

SWEET LUCY GRAY — AND MS. JAMES

The young lad squirmed as Ms. James read
A poem about Lucy Gray.
Her icy voice seemed as dead
As sweet Lucy on her last day.
Oblivious of lyrics' beauty,
Ms. James to Wordsworth did her duty:

“The storm came on before its time:
She wandered up and down;
And many a hill did Lucy climb
But never reached the town....”

Ms. James droned on as if poems' words,
Like children, should be seen not heard.

The pupil shrank. Behind his book,
His eyes gazed on a scene outside
The darksome schoolroom where a brook
Had trickled down the green hillside
And formed a pond. Beneath the trees,
Gold jonquils fluttered in the breeze.

A flock of white sheep ambled by.
Butterflies danced over pink flowers.
He heard a tawny linnnet cry
And watched a wobbly squirrel cower
On a red maple's dangling limb
Until Ms. James peered down at him:

“Now will you, please, explain to me
What you've learned about poetry?”

—Mary E. Slayton