

**“Warren Pryor” by Alden Nowlan**

When every pencil meant a sacrifice  
his parents boarded him at school in town,  
slaving to free him from the stony fields,  
the meagre acreage that bore them down.

They blushed with pride when, at his graduation,  
they watched him picking up the slender scroll,  
his passport from the years of brutal toil  
and lonely patience in a barren hole.

When he went in the Bank their cups ran over.  
They marvelled how he wore a milk-white shirt  
work days and jeans on Sundays. He was saved  
from their thistle-strewn farm and its red dirt.

And he said nothing. Hard and serious  
like a young bear inside his teller's cage,  
his axe-hewn hands upon the paper bills  
aching with empty strength and throttled rage.