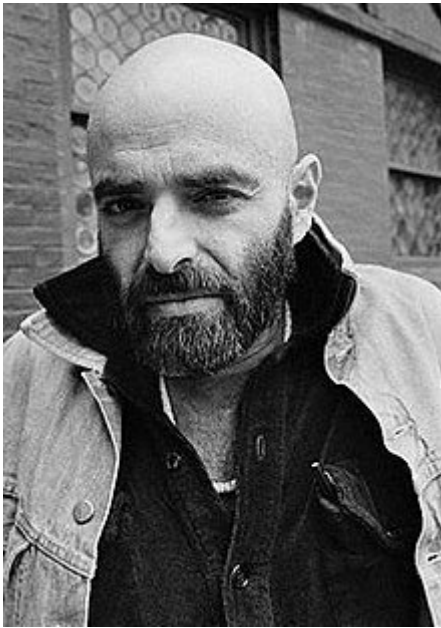


Sick Poem By Shel Silverstein Questions & Answers

Sick

_ By Shel Silverstein



Sheldon Allan Silverstein was an American writer, poet, cartoonist, songwriter, and playwright.

Sick - English Poem

**"I cannot go to school today,"
Said little Peggy Ann McKay,
"I have the measles and the mumps,
A gash, a rash, and purple bumps.
My mouth is wet, my throat is dry,
I'm going blind in my right eye.
My tonsils are as big as rocks,
I've counted sixteen chicken pox
And there's one more—that's seventeen,
And don't you think my face looks green?
My leg is cut, my eyes are blue—
It might be Instamatic flu.
I cough and sneeze and gasp and choke,
I'm sure that my left leg is broke—
My hip hurts when I move my chin,
My belly button's caving in,
My back is wrenched, my ankle's sprained,
My 'pendix pains each time it rains.
My nose is cold, my toes are numb,
I have a sliver in my thumb.
My neck is stiff, my voice is weak,
I hardly whisper when I speak.
My tongue is filling up my mouth,
I think my hair is falling out.
My elbow's bent, my spine ain't straight,
My temperature is one-o-eight.
My brain is shrunk, I cannot hear,
There is a hole inside my ear.
I have a hangnail, and my heart is-what?
What's that? What's that you say?
You say today is—Saturday?
G'bye, I'm going out to play!"**



Lines 1-6

**“I cannot go to school today,”
Said little Peggy Ann McKay,
“I have the measles and the mumps,
A gash, a rash, and purple bumps.
My mouth is wet, my throat is dry,
I’m going blind in my right eye.**

In the first lines of the poem, the young speaker begins by stating that she cannot go to school that day. She is determined not to go to school and she’ll do anything she can to convince her parents that she has a good reason not to go. The first two things she mentions are the ‘measles and the mumps.’ They are followed by two rhyming words ‘A gash, a rash.’ These could be associated with ‘measles and mumps,’ but to Peggy, it doesn’t really matter.

She adds that her mouth is wet and her throat is dry and she is going blind in her right eye. The narrator of the poem, the person who is telling the story of Peggy Ann McKay, only speaks a few times.

Lines 7-12

**My tonsils are as big as rocks,
I've counted sixteen chicken pox
And there's one more-that's seventeen,
And don't you think my face looks green?
My leg is cut, my eyes are blue-
It might be instamatic flu.**

In the above lines, she tells that her tonsils are as big as rocks and she has 17 chickenpox. Her leg is cut and her eyes are blue.

The final line utilises the word 'instamatic.' She has gotten the flu instantly, without warning. This is why her parents are only hearing about it now. This statement comes after a number of other claims: she has enlarged tonsils, chickenpox, and a green face.

Lines 13-18

**I cough and sneeze and gasp and choke,
I'm sure that my left leg is broke-
My hip hurts when I move my chin,
My belly button's caving in,
My back is wrenched, my ankle's sprained,
My 'pendix pains each time it rains.**

Among other things, she claims to have a cough, a hip that hurts, a 'wrenched' back, and a sprained ankle. These last couple of phrases are interesting as it's clear she got them from those around her.

The statement about the 'pendix' hurting when it rains for example and the 'wrenched' back. These are the pains of an older person

Lines 19-24

**My nose is cold, my toes are numb,
I have a sliver in my thumb.
My neck is stiff, my voice is weak,
I hardly whisper when I speak.
My tongue is filling up my mouth,
I think my hair is falling out.**

Next, the speaker states that one of the reasons she can't go to school is because her 'nose is cold' and her 'toes are numb.' Still, this isn't enough. She moves to her thumb, neck, and voice.

They are all hurting or disabled in some way. She is barely able to speak and her 'hair is falling out.'

Lines 25-31

My elbow's bent, my spine ain't straight,

My temperature is one-o-eight.

My brain is shrunk, I cannot hear,

There is a hole inside my ear.

I have a hangnail, and my heart is-what?

What's that? What's that you say?

You say today is—Saturday?

G'bye, I'm going out to play!"

After listing out a number of other maladies, from a shrunken brain to a hangnail, she is told that it is Saturday. There was no reason for her excuses after all. This immediately makes her stop talking and she runs off to play outside.

Summary of the poem

The poem begins with the speaker stating that she is not going to school. There is an endless number of reasons she gives her parents (most likely) to support her decision. This is a list-like of reasons in the next thirty-one lines.

They range from having measles to a cough and a shrunken brain.

It's unclear if the child speaker knows how absurd she sounds. (But the reader should be enjoying her very funny attempts at coercion.) This is a fact that makes the poem all the more amusing. Especially when one gets to the end and it turns out it was Saturday all along.

Tone and Mood of the Poem

The speaker, who is a young girl named Peggy Ann McKay, is doing her best to figure out a way not to go to school, and as the poem progresses she makes a number of claims of falling sick.

The fact that there are so many different things she comes up with adds to the light-hearted nature of the text. Her tone throughout the poem varies at times, with the repetition of claims of illness, it is clear how desperate she feels to find a way out of school.

Other times, it's impossible not to laugh at the absurdity of her claims. It's unclear whether or not she realizes how her words sound, but the writer's mood is definitely light-hearted. The speaker's tone changes immediately in the last lines when she finds out that it is Saturday. Any sense of depression she might have vanished and she goes out to play.

Word Galaxy

- **Mumps** — a disease that causes painful swelling of the neck
- **Measles** — an illness that produces red spots on the skin
- **Sprained** — injured by a sudden and violent twist
- **Wrenched** — here, injured because of sudden movement
- **Numb** — without any feeling
- **Sliver** — here, a small thin piece of wood or metal
- **Hangnail** — a loose piece of skin near the bottom of your fingernail
- **Measles** — an infection viral disease-causing fever and a red rash, typically occurring in childhood.
- **Gash** — a long, deep cut or wound
- **'Pendix** — Short form of appendix, which is an organ attached to the large intestine.
- **Sliver** — a small, thin piece of something cut off a larger piece

Q.1: Why was Peggy feeling sick?

Ans: Peggy was feeling sick because she did not want to go to school.

Q.2: How much chickenpox did she have?

Ans: She had seventeen chicken pox.

Q.3: What had happened to her legs and eyes?

Ans: Her right leg is cut and her left leg is broken. Her eyes have turned blue.

Q.4: Find three examples of alliteration from the poem.

Ans: Three examples of alliterations from the poem are hip hurts, belly buttons, and 'pendix pains.

Q.5: What did Peggy mean by the term 'Instamatic flu'?

What do you think is the characteristic feature of 'Instamatic flu'? Ans: Peggy meant that she had the flu suddenly or instantly when she said she had Instamatic flu. Coughing, sneezing, gasping, and getting choked could be characteristic features of Instamatic flu.

Question 6: Read and answer the questions:

**"My tonsils are as big as rocks.
I have counted sixteen chicken pox."**

(a) Identify the figure of speech in this sentence.

Ans: The figure of speech is a 'simile'. Tonsils are compared to rocks.

(b) What does the speaker mean by counting chicken pox?

Ans: When a person has chicken pox, there are pimples or blisters all over the body. Counting chicken pox means counting these pimples or blisters.

(c) What happened immediately after the speaker counted the number of chicken poxes she had?

Ans: Immediately after the speaker counted the number of chicken poxes, one more pimple or blister appeared.

Q.7: Read and answer the questions:

**"You say today is Saturday?
G'bye, I'm going out play!"**

(a) Why was the girl so startled to hear that it is Saturday?

Ans: The girl was so startled to hear that it is Saturday because she had thought that it was not a holiday and she had to go to school.

(b) Why did she go out to play?

Ans: She went out to play because it was Saturday and her school was closed.

(c) What cured the little girl of her illness?

Ans: The girl was pretending to be ill because she did not want to go to school. Once she heard that it was Saturday and she did not have to go to school, all her made-up illnesses were cured.

Q. 8: Peggy Ann Mckay was not sick. She was just making excuses to avoid going to school. Do you think she was wrong in making these excuses?

Ans: Peggy Ann Mckay was not being truthful and so, she was wrong. Also, children must go to school and study and not make excuses for not going to school. However, Peggy Ann

Mackay is a small child, and mostly all children, at some point or the other, try to wriggle out of going to school because the attraction of playing and having a free day is very strong.

Q.9: What adjective can be used to describe Peggy Ann Mckay? Give examples from the poem.

Ans: An adjective that can be used to describe Peggy Ann Mckay very well is 'imaginative'. If we are to look at the excuses she comes up with to prove that she is sick, we will understand that this is an appropriate adjective for her.

Examples from the poem:

_ My tonsils are as big as rocks,

_ I'm going blind in my right eye.

_ I've counted sixteen chicken pox

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