



Scar By Bruce Bond

A Study Guide

Synopsis

Bruce Bond's trilogy of sonnet sequences explores trauma and self-alienation and the power of imaginative life to heal—to reawaken with the past; to better understand its influence, both conscious and unconscious; to gain some measure of clarity, empathy, and freedom as we read the world around us.

Author Bio

Bruce Bond is the author of twenty-three books including, most recently, *Blackout Starlight: New and Selected Poems 1997-2015* (E. Phillabaum Award, LSU, 2017), *Rise and Fall of the Lesser Sun Gods* (Elixir Poetry Prize, Elixir Press, 2018), *Frankenstein's Children* (Lost Horse Press, 2018), *Dear Reader* (Free Verse Editions, 2018), and *Plurality and the Poetics of Self* (Palgrave, 2019). Other awards include Lynda Hull Memorial Poetry, Allen Tate, Laurence Goldstein Poetry, Richard Peterson, and fellowships from the NEA and the Texas Institute for the Arts. Presently he is a Regents Professor of English at the University of North Texas. His poems have appeared in *Best American Poetry* six times.

Study Questions

Knowledge

1. The poems in *Scar* are written as sonnets, traditionally 14 line poems typically composed of 10 syllables per line. Can Bond's sonnets be considered traditional?
2. Look at several poems in each of the three sections of *Scar*; are they consistent in word choice and rhythm?
3. Identify Bond's reoccurring themes and images. How are they connected?

Knowledge (cont'd)

4. Make a list of the words Bond italicizes. Is there a pattern?
5. Aside from recurring images, themes and italicized words, what other elements reoccur throughout Bond's work, specifically in the first section, "The Lost Language?"

Comprehension

1. *Scar* is separated into three books; "The Lost Language," "Scar," and "Narcissus in the Underworld." How do the individual titles inform the theme of each section?
2. Each section is introduced by a line or lines of poetry by other poets. How does each introduction set up the tone for the poems to follow?
3. Do these introductions act as bridges between sections; between the last poem of the previous section and the first poem of the following section?
4. Is each section written in the same voice, or does Bond employ several voices?
5. Identify the major themes of each section. How do they connect to each other?

Application

1. Choose a poem from the second section of the book, "Scar" that tells the story of a pain that someone in Bond's life suffered and summarize the events in two paragraphs.

Application (cont'd)

2. Choose a poem from the book that presents a problem and write a response poem suggesting a means of overcoming that problem.
3. Write a sonnet addressing a pain that you have experienced in your life.
4. Write a sonnet addressing a pain that someone you care about has experienced in their life and include your response to it.
5. Write a sonnet addressing your relationship with your mother and/or your father.

Analysis

1. In several poems throughout the collection, Bond refers both to God and god. Choose one poem each that mentions God and god and write a two-page essay comparing the difference in reverence and use.
2. Examine how Bond employs the image of the bird throughout the collection. Is there just one usage, or is it multifaceted? Discuss in a one-page essay.
3. Many poems in the collection reference mortality. Write a two-page essay, employing specific lines from the poems, defining and defending the poet's stance on mortality.

Synthesis

1. Choose one poem from section 2, "Scar" which addresses a second-person story of pain and rewrite it in the first person.
2. Look specifically at "Narcissus in the Underworld" part 30 – "Life, friends, is dangerous and dull / when it is not yours..." What does Bond mean by this line? Is the meaning evident in the rest of the poems in this section? Write a two-page essay defining and defending the meaning as you see it.
3. Write a sonnet that begins with the ending of the last poem in the collection, "And in the song, a tree, bare and wingless, and capable of listening."

Evaluation

1. In a 500-word essay, compare and contrast Bond's use of the image of "language" and his use of the image of "music" in the first section, "The Lost Language." Do you consider music to be the lost language he is referencing?
2. How would you characterize the poet's relationship with his father? Choose two poems that represent this and write a 500-word essay. Use specific examples of imagery and language from the poems.
3. Many poems in the collection refer to childhood, both the poet's specifically, and the idea of childhood. Do you feel as if the poet enjoyed his childhood? Use specific examples from the poems to defend your position.



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