the sight inspired him to imagine in his mind's eye  
*Hyperbole* (hi-PUR-bo-lee) means exaggerated for effect

**RESPONSE STANCE:** Please go back into "I Can't Forget You." and mark the lines and phrases you can see.

**BENEDICTION:** There's a lot to be said for careful visual imagery, combined with the poet's imagination. Again, begin with the *thing*—the visual perception; then bring to it your poet's vision and invention.

### *I Can't Forget You.*

spray-painted high on the overpass,  
each letter a good foot long,  
and I try to picture the writer  
    hanging from a rope  
between midnight and dawn  
the weight of his love swaying,  
    making a trembling  
N and G, his mind at work  
    with the apostrophe—  
    the grammar of loss—  
and his resistance to hyperbole,  
    no exclamation point  
    but a period at the end  
that shows a heart not given  
    to exaggeration,  
a heart that's direct with a no-  
    fooling around approach,  
and I wonder if he tested the rope  
before tying it to the only tree I can see  
    that would bear his weight,  
or if he didn't care about the free-  
    fall of thirty or more feet  
as he locked his wrist to form such  
    straight T's,  
and still managed, dangling, to flex  
    for the C and G,  
knowing as he did, I'm sure,  
the lover would ride this way each day  
until she found a way around,  
a winding back road with trees  
    and roadside  
tiger lilies, maybe a stream, a  
    white house, white fence,  
    a dog in the yard  
    miles  
from this black-letter, open-book  
    in-your-face missing  
that the rain or Turnpike road  
    crew  
will soon wash off.

—Len Roberts