

Being Poor

© 2002 by Jackie R. Kays

On a cold dreary day...
Twenty Fourth of December in the
depression year of Nineteen Thirty
Seven, I slipped, stumbled, and cried
as I hurriedly trotted behind my
Grandma down the old Missouri
Pacific railroad tracks, with a cloth
sack of oranges on my back.

She would say; "Hurry-up!
It's getting colder and darker,
and we still have a long ways
to go, this sack of corn meal and
potatoes ain't gotten' any lighter
you know!"

Four years old I was then, to the
county welfare office we'd been.
Pants too short, jacket too small.

The icy wind whipping my bare
ankles and stocking less feet in
black tennis shoes too small,
and every time I took a step,
I'd almost fall.

But that was all right, for
Christmas was tomorrow!

All you could eat...
chicken and dumplings,
cornbread and
black- eyed peas.

And maybe a small slice of pumpkin
pie, if you'd say... Please!

Things have changed a lot in the past
sixty five years, but being poor is not one of them.