

# Flounder

by Natasha Trethewey, U.S. Poet Laureate

*Here, she said, put this on your head.*

She handed me a hat.

*You 'bout as white as your dad,  
and you gone stay like that.*

Aunt Sugar rolled her nylons down  
around each bony ankle,  
and I rolled down my white knee socks  
letting my thin legs dangle,

circling them just above water  
and silver backs of minnows  
flitting here then there between  
the sun spots and the shadows.

*This is how you hold the pole  
to cast the line out straight.*

*Now put that worm on your hook,  
throw it out and wait.*

She sat spitting tobacco juice  
into a coffee cup.  
Hunkered down when she felt the bite,  
jerked the pole straight up

reeling and tugging hard at the fish  
that wriggled and tried to fight back.  
*A flounder, she said, and you can tell  
'cause one of its sides is black.*

*The other side is white, she said.*  
It landed with a thump.  
I stood there watching that fish flip-flop,  
switch sides with every jump.