

On Turning Ten

The whole idea of it makes me feel like I'm coming down with something, something worse than any stomach ache or the headaches I get from reading in bad light-- a kind of measles of the spirit, a mumps of the psyche, a disfiguring chicken pox of the soul.

growing up compared to illnesses

You tell me it is too early to be looking back, but that is because you have forgotten the perfect simplicity of being one and the beautiful complexity introduced by two. But I can lie on my bed and remember every digit. At four I was an Arabian wizard. I could make myself invisible by drinking a glass of milk a certain way. At seven I was a soldier, at nine a prince.

maturing generation gap

imagery

But now I am mostly at the window watching the late afternoon light. Back then it never fell so solemnly against the side of my tree house, and my bicycle never leaned against the garage as it does today, all the dark blue speed drained out of it.

image contributes to setting

turning point

This is the beginning of sadness, I say to myself, as I walk through the universe in my sneakers.

It is time to say good-bye to my imaginary friends, time to turn the first big number.

tangible example

It seems only yesterday I used to believe there was nothing under my skin but light. If you cut me I could shine.

invincibility

But now when I fall upon the sidewalks of life, I skin my knees. I bleed.

metaphor

imagery

Billy Collins = make mistakes

Describe the speaker of the poem. ~~Soon to be~~ 10 year-old, changing, growing up

In what point of view is the poem written?
first person

What do you notice about the structure of this poem? Why do you think the poet makes these choices?

repetition in lines 5-7

What is the subject of this poem?

- birthdays - consequences
- growing up - responsibility

In what form is this poem written?

free verse

Where does the poet use language in surprising ways?

Answers will vary. See my notes

What is one theme of this poem? How is it developed?

Growing up comes w/ more responsibility. Stanza 5.

Explain the meaning of these lines "It seems only yesterday I used to believe/ there was nothing under my skin but light./ If you cut me I could shine."

Nothing could hurt the speaker.

Pick out an image you feel contributes to the meaning of the piece and explain how/why.

Answers will vary. See notes

"The sidewalks of life" is an example of what poetic device?

metaphor