

To a Sad Daughter

BY MICHAEL ONDAATJE

START UP

As adolescents grow toward adulthood, there are some topics that can cause tension between them and their parents or caregivers. In a small group, talk about some of these topics.

All night long the hockey pictures gaze down at you sleeping in your tracksuit. **Belligerent** goalies are your ideal. Threats of being traded cuts and wounds — all this pleases you. *O my god!* you say at breakfast reading the sports page over the Alpen as another player breaks his ankle or assaults the coach.

When I thought of daughters I wasn't expecting this but I like this more. I like all your faults even your purple moods when you retreat from everyone to sit in bed under a quilt. And when I say 'like' I mean of course 'love' but that embarrasses you. You who feel superior to black and white movies (coaxed for hours to see *Casablanca*) though you were moved by *Creature from the Black Lagoon*.

Belligerent: aggressive; hostile

One day I'll come swimming beside your ship or someone will and if you hear the siren listen to it. For if you close your ears only nothing happens, you will never change.

I don't care if you risk your life to angry goalies creatures with webbed feet. You can enter their caves and castles their glass laboratories. Just don't be fooled by anyone but yourself.

This is the first lecture I've given you. You're 'sweet sixteen' you said. I'd rather be your closest friend than your father. I'm not good at advice you know that, but ride the ceremonies until they grow dark.

Sometimes you are so busy discovering your friends I ache with a loss — but that is greed And sometimes I've gone into my purple world and lost you.

One afternoon I stepped into your room. You were sitting at the desk where I now write this. Forsythia outside the window and sun spilled over you like a thick yellow miracle as if another planet was coaxing you out of the house — all those possible worlds! — and you, meanwhile, busy with mathematics.

What loss is the father talking about?

BROTHERS

BY JON SCIESZKA

START UP

With a partner, share a happy childhood memory involving you and a member of your family. Do your memories and your partner's memories have anything in common?

Jon Scieszka was born in Flint, Michigan, in 1954. Like many children of their generation, Scieszka and his brothers were interested in the American Wild West.

I grew up with five brothers. No sisters. I'm the second oldest of the Scieszka brothers — Jim, Jon, Tom, Gregg, Brian, Jeff. There were so many of us that even my dad had trouble remembering our names. He would call to one of us, "Jim ... erhh, Tom ... erhh, Jon ... I mean ... hey you."

Growing up, we brothers did a lot of "guy" things together. Without knowing anything different, we just figured everyone wrestled in their living room, played Cowboys and Indians with their babysitter (and maybe left her tied up in the closet just a little too long), fought dirt-clod wars in empty lots, built model airplanes (then lit them on fire and blew them up for more realistic crashes), collected every Hardy Boys book, read every Sgt. Rock comic, and watched every TV cartoon possible.

I cannot look at forsythia now
without loss, or joy for you.
You step delicately
into the wild world
and your real prize will be
the frantic search.
Want everything. If you break
break going out not in.
How you live your life I don't care
but I'll sell my arms for you,
hold your secrets for ever.

If I speak of death
which you fear now, greatly,
it is without answers,
except that each
one we know is
in our blood.
Don't recall graves.
Memory is permanent.
Remember the afternoon's
yellow suburban **annunciation**.
Your goalie
in his frightening mask
dreams perhaps
of gentleness.

annunciation: *announcement; proclamation*

Why does the speaker have contrasting feelings?

Note the connection between the search that the speaker mentions here and Odysseus's journey in "Ithaka" (page 140).

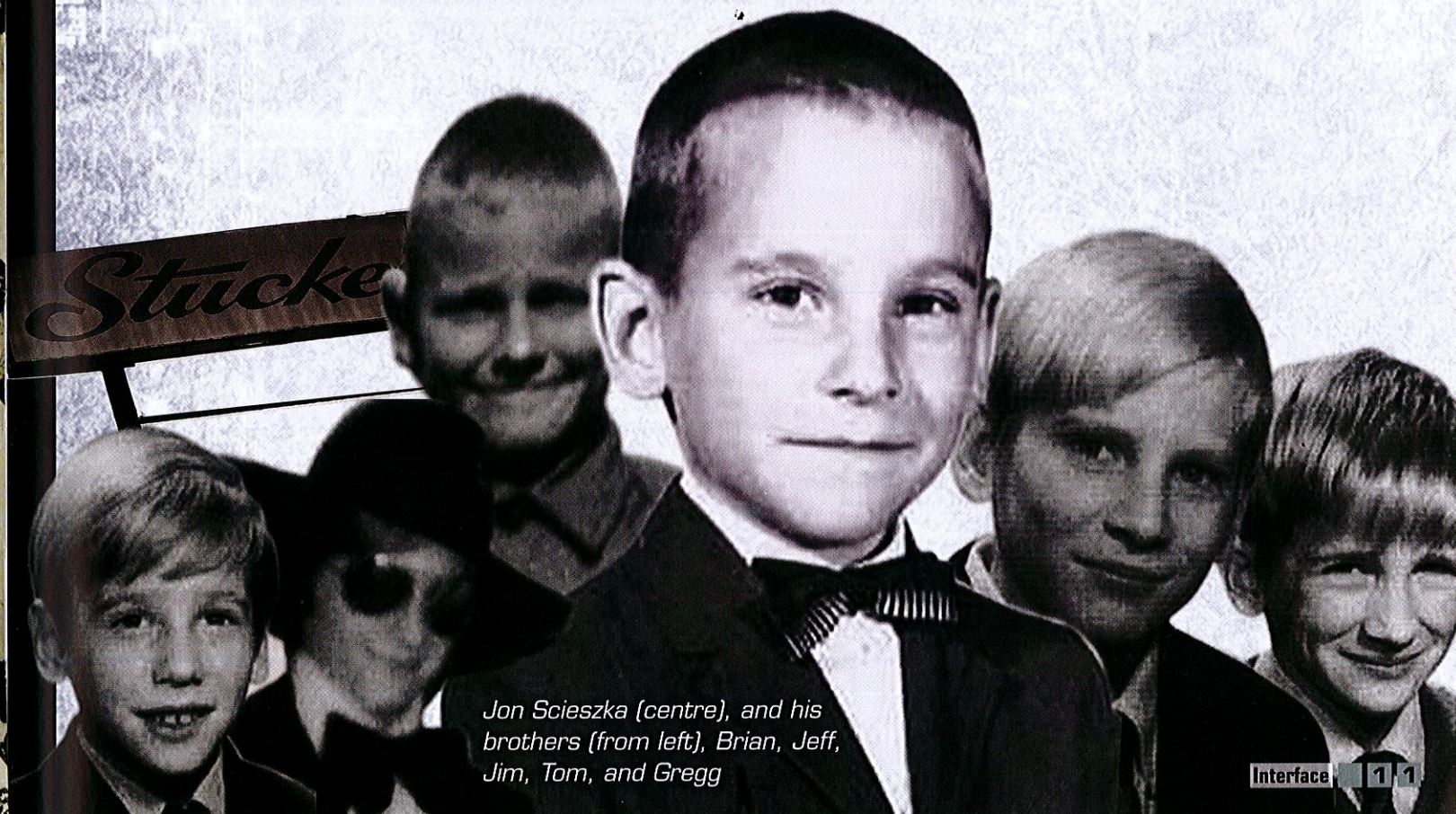
Think about the recurring image of the hockey goalie, here in a frightening mask. Remember, however, that the mask also protects.

ZOOM IN

- With a partner, list the advice that the father gives his daughter.
 - Refer to specific lines from the poem and comment on your view of the father's advice.
- Working independently, write what you think is the significance of the title.
 - Compare your response with a partner's.
 - Together, come up with another title for the poem.

ZOOM OUT

- This poem is written from the point of view of the father. With a partner, write a brief poem or journal entry from the point of view of the daughter to reflect her opinion of her relationship with her father.
- Create a photo essay about your relationship with your parent(s) or another adult who is important to you. Write a caption for each photo.



Jon Scieszka (centre), and his brothers (from left), Brian, Jeff, Jim, Tom, and Gregg

How to Paint the Portrait of a Bird

BY JACQUES PRÉVERT
TRANSLATED BY PAUL DEHN

START UP

Think of a time when you had to create something such as a title page or an art project. With a partner, discuss the steps that you went through from the beginning to the end of the activity. Compare your creative process with your partner's and note the similarities and the differences.

Jacques Prévert was one of the most popular French poets of the 20th century. "How to Paint the Portrait of a Bird" talks imaginatively about art and the creative process.

As you read the poem, visualize the steps in the creation of a work of art that the poet suggests.

EXTENDED METAPHOR

An extended metaphor develops and repeats a comparison over the course of a work. In this poem, think about the metaphor used for the creative process and what it adds to the poem.

What do you think the bird represents?

FIRST paint a cage with an open door then paint something pretty something simple something fine something useful for the bird next place the canvas against a tree in a garden in a wood or in a forest hide behind the tree without speaking without moving ... Sometimes the bird comes quickly but it can also take many years before making up its mind

What does this line mean? What is the artist waiting for? Why is it a "bad sign" if the bird does not sing?

Don't be discouraged
wait
wait if necessary for years
the quickness or the slowness of the coming
of the bird having no relation
to the success of the picture
When the bird comes
if it comes
observe the deepest silence
wait for the bird to enter the cage
and when it has entered
gently close the door with the paintbrush
then
one by one paint out all the bars
taking care not to touch one feather of the bird
Next make a portrait of the tree
choosing the finest of its branches
for the bird
paint also the green leaves and the freshness of the
wind
dust in the sun
and the sound of the grazing cattle in the heat of
summer
and wait for the bird to decide to sing
If the bird does not sing
it is a bad sign
a sign that the picture is bad
but if it sings it is a good sign
a sign that you are ready to sign
so then you pluck very gently
one of the quills of the bird
and you write your name in a corner of the picture

⊕ ZOOM IN

- Working with a partner, take turns reading the poem slowly to each other.
 - As your partner is reading, sketch the pictures according to the steps the poet is describing.
 - Add details to your sketches after each reading.
 - Compare your finished sketches with another group's.
- With a partner, discuss what you think the meaning of the poem is.
 - What does the poet say is important in creating art?
 - Choose specific lines from the poem to support your ideas.

⊖ ZOOM OUT

- Choose one of your favourite songs or poems. Print a copy of it or carefully write it out.
 - Draw pictures or find some in magazines or on the Web to represent the ideas in the poem.
 - Present your illustrated poem to a small group.

Grandma's Scones

BY ROBERT D. SAN SOUCI

START UP

List some foods that you associate with special memories or times in your life. Compare your list with a partner's list and explain why you chose the foods on your list.

SENSE IMAGERY

A sense image is a picture that is created in your mind involving one or more of your five senses (hearing, taste, touch, smell, sight).

"I came to California when I turned seventeen. Before, I'd never left my town of Skiberreen. But across the miles," my grandma said, "all on my own, Ireland would return in every taste of every **scone**."

I'd visit and she'd butter scones and pour us tea,
And tell of growing up an orphan in a village by the sea.
Emerald hills and golden shores by lakes of bluest silk
Were treasures for that **scullery girl** eating bread-and-milk.

Best was Sunday evening, when the old folks told their stories
Of heroes and high kings and all of Ireland's glories.
They spoke, as well, of children lost to fairy mounds
And warned: Beware of **banshees**, for death is in their sounds.

scone: small, biscuit-like pastry
scullery girl: young maid
banshees: wailing spirits that foreshadow death

"We ate our scones **enraptured**," my grandma would recall.
"One bite brings back those days as if I hadn't left at all."
And though I'd never been there, like magic, scones and tea
Carried me to bright-dark Ireland and that village by the sea.

Crusty outside, inside light and sweet as sugared air,
Each was tastier for the countless currants hidden there.
All these years later, when I have a scone with tea,
I'm back where Grandma **regales** a younger, spellbound me.

enraptured: with delight
regales: entertains

⊕ ZOOM IN

- With a partner, practise reading this poem aloud. One person will read the grandmother's words and the other the speaker's.
 - Pay attention to the meaning and punctuation when deciding where to stop for breath.
 - Make a recording of a dramatic reading of the poem.
 - Include appropriate sound effects.
 - Compare your interpretation with another group's.
- This poem creates very strong sense images that take the speaker back to his childhood.
 - With a partner, choose several sense images from the poem.
 - Describe the feelings each image creates for the speaker.

⊖ ZOOM OUT

- Choose one of the foods you discussed in the Start Up activity and add more details about the memories you have of it.
 - Take your list of ideas and transform it into a different format (poem, rap, collage, and so on).
 - Present your finished work to a partner.
 - Explain why you chose the form you did to describe your memories.