

The Beautiful Day Dance

POETRY

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for my father, widower at 33

Mornings, when I woke up,
my face sagging, defeated, Dad would
smile at me and wave his arms above
his head, his legs kicking beneath
him, a desperate flail but a chance to
show that he could move his body as well
as anyone—when the sunlight seemed to
break and spill down his raised chin like
egg whites and the chill bit into us both—he'd sing.
The song isn't as important to me now as the
beauty of the dance (and I'm sure the melody was a
repetitious rip-off of "Zip-a-Dee-Doo-Dah," though
sometimes we tilted our heads beneath the sky
and just yelled it, despite the neighbors, dispelling
puffs of warm air from our mouths as we screamed
"It's a beautiful day" to the blue that filled the space
behind the clouds, to whoever was listening—to the
way I sweat at nights, Dad rubbing the wet T-shirt
that clung to my back, whispering, It's all right,
we're OK, over and over, like a chorus, to the broken
limbs and the deaths that rendered us, for a time,
living memories, regretfully alive, but thankful that
we could always spin ourselves around, arms spread wide
to live and dance and)
to sing anyways—
to sing always. ■

This work was previously published in the *Class of 2018 National Student Poets Program Chapbook*.

Discussion Questions

We know from the title that the author will be focusing on his surviving parent, his father, in this poem. The author is grieving the loss of his mother; his father is grieving the loss of his wife. **What do they do together to share this grief?**

What does the author mean when he says "the song isn't as important to me now as the beauty of the dance"?

Writing Prompt

Write a sentence that describes the author's relationship with his father. Now rewrite that sentence as a question and answer it with supporting words and quotes from the poem.