

Chalkdust

Ralph McTell

"Goodnight Miss Johnson", calls the janitor
Finishing his nightly rounds
Continuing to clean the blackboard
She answers without looking round
And it's far too easy to erase
The hard planned lessons of another day

And then she carefully packs her briefcase
And blows the chalk dust from her hands
Winds up the windows and feeds the fishes
But forgets about the plants
Oh, all the biology class
And the questions that the young girls ask

And they're all whispering in the playground
Young girls talking 'round in groups
And those words scrawled on the blackboard
Could they really be the truth
And no one asked the reason why
Something in assembly made Miss Johnson cry

Young girls seem to grow so quickly
And proves she's slowly growing old
How could they hope to understand it
Even if they could be taught
Oh, no more than a name hanging in the hall
On a dusty roll of honour, unread on the wall

Chalk dust settles everywhere
Dries up her voice, whitens her hair
Finding, filling every place
But for punishment the hundred lines upon her face

There is chalk dust in the letters
That she slips beneath the doors
There is chalk dust, there are letters
All along the corridors
And all the lessons she's erased
Are chalk dust falling in the rays of sunset
Through the window pane