

# Daughters 1900

By Marilyn Nelson

Five daughters, in the slant light on the porch,  
are bickering. The eldest has come home  
with new truths she can hardly wait to teach.

She lectures them: the younger daughters search  
the sky, elbow each other's ribs, and groan.  
Five daughters, in the slant light on the porch

and blue-sprigged dresses, like a stand of birch  
saplings whose leaves are going yellow-brown  
with new truths. They can hardly wait to teach,

themselves, to be called "Ma'am," to march  
high-heeled across the hanging bridge to town.  
Five daughters. In the slant light on the porch

Pomp lowers his paper for a while, to watch  
the beauties he's begotten with his Ann:  
these new truths they can hardly wait to teach.

The eldest sniffs, "A lady doesn't scratch."  
The third snorts back, "Knock, knock: nobody home."  
The fourth concedes, "Well, maybe not in *church* . . ."  
Five daughters in the slant light on the porch.

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