**Backpack**

**A Poem by J. Allen Smith**

**I stay quiet and listen,**

**As I walk through these halls,**

**To the colorful history,**

**That rings out from these walls.**

**I gather the secrets,**

**That these dead stones tell.**

**They go in my backpack,**

**Like a secret half-filled well.**

**From these fading echoes,**

**These broken memories,**

**I see shades and shadows,**

**That only I can see.**

**I’m an observer, a watcher,**

**I see the past and the present.**

**I can predict the future,**

**Though not all of it is pleasant.**

**They’re soft like whispers,**

**But they’re loud as can be,**

**All these signs and stories,**

**That keep calling to me.**

**They sit in my backpack,**

**Always swirling around.**

**For only by me,**

**Can these secrets be found.**

**There is no end,**

**To the stories to be told.**

**I collect and protect,**

**Until I grow too old.**

**My time here is over,**

**I have to move on.**

**But the whispers continue,**

**Even when I’m gone.**

**I give up my backpack,**

**I must pass it along,**

**To some new soul,**

**Who will write their own song.**

**I give it away,**

**My special secret stash.**

**Take care of my backpack,**

**It’s worth more than cash.**