

# 20181211\_slowdown\_20181211\_128

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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

innocence, poem, slowdown, kool aid, waited, daniels, leaves, fire, beanbag chairs, liquor bottles, kite string, hang, dioramas, cover, third graders, pray, experience, girlfriends, shoe box, slow



00:05

I'm us Poet Laureate Tracy k Smith.



00:09

And this is the slow down.



00:23

There's a rumor going around my daughter's elementary school. And it has to do with the birds and the bees. The other night she told her father and me What a boy has told a whole classroom of third graders, I could see the wheels spinning behind my husband's eyes. He was trying to figure out what our approach should be. But there was no way to confer no chance to run tactics by one another. We waited haltingly into that conversation, answering the questions that made sense, promising to return to the others a little further down the line when she and we were a bit more ready. I heard myself say, you have something right now that's very special, and we want to help you hang on to it a little while longer. I was talking about innocence, trying to explain to her and myself why such a thing matters. And the topic hasn't been put to bed. I know we have more unguarded conversations waiting for us in the not too distant future. But I think we are okay, leaving things where they stand for now. Maybe innocence is something we can only fully appreciate after it's been traded in for the satisfaction and the pain of experience. As a parent, that means I am bound for some worry. And then I pray I'll know when the day has come. I'll have no choice but to let life happen. To embrace the adventures my children will one day be ready to greet today's poem by Pittsburgh poet Jim Daniels

speaks to me for these reasons and more. And it reminds me of what it felt like when I was crossing from childhood to what comes after. I wonder if you'll think it's strange that this poem also makes me think about America, our young nation. It makes me wonder if passing from innocence to experience is something we do together as a society. And I wonder if like me, you'll find that idea both heartening and harrowing.



02:51

hair on fire by Jim Daniels.



02:57

We ironed fall leaves between wax paper sheets. We melted crayons into candles and froze Kool Aid into popsicles. And we poked cloves into oranges. We grew roots on sweet potatoes, toothpicks in water and we taped our broken glasses together and shut up. We made shoe box dioramas with playdough and modeling clay. We cut snowflakes from folded paper and hung them with kite string. We made newspaper kites and imagined they could fly and we shaped tin foil into fake coins for our church on envelopes. We covered love bytes with Kool Aid. We filled liquor bottles with holy water. We hid our stash in beanbag chairs. And we drove to Ohio for drugs and rolled back our father's odometer. We mounted our girlfriends on basement pool tables, clacking balls together for ears upstairs. We drew lies with chalk and the truth with tar. We let our hair on fire to cover the smell.



04:26

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