

## Arthur Turfa

### Middle School Universe - for MGT

When the bell rang and the classroom door closed,  
a universe formed several times a day,

180 days a year except when it snowed. Starting  
with the worn textbooks, she conjured tales, drew

from her life and contemporary situations, weaving  
tapestries for thousands of middle schoolers. Memories

remained alive in them and her long after she  
turned in the keys and took the Commonwealth's pension.

Grading papers at the kitchen table cleared  
after early supper when dad's shift ended,

finally falling asleep in her chair flanked by  
newspapers on the floor and Reader's Digests on

an end table a former student made long ago, dad  
snoozing in his chair, TV on, sounds mingling with

our FM radios or stereos rumbling upstairs until the  
11 O'clock news signaled an end to another long day.

Decades pass, back home, widowhood, then high  
desert and last move to another coal-laden valley.

Fog then enveloped memory, obscuring most of  
her days and people.. School remained her happy

place. She said she was in the teacher's lounge for  
lunch with a colleague; not knowing exactly who

I am. Smiling, I stepped into the hall grateful  
that the place she loved best stayed intact. Mom

in her middle school universe, all the world she  
needed, a decade lasting for three decades.

Since 2004 **Arthur Turfa** has called the Midlands of South Carolina home. But his poetry reflects his native Pennsylvania, Germany, New Mexico, Virginia, and other places. An adviser to the Board of the South Carolina Writers Association, he has been

published in numerous print and online journals, US and international, and was in the Top Ten for the *Pangolin Review's* 2019 Poetry Prize. The most recent of his poetry books is *Saluda Reflections* from Finishing Line Press, 2018. His first novel will be released soon on Blurb. With his creative partner, award-winning artist Carol Worthington-Levy, he has produced two books of ekphrastic poetry.