

theslowdown_20200324_20200324_128

📅 Wed, 9/30 8:16PM ⌚ 5:00

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

english, bd, poem, birds, dumb, language, book, mail, monica, word, parents, chair, felt, share, dme, mandarin, instruction manuals, dum, slow, cambodian

00:05

I'm poet Jenny shear, filling in for Tracy k Smith, and this is the flow down.

00:23

For many immigrants in the US for whom English is not a native language, learning English can prove an emotionally fraught experience. When I first began learning to speak and read the language, I immediately grasped and then absorbed the social, political, and economic power the language carried in the US. I saw to those without English fluency, people like my parents could be denied those powers, by extension deny their dignity in countless spaces. The more American schooling I received, the more quickly I outpaced my parents my knowledge of English, I spoke Mandarin at home and English outside, and I often acted as a de facto translator of the family, deciphering instruction manuals, mail and reports from school, and writing out letters to teachers and colleagues. On behalf of my parents, I grew expert at signing their signature at the end of notes. Over time, as my opportunities to practice and use Mandarin diminished, I felt a kind of exile from my mother tongue, which felt more and more like a foreign language. English felt foreign to, but differently because of the weight placed on standardized English with its rules and constraints. I considered myself a native speaker and training, always alert to my mistakes of betraying myself as an outsider. Only later in life that I understand the language could be my own, opening itself to my own idiosyncratic molding. That was the freedom of writing, particularly poetry, the freedom of invention. Today's poem by Cambodian American poet Monica Sok offers a moving portrait of an entire family, learning to speak and read in

02:19

English.

02:21

The speaker recalls a children's book The father used as a teaching tool. The book features the transliteration of the cause of birds, Chair bd chrb. DME, a refrain from the book, which appear in the poem. Words helps shape the contours of experience and make vivid what we can detect and understand.

02:45

ABC for refugees

02:47

by Monica silk.

02:50

Share BD How does a man who doesn't read English well know that share be dumb? Those aren't really words BD, but birds cervi DME he stumbles reading to me by the sliding glass door chair BD through which I watch my brother play in the dum dum yard. Chair BD chair be dumb. Like how my father says Fine, then leave. My mother shouts stupid, dumb. We live in a small bt nest to one hallway to be dumb slam doors. Birds, what our birds thanks to my father reading with me. I have more feathers. T h e. First word he ever taught me to pluck. It is a word used all the time. sherab share beat the mail, the mailbox, the school bus. Vivi. He asks me to read the mail, not birds mail. If you don't read this, you will turn into birds. And I read it to him the best I can. The end. A feather two feathers, the the end. Mother Mother. Repeat after me. Share BD share be dumb. We read together before bedtime.

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