



9-1-2016

## Rough River

Loren Sundlee

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.murraystate.edu/crsw>



Part of the [Social Work Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Sundlee, Loren (2016) "Rough River," *Contemporary Rural Social Work Journal*: Vol. 8 : No. 2 , Article 17.  
Available at: <https://digitalcommons.murraystate.edu/crsw/vol8/iss2/17>

This Poetry is brought to you for free and open access by Murray State's Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Contemporary Rural Social Work Journal by an authorized editor of Murray State's Digital Commons. For more information, please contact [msu.digitalcommons@murraystate.edu](mailto:msu.digitalcommons@murraystate.edu).

---

## Rough River

Loren Sundlee

You would have thought that a slow river  
would freeze smoother, like a lake,  
petrify into a slate you could write on,  
where your skates glide without miracles.  
But we found pocks and ripples,  
corrugations like country roads that jarred  
our teeth and ankles. Whatever escape  
we might have dreamed, of gliding  
over the channel that wound  
through measured fields, that led  
to endless adventure and cut through  
the ship-shape souls of our parents—  
whatever access into the incredible  
we wished for was not there  
in that frozen youth, where snow crusted,  
and branches late in their cruise to the gulf  
braked mid-stream to trip us up.  
We shuddered through that rugged zero,  
balloon breaths shouted *we're skating on death*.  
Stories hovered of those fallen through.  
When our knees and ankles ached,  
and winter terrorized our toes and fingers,  
we changed into stiff boots and slogged  
home over plowed snow fields,  
cursing the lumped furrows—  
our rough praise for not sinking.

Discussion questions for poem *Rough River*:

1. How does the frozen rough river often compare with life in a rural area?
2. How does the dreamed escape and the actuality often parallel the lives of rural youth?
3. Do you have a sense that the skaters wanted a different life than the one they were living? Explain.
4. Do you feel a sense of satisfaction in the skaters for successfully overcoming rural hardship? Explain.