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SUMMARY KEYWORDS

poem, beat, riverbanks, feel, river, blows, work, life, reader, predominate, memory, maya, sense, green, retelling, rises, trunks, strange, steep, june

00:05

I'm us Poet Laureate, Tracy k Smith. And this is the slow down.

00:22

There are poems that tell stories and narrative terms, giving readers a sense of the characters present, and the setting and mapping out a clear sense of something meaningful that happened. And there are poems in which the whole story is less essential than the brief instant when a powerful feeling or realization was encountered. Other Poems behave still differently, allowing images or sounds to predominate, invoking a particular tone, or mood that does a kind of work upon the reader.

00:59

When I read a poem like this,

01:02

I don't come away with a sense of what it was about, so much as what kind of a state it thrust me into. Afterward, I feel a little like I do, upon waking from certain dreams, the kind where plot escapes me, but an urgent emotional residue persists. Today's poem, where there were steep riverbanks by arregui, and poet sirsi. Maya feels to me like a mystery, or like a dream, whose events seemed clear in the moment, but grow strange and pretentious in the retelling on its surface. The poem seems to take place in a boat on a river on a June afternoon, but the poem works upon me mysteriously causing the scene it describes to feel larger and longer than a single day, and farther away than an ordinary memory. reading it, a strange thought comes to mind if I

were to enter into another state of being in a form other than human, and someone were to ask me to describe what it had been like having a life. This poem could stand as an answer.

02:19

I feel fear,

02:21

beauty, struggle, joy, and love in the periphery of this poem. And I feel the long journey of life and the approach of death or departure to what was it like

02:36

life.

02:37

It was long and short, fearsome, and beautiful. And it was work such hard work. And it was like a kind of game, something I enjoyed to play. All throughout, there were things I lost. Just as all throughout there were wonderful small gifts. where there were steep riverbanks by sirs Maya. Once again, the memory rises up of the or beating against the water. The river shines and leaves tremble in the shade. wet hair, smiling, eyes watching. Above blue and sun and blue. Watch the black and broken tree trunks. Listen to the water. I still feel warm wood in my hand. And at every dole beat my blood makes the or sinks again in green, cold and algae. Like a stem, firm and green. June came rising. There came from wind from love and life, Red Wings in flight, the days of summer, row rower and do not listen to the black beat of the or the or strokes, cut time into pieces, equal pieces, almost clockwork and All you think about is where each is falling, a beat and another beat together as the day flies. Look how the white hours grow black and the wanting to stop them almost hurts.

04:25

Blows fall on the soul, cold and ashen the blows of the ore on the water. And behind. You can see the flat surface of the river, the face of summer, blue and smooth. This poem was translated by Jesse Lee Courchevel. The slow down is a production of American public media in partnership with the Library of Congress and the Poetry Foundation.