
ONE TURN AROUND THE SUN

BY TIM SEIBLES

A Study Guide for Students

Synopsis

One Turn Around the Sun deals with the subjects of age, aging, and coping with the passing of parents into their later years. Seibles also addresses socio-political questions that affect our world and our ability to live in it. *One Turn Around the Sun* confronts us with the things we can change within our society – and those inevitabilities we can't.

Why Include This Book in the Classroom?

This book of poems deals with universal issues. As students grow up, they will be confronted with the socio-political situation of the country. They will also be unable to avoid aging – be it their own or that of their loved ones. Through this book of poems, students will be able to study real-life issues in a creative format. The format of the poems is also something for students to study and explore the connection between form and meaning.

Author Bio

Tim Seibles was born in Philadelphia, and currently lives in Norfolk, Virginia. He is faculty in the English Department at Old Dominion University. He has won numerous awards for his writing, including a fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts, a nomination for a National Book Award for his book of poems *Fast Animal*, and a PEN Oakland Josephine Miles Award for the same book of poetry. He has been published in many journals including *Indiana Review*, and was anthologized in *Best American Poetry 2010*.

Study Questions

Section #1

In Chapter 1, Seibles presents two odes: “Ode To Your Mother” and “Ode To Your Father.” Think about these two poems as you address the following:

- 1) Odes are extended poems about a single subject. Why do you think that Seibles chose this form for these two poems?
- 2) Why might Seibles have addressed the poems to “your” mother and father instead of to his own parents?
- 3) What kind of imagery is in “Ode To Your Mother”? How does it remind you of a mother? And for “Ode To Your Father”?
- 4) What are the similarities and differences between the two odes?

Section #2

In Chapters 2, 4, and 5, there are four villanelle poems: “No Complaints Blues Villanelle,” “Taste Me Blues Villanelle,” “Zombie Blues Villanelle,” and “Thirty-Thirty Blues Villanelle.” Think about these poems as you address the following:

- 1) A villanelle is a French poem form from the 15th century with a complicated rhyme scheme. Can you detect any similarities in the sound of these poems? Why do you think Seibles called them “blues villanelles”?
- 2) In “No Complaints Blues Villanelle,” Seibles repeats “I’m not complaining, just can’t see it clear.” What issues does he struggle with in

the poem and why are they not “clear”?

3) In “Taste Me Blues Villanelle,” there is an epigraph under the title about the Mad Hatter’s tea party. Obviously, this is a reference to Alice in Wonderland. What connection can you make between what you know of Alice in Wonderland and this poem?

4) In “Zombie Blues Villanelle,” what do zombies represent?

5) For “Thirty-Thirty Blues Villanelle,” discuss the progression of age, both good and bad.

Section #3

In Chapters 1, 3, and 5, there are three “sessions” of the poem “The Hilt.” Think about this trilogy of poems as you answer the following:

1) In “The Hilt, First Session,” the most obvious characteristic of the poem is the use of empty space. Why do you think Seibles used space in this way? How does it enhance the poem?

2) In “The Hilt, Second Session,” why are some sections in italics and others not? Do they address a different audience or topic? Who are the men mentioned in the poem and how do they relate?

3) “The Hilt, Third Session” begins with the poet’s childhood. How does this compare to the other two “The Hilt” poems? Also in this poem, there is a section of space and nature imagery. How do you think this conveys the poet’s message?

4) How do these three poems connect? Do they tell a cohesive story?

Section #4

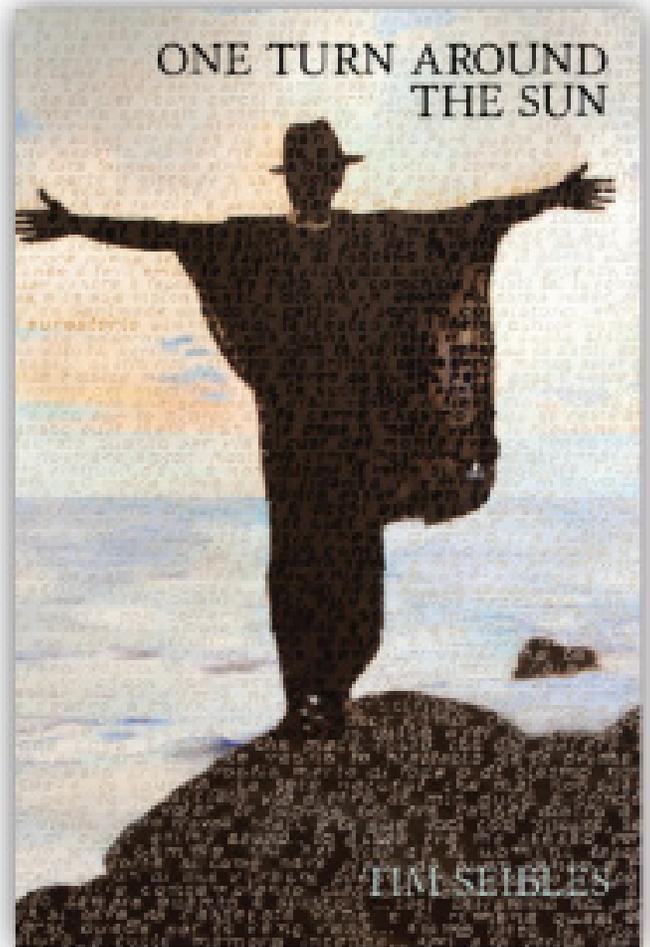
In the following questions, consider the work of *One Turn Around the Sun* as a whole.

1) What are the overarching themes of the book?

2) Why do you think that the book of poems was named after the poem “*One Turn*

Around the Sun”?

3) The final chapter is a single poem, “Mosaic.” How does this poem relate to the other poems in the book? Why do you think that Seibles chose to end the book with this poem?



84 West South Street
Wilkes-Barre, PA 18766

P: 570.480.4546

www.etruscanpress.org
books@etruscanpress.org