

September, You Remember The Ottoman Empire ·
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Days like this you remember grade school, the smell
of pencils, the hot, whirring drone of the clock
as you brought forth the names of the great metals:
platinum, zinc, manganese, copper, silver,
gold, mercury, chromite, vanadium, tin.
Antimony was important in peace and in war.
The core of the earth was liquid nickel and iron

and fact was muscle. You were bigger than anybody.
You could have walked all the way to Duluth
for a start. Whole zones of the earth as yet
unmarked by your boot: Tibet and the tundra—
that rug over Russia. Jungle, savannah, glacier,
the moon. You were capable of just about probably
everything. The teacher sat alone at the end

of the room. So it was decided: you would go
among the great populations. Tokyo six million
then. Africa shimmering with tribes. Tanzania,
Chile, Bolivia, Guam. The whole Chinese nation
starving and teeming. Arabians in silver tents
against the desert's storm. The invention of the knout.
The Slavs and their snows.

In Ohio there is
no history. Beside you Harrold Gene
was chewing gum. He was fat, and dumb. You were
thirteen. How you ached to get into history:
Jesus, Mohammed, Eisenhower, Churchill, the Queen.