

# On Turning Ten & Mending

Alex, Shelby, Shahrads and Jenna

## *On Turning 10* by Billy Collins

- American poet from New York, born March 21st 1941
- Most of his poems are known for humour, but this one talks about a more serious topic



## 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.

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.

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.

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.

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

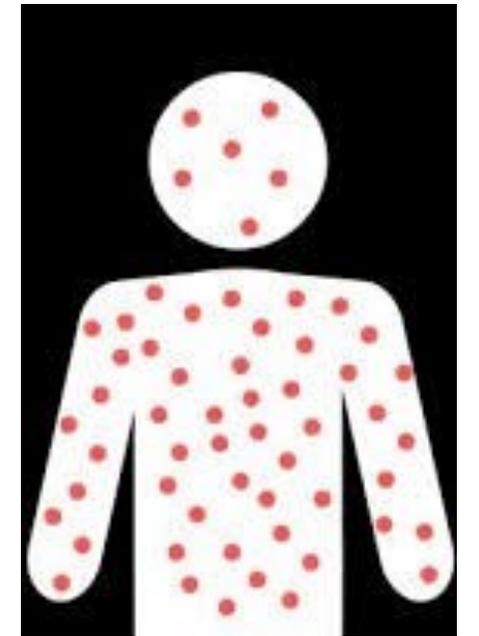
Billy Collins

# Imagery

“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.”

## Metaphor

“a kind of measles of the spirit, a mumps of the psyche, a disfiguring chicken pox of the soul”



# Imagery

## Metaphor

“At four I was an Arabian wizard... at seven I was a soldier, at nine a prince”



# Imagery

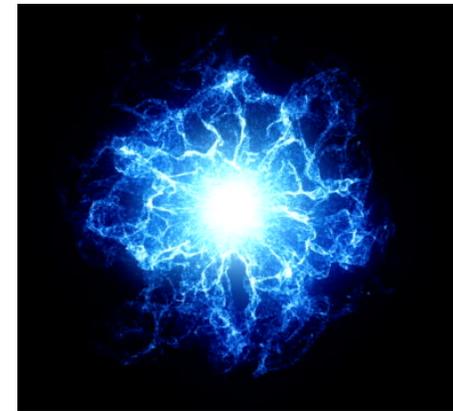
“But now I am mostly at the window watching the late afternoon light. Back then it never fell so solemnly against the side of my tree house, and my bicycle never leaned against the garage as it does today, all the dark blue speed drained out of it.”

## Personification

“light... never fell so solemnly”

## Metaphor

“all the dark blue speed drained out of it”



# Imagery

“This is the beginning of sadness, I say to myself, as I walk through the universe in my sneakers. It is time to say goodbye to my imaginary friends, time to turn the first big number.”



# Imagery

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

## Metaphor

"sidewalks of life"



# Tone & Attitude

**Tone:** melancholic/sorrowful

- Realization of how when you age and mature you start to lose your creativity and imagination

**Connotation**

- “measles of the spirit, mumps of the psyche, disfiguring chicken pox of the soul”: childhood illnesses that can leave permanent scars; turning 10 is scarring his emotional sense of wellness
- “Arabian wizard... soldier... prince”: adventure/fantasy heroes from imagination

**Hyperbole**

- “I walk through the universe in my sneakers”

**Paradox**

- “The perfect simplicity of being one, and the beautiful complexity introduced by two”

- Open poem
- Free verse

### **Repetition**

- “like I’m coming down with **something, something** worse than any stomach ache”

Style

# Interpretation

**Speaker:** Billy Collins

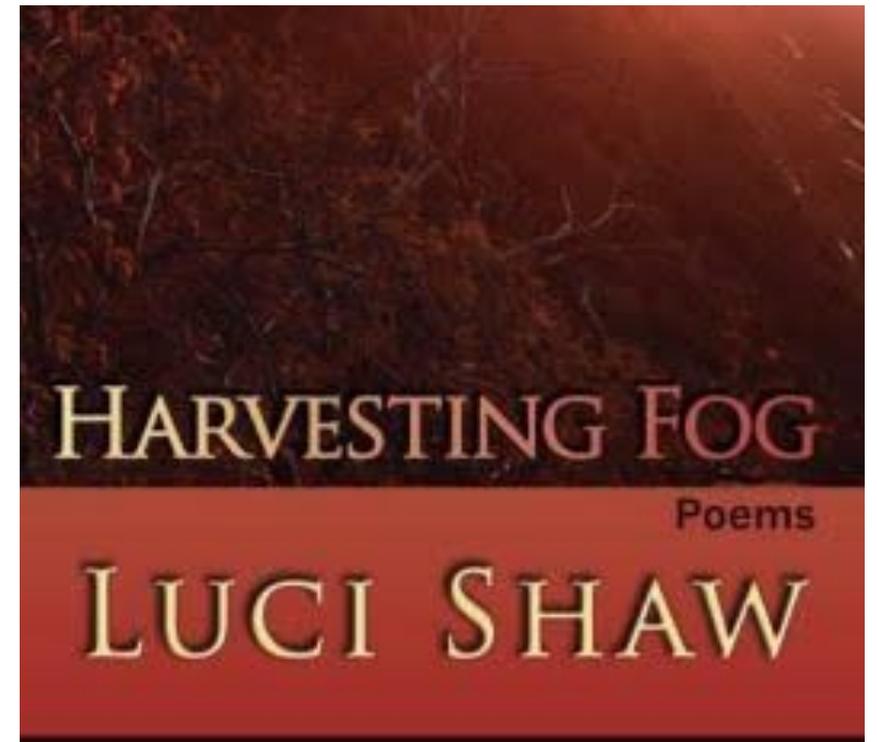
- 1st 4 stanzas are his young voice
- last stanza is his adult voice

**Theme:**

- Coming-of-age/maturing
- Losing imagination/creativity
- Life's purpose

# *Mending* by Luci Shaw

Born in 1928 in London, England  
Author of eight volumes of poetry  
Lectured in North America and abroad  
about art and spirituality  
1953 high honors graduate of  
Wheaton College, Illinois



# Mending

## **Mending by Luci Shaw**

*Here I am, a needle in time,  
a sharpness glinting through some poor  
torn paisley of fabric, pulling the swift nerve of my suture  
behind me through invisibility, then flashing  
back out, eager for the next stitch and the next,  
a hopeful mending of what will never be  
a seamless garment.*

*As the fabric of seasons shrinks,  
shreds again – fibers of old cloth  
wearing thin, needing to be rewoven –  
my failed needle waits for a spool of fresh, glowing  
thread,  
keeping itself steel bright and its point  
quick and its eye open  
for the next rip.*

# Imagery

## Metaphor

"Here I am, a needle in time"

"fabric of seasons"

"eager for the next stitch"

## Personification

"eager for the next stitch"

"a hopeful mending"

"my failed needle waits"

"keeping its steel bright and its point quick and its eye open"



# Tone/Attitude



**Tone/Attitude:** hopeful

## Connotation

- Paisley: intricate, unique fabric, like life

## Allusion

- “glowing thread”: thread of life in Greek mythology, spun by the 3 fates

# Style

- Free verse
- Open poem

## Alliteration

- "...**poor** torn **paisley** of fabric, **pulling**..."
- "... As the fabric of **seasons shrinks, shreds** again..."

**Speaker:** Luci Shaw

**Theme:**

- Experiencing life's stages
- No life is perfect
- Life's ups & downs

Interpretation

# Summary

- Both poems are about life & aging
- *On Turning Ten* is about coming-of-age, maturing, & losing imagination and creativity
- *Mending* is about experiencing different stages, the ups and downs of life
- Billy Collins looks back with regret and remorse, but Luci Shaw looks forward with hope