



# theslowdown\_20200128\_20200128\_128

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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

poem, remember, grenade, john, threats, pomegranate, protect, face, fear, today, exiled, tay, ashen, jamal, stick figures, love, shang, earthquake drills, response, cover

00:06

I'm Tracy k Smith, and this is the slow down.

00:22

When I was in elementary school, we had earthquake drills. When an alarm sounded, we knew to crouch under our desks. A similar duck and cover was the response to bomb drills. Though it was clear Even then, that ducking under a desk would have done nothing to protect us from a nuclear attack. Maybe the point was to teach us that there were threats out there that were so large, the best we could summon in response was calm, order and obedience. Today, school kids in America practice the emergency procedure for lockdown. What to do if I hate to even finish that sentence, we all know the threats and the fear such events have introduced in our day to day lives. It's a terrible burden, we must acknowledge, even while we try to counter it with love community, and by reminding ourselves of the many good things we humans are also capable of. Today's poem is pomegranate means grenade BY JAMAL May. I'm grateful for the way it speaks directly to the reality of danger in our lives, and in the lives of young people we love and seek to protect. It's an offering of hope, and imagination. And it's an affirmation that these things still matter. Even today, even in a world marred by the constant threat of terror. How can a poem protect us? In the face of all that is real? All the disasters we can't always predict or evade. A poem can foster in us a belief in the world restoring powers of mind and spirit we all possess. A poem can help us to prize joy over rage. Love over fear. pomegranate means grenade BY JAMAL May. The heart trembles like a herd of horses. JOHN Tae McCrory age 11. Hold a pomegranate in your palm. Imagine ways to split it. Think of the breaking skin as shrapnel. Remember Grenada means pomegranate. And Granada means grenade because grenade takes its name from the fruit. Identify war by what it takes away from pecan orchards. JOHN Tay. There will always be one like you. A child who gets the picked over box with mostly black crayons. One who wonders what

beautiful has to do with beauty as he darkens his son in the corner of every page constructs a house from ashen lines, sketches stick figures lying face down. I know how often red is the only color left to reach for I fear for you. You are writing a stampede into my chest. The same anxiety that shatters me when I push past Marines in high school hallways. moments after video footage of young men dropping from helicopters and night vision goggles. I want you to see in the dark without covering your face and carry verse as countermeasure to recruitment videos. And remember the cranes buried inside the poems painted on banners that hung in Tiananmen Square. Remember, because Huang Shang was exiled for these, remember, because the poet Juan Shang was exiled for this, the calligraphy of revolt. Always know that you will stand nameless in front of a tank. Always know that you will not stand alone, that there will always be those who would rather see you pull a pin from a grenade than a pen from your backpack. JOHN Tay they are afraid

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