



20190320_theslowdown_20190320_128

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SUMMARY KEYWORDS

child, gerard manley hopkins, lolo, poem, mourning, naomi, grief, poet, spring, slow, wood, paint, portrait, leaves, leaf, cat, margaret, hopkins, part, work

00:05

I'm us

00:06

Poet Laureate Tracy k Smith. And this is the slow down.

00:22

My daughter went to a birthday party at one of those places where an artist guides you to create original artwork. Like my third grade classmates in 1981. the birthday girl was a fan of unicorns. Everyone was asked to paint a unicorn. But my Naomi couldn't comply. She felt moved to paint a vivid, realistic portrait of our late cat Lalo, who passed away five years ago. This may. Her Canvas bears the abbreviation r. i P. in black paint above his image. We all loved Lolo. He was a great cat. He was my cat throughout the ups and downs of my 30s and into the first years of my children's lives. He's not always on Naomi's mind. But her grief for him does surface occasionally. not infrequently. It arises when some new person visits our home for the first time. And she can point their attention to a plaster pawprint of his that she keeps in her room. Sometimes, I think part of the act of mourning Lolo, part of her performance of ongoing grief offers my daughter practice at mourning something else. Sometimes, I am tempted to believe that part of every grief anyone feels

01:49

child or adult

01:50

is directed subtly and even unconsciously, at what we know our own lives will someday come to death is just so, so huge, so abstract, so unreal. And yet it's an inevitability for every living thing. We need practice dealing with it as it relates to others fades, and especially to our own painting. lolos portrait was an exercise in looking at death head on owning up to its reality.

02:25

That's my theory at least.

02:27

And it reminds me of today's poem spring and fall by Victorian poet Gerard Manley Hopkins. It's a poem addressed to a child who is made sad by the leaves falling from a tree. A rhythmic engine propels Hopkins lines forward. He's a poet who also coined many new words, often by building compound words out of familiar words paired in new ways, like one wood, which pairs won or pail with wood as a way of depicting the breakdown of wood to decay, or decomposition. And leaf Neal, which pairs leaf and meal to conjure a sense of scattered fallen leaves, or maybe brittle crumbling ones. Hopkins is actually a great poet to read with children, because his mind is so inventive, and his language works upon the reader almost physically. It would be good poetry to let the kids run around too, trusting some of the heavier questions to take root and do their own slow unconscious work. spring and fall by Gerard Manley Hopkins, to a young child. Margaret, are you grieving over golden Grove on leaving? leaves like the things of man, you with your fresh thoughts care for? Can you Ah, as the heart grows older, it will come to such sites colder by and by, nor spare OSI, though worlds have won wood leaf meal ly and yet you will weep and know why. Now no matter child the name, sorrows, springs are the same. Nor mouth had no nor mind expressed. What heart heard of ghost guessed? It is the blight man was born for it is Margaret, you mourn for

04:36

the slow down

04:37

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