

Literary Analysis: Elements of Voice

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--
5 a kind of measles of the spirit,
a mumps of the psyche,
a disfiguring chicken pox of the soul.

You tell me it is too early to be looking back,
but that is because you have forgotten
10 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
15 by drinking a glass of milk a certain way.
At seven I was a soldier, at nine a prince.

But now I am mostly at the window
watching the late afternoon light.
Back then it never fell so solemnly
20 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.

This is the beginning of sadness, I say to myself,
25 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.

It seems only yesterday I used to believe
there was nothing under my skin but light.
30 If you cut me I could shine.
But now when I fall upon the sidewalks of life,
I skin my knees. I bleed.

- Billy Collins

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Question & Answer	Skill Assessed	Strategy Used
<p>1. What is the effect of the image in the line 8?</p> <p>“But now I am mostly at the window/ watching the afternoon light.”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The light creates a sense of optimism for the speaker. b. Windows are often considered a symbol for opportunity. c. The speaker can be characterized as passive rather than active. d. The occasion causes the speaker’s audience to doubt his point of view. 		
	Justification/Rationale	
Question & Answer	Skill Assessed	Strategy Used
<p>2. The diction in stanza 1 (lines 1-7) most strongly expresses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The speaker’s fear that aging will cause illness. b. The universal dread of leaving behind the innocence and freedom of childhood. c. The speaker’s irritation toward his parents for refusing to acknowledge his perspective. d. The adult reluctance to honestly share feelings of vulnerability. 		
	Justification/Rationale	
Question & Answer	Skill Assessed	Strategy Used

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3. Through his ten-year-old speaker, Collins conveys the theme that a. Sometimes people have a negative experience even when expecting a positive outcome. b. Children should be respected for their honesty and wisdom. c. All people will experience pain in life. d. The loss of innocence is an inevitable part of the process of maturing.		
	Justification/Rationale	