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# Learning to Read

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*Donald Hall*

LEARNING TO READ

Sitting in the back seat  
of a nineteen-thirty-five Packard  
with running boards, I held  
my great-uncle Luther's blotchy hand.  
He was nine for Appomattox  
and told about the soldier  
boys coming home from the war.  
When I pressed the skin of his hand  
between thumb and forefinger,  
the flesh turned white as Wonder Bread.  
It remained indented  
for a few seconds, and then rose up,  
turning pink, flush to the surface  
of his veined hairless mottled  
hand. Then I pressed it again.  
Luther would stay old forever.  
I would remain six, just  
beginning first grade, learning to read.