

# 20190829\_theslowdown\_20190829\_128

Wed, 9/30 7:38PM 5:00

## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

manners, book, courtesy, kindnesses, strangers, clerk, post office, solicitous, assure, grocery bag, small, accompanies, cheerfully, humanizing, aisle, american public, clam chowder, dramatize, revived, learn

00:06

I'm Tracy k Smith, and this is the slow down.

00:20

my six year old boys are captivated by a picture book called manners by a writer illustrator named a leaky. The title of the book sits just above the author's name on the cover. So when they asked for it, they say please read manners Alike. I have accepted that manners. Alike is for all intents and purposes, the books actual title, at least in our household. I love the book, because it illustrates and even dramatize is the importance of all the small gestures of courtesy so many of us learned as children. When I am discouraged or worn down by the struggle that sometimes accompanies raising young children, I turned to the world of manners, Alike, and find myself revived. Yes, this slim masterpiece assures me there is still hope for kindness, courtesy, consideration and resulting peace in this crazy mixed up world. manners are simple. They are easy to learn. With repetition, they become habit. with minimal effort, we can all move through the world, offering small tokens of esteem to friends and strangers alike. Thank you. You're welcome. Excuse me. I'm sorry. After you What a lovely party, Get home safely. Please come again. I used to think these things were important because of the ways they assure others of my civility and good breeding. Now I realize that manners also perform a kind of psychic uplift and others, reminding them that they are worthy of graciousness, and courtesy. I lived for many years in Brooklyn, I got used to the practical gruffness of post office employees and DMV clerks. I internalized messages like a lack of planning on your part does not constitute an emergency on my part, posted deliberately within sight of customers. Then, one autumn I moved to Pittsburgh for a teaching appointment. My first trip to the post office there brought me to tears because the clerk was kind, patient, jovial and solicitous. In the time it took to mail a package, a portion of

myself worth I was not aware of having ever surrendered, was instantly and cheerfully restored. Today's poem is small kindnesses by de Lucia lameiras. It celebrates the extraordinarily humanizing gift of simple, ordinary manners. Small kindnesses by de newsha lameiras. I've been thinking about the way when you walk down a crowded aisle, people pull in their legs to let you buy, or how strangers still say Bless you, when someone sneezes, a leftover from the bubonic plague don't die, we are saying. And sometimes, when you spill lemons from your grocery bag, someone else will help you pick them up. Mostly, we don't want to harm each other. We want to be handed our cup of coffee hot, and to say thank you to the person handing it, to smile at them and for them to smile back for the waitress to call us honey when she sets down the bowl of clam chowder and for the driver and the red pickup truck to let us pass. We have so little of each other now. So far from tribe and fire. Only these brief moments of exchange. What if they are the true dwelling of the holy, these fleeting temples we make together when we say here, have my seat. Go ahead, you first. I like your hat. The slow down is a production of American public media in partnership with the Poetry Foundation.