



TO THIS DAY

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## TO THIS DAY

by Shane Koyczan

To This Day

When I was a kid

I used to think that pork chops and karate chops  
were the same thing

I thought they were both pork chops  
and because my grandmother thought it was cute  
and because they were my favourite  
she let me keep doing it

not really a big deal

one day

before I realized fat kids are not designed to climb trees  
I fell out of a tree  
and bruised the right side of my body

I didn't want to tell my grandmother about it  
because I was afraid I'd get in trouble  
for playing somewhere that I shouldn't have been

a few days later the gym teacher noticed the bruise  
and I got sent to the principal's office  
from there I was sent to another small room  
with a really nice lady  
who asked me all kinds of questions  
about my life at home

I saw no reason to lie  
as far as I was concerned  
life was pretty good  
I told her "whenever I'm sad  
my grandmother gives me karate chops"

this led to a full scale investigation  
and I was removed from the house for three days  
until they finally decided to ask how I got the bruises

news of this silly little story quickly spread through the  
school  
and I earned my first nickname

pork chop

What does the gym teacher  
infer is the cause of the bruise?

- a. school yard fall
- b. accident
- c. physical abuse
- d. bullying

to this day  
I hate pork chops

I'm not the only kid  
who grew up this way  
surrounded by people who used to say  
that rhyme about sticks and stones  
as if broken bones  
hurt more than the names we got called  
and we got called them all  
so we grew up believing no one  
would ever fall in love with us  
that we'd be lonely forever  
that we'd never meet someone  
to make us feel like the sun  
was something they built for us  
in their tool shed  
so broken heart strings bled the blues  
as we tried to empty ourselves  
so we would feel nothing  
don't tell me that hurts less than a broken bone  
that an ingrown life  
is something surgeons can cut away  
that there's no way for it to metastasize

it does

she was eight years old  
our first day of grade three  
when she got called ugly  
we both got moved to the back of the class  
so we would stop getting bombarded by spit balls  
but the school halls were a battleground  
where we found ourselves outnumbered day after  
wretched day  
we used to stay inside for recess  
because outside was worse  
outside we'd have to rehearse running away  
or learn to stay still like statues giving no clues that we  
were there  
in grade five they taped a sign to her desk  
that read beware of dog

What lines in the this stanza  
mean that depression feels like  
an incurable cancer that keeps  
growing? Lines beginning/ending  
in:

- a. hurt more than...  
believing no one
- b. was something they  
built for...bled the  
blues
- c. an ingrown life... to  
metastasize
- d. we'd only be  
lonely...feel like the  
sun

What is a metaphor in this  
stanza?

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to this day  
despite a loving husband  
she doesn't think she's beautiful  
because of a birthmark  
that takes up a little less than half of her face  
kids used to say she looks like a wrong answer  
that someone tried to erase  
but couldn't quite get the job done  
and they'll never understand  
that she's raising two kids  
whose definition of beauty  
begins with the word mom  
because they see her heart  
before they see her skin  
that she's only ever always been amazing

What is a metaphor in this stanza?

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he  
was a broken branch  
grafted onto a different family tree  
adopted  
but not because his parents opted for a different destiny  
he was three when he became a mixed drink  
of one part left alone  
and two parts tragedy  
started therapy in 8th grade  
had a personality made up of tests and pills  
lived like the uphill were mountains  
and the downhill were cliffs  
four fifths suicidal  
a tidal wave of anti depressants  
and an adolescence of being called popper  
one part because of the pills  
and ninety nine parts because of the cruelty  
he tried to kill himself in grade ten  
when a kid who still had his mom and dad  
had the audacity to tell him "get over it" as if  
depression  
is something that can be remedied  
by any of the contents found in a first aid kit

What is a metaphor in this stanza?

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Based on the ideas expressed in this stanza, it can be inferred that...

- a. his parents walked away from him
- b. his parent died
- c. his parent were unfit

to this day  
he is a stick of TNT lit from both ends  
could describe to you in detail the way the sky bends  
in the moments before it's about to fall  
and despite an army of friends  
who all call him an inspiration  
he remains a conversation piece between people  
who can't understand  
sometimes becoming drug free  
has less to do with addiction  
and more to do with sanity

we weren't the only kids who grew up this way  
to this day  
kids are still being called names  
the classics were  
hey stupid  
hey spaz  
seems like each school has an arsenal of names  
getting updated every year  
and if a kid breaks in a school  
and no one around chooses to hear  
do they make a sound?  
are they just the background noise  
of a soundtrack stuck on repeat  
when people say things like  
kids can be cruel?  
every school was a big top circus tent  
and the pecking order went  
from acrobats to lion tamers  
from clowns to carnies  
all of these were miles ahead of who we were  
we were freaks  
lobster claw boys and bearded ladies  
oddities  
juggling depression and loneliness playing solitaire spin  
the bottle  
trying to kiss the wounded parts of ourselves and heal  
but at night  
while the others slept  
we kept walking the tightrope  
it was practice  
and yeah  
some of us fell

What do the following lines  
mean?

who can't understand  
sometimes becoming drug free  
has less to do with addiction  
and more to do with sanity

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When the poet writes,  
"soundtrack stuck on repeat  
when people say things like kids  
can be cruel," does the poet  
mean to imply ...?

- a. that bullying is always  
excused
- b. that bullying is always  
battled
- c. that bullying is stupid

but I want to tell them  
that all of this shit  
is just debris  
leftover when we finally decide to smash all the things  
we thought  
we used to be  
and if you can't see anything beautiful about yourself  
get a better mirror  
look a little closer  
stare a little longer  
because there's something inside you  
that made you keep trying  
despite everyone who told you to quit  
you built a cast around your broken heart  
and signed it yourself  
you signed it  
"they were wrong"  
because maybe you didn't belong to a group or a click  
maybe they decided to pick you last for basketball or  
everything  
maybe you used to bring bruises and broken teeth  
to show and tell but never told  
because how can you hold your ground  
if everyone around you wants to bury you beneath it  
you have to believe that they were wrong

they have to be wrong

why else would we still be here?  
we grew up learning to cheer on the underdog  
because we see ourselves in them  
we stem from a root planted in the belief  
that we are not what we were called we are not  
abandoned cars stalled out and sitting empty on a  
highway  
and if in some way we are  
don't worry  
we only got out to walk and get gas  
we are graduating members from the class of  
fuck off we made it  
not the faded echoes of voices crying out  
names will never hurt me

of course  
they did

Find two metaphors in this stanza.

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but our lives will only ever always  
continue to be  
a balancing act  
that has less to do with pain  
and more to do with beauty.

Does the poet believe that the  
name-calling sticks to a person  
for their entire life? What lines  
suggest this.

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## PART B : CREATE

1. Identify five (5) powerful images in the poem.
2. Interpret the meaning (i.e. impressions, symbols) of each image.
3. Examine the image below and determine what part of the poem might reflect the message of the image.



4. Create the image that you see in your mind. You can:

draw the image  
paint the image  
create a cut-out image collage  
create computer/photoshopped image

5. For each image, write a “tweet story”. The story should have a character, conflict and conclusion, for example:

I (character) am erased (conflict). I am invisible. But that is not my memory (conclusion).

## **PART C : COMMENT**

Answer the following question in a series of paragraphs expressing an supported opinion:

What, in your opinion, is the worst effect of bullying? Why/how?

Some tips when writing a Supported Opinion Essay:

- . read the question carefully. Identify the main subject/topic (i.e. bullying).
- . think about what you already know about the subject/topic.
- . think about what opinion you will argue. Think about strong reasons/points.
- . think about support you have for your reasons (i.e. personal examples, past readings, text books). Try to include these in your body paragraphs.

Use the following template to structure your response.



## INTRODUCTORY PARAGRAPH

<< what is (topic) in general (2-3 sentences)? >> \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ << what, in your opinion, is the worst effect of  
bullying? >> \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ << why/how? >> because \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_.

## BODY PARAGRAPH

<< what about (answer to why/how) proves your opinion? >> \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ << what support do you have as “proof” of  
why/how? >> for example (or another suitable transition) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ << how does “proof” prove your opinion? >> \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## CONCLUDING PARAGRAPH

<< restate the main effect of bullying >> -----

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----- << what should be done to stop the  
effects? >> -----

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<< evaluation >>

(lsr) you can use inference skills to communicate knowledge of poem

1 2 3 4 5

(lsr) you can identify literary devices, such as metaphor, in a poem

1 2 3 4 5

(ms) you can identify powerful images and creatively re-interpret the images

1 2 3 4 5

(ms) you can create a unique visual re-interpretation of images within a text

2 4 6 8 10

(w) you can write five interesting and original "tweet" stories that include character, conflict, and conclusion

2 4 6 8 10

(w) you can follow the structure of a supported opinion essay

1 2 3 4 5

(w) you can use relevant proof to support your opinion

1 2 3 4 5

(w) you can write clear sentences (i.e punctuation) that use strong vocabulary

1 2 3 4 5

(w) you can express an opinion that is organized and understandable

1 2 3 4 5

literature studies /10 media studies /15 writing /30