

To My Nine-Year-Old Self



SUMMARY

The speaker, an adult woman, asks her nine-year-old self to forgive her for appearing before her. She tells her younger self not to seem so surprised, confused, and eager to depart—to return to walking on her hands or across a tightrope. The speaker has an intimate understanding of her younger self, knowing that her younger self prefers running over walking, climbing over running, and jumping off of things most of all.

The speaker confesses that she has indulged and ruined her body over the years as she's aged. She shows her nine-year-old self various scars and notes how slowly and timidly she moves due to her aching back and hurt foot. The speaker asks her younger self if she remembers when, just a few minutes after waking up, they'd leap out of the first floor window to embrace the mornings in the summer.

The speaker then refers to a childhood dream of theirs, which is relatively recent for her nine-year-old self. Indeed, the speaker compares the freshness of this dream to a blank piece of paper on which her younger self might write the dream down. Although the speaker's past self started to pursue this dream, she was distracted by various things such as a baby vole or a bag of hard lemon candies. The dream was entirely derailed by one particular summer where they ambitiously decided to start a popsicle factory, create a wasp trap, and dig a den by a particular waste pit in the ground.

The speaker reflects that she would like to be friends with her past self, but admits they are too different from each another. Indeed, the only thing they share is a past. Therefore, the speaker decides to leave her nine-year-old self to her own devices. The speaker muses that her nine-year-old self will probably go off to pick rosehips in exchange for two pennies a pound, hide in the streets from men driving cars looking to kidnap girls, or to swing over the water on a rope that hangs from a tree.

This particular tree, the speaker reflects, has long been cut down for the construction of new housing. The speaker stops musing, declaring that she shouldn't taint her nine-year-old self's happy and innocent morning with her fears. These fears are so plentiful, they are more than enough for one person, let alone two.

Instead, the speaker decides to leave her past self alone to her state of pure happiness: her nine-year-old self is deep in a state of concentration, peeling a scab from her knee in order to place it in her mouth and taste it.



THEMES



THE JOY AND INNOCENCE OF CHILDHOOD

“To My Nine-Year-Old Self” is a dramatic [monologue](#) in which the speaker, now an adult, nostalgically watches her younger self. Though the speaker intimately understands the young girl she addresses, and though they share the same past, the speaker realizes by the end of the poem that she no longer possesses the innocent joys of childhood she once had. Indeed, the speaker realizes that she and her nine-year-old self are entirely different people.

On the one hand, then, the poem suggests that with growing up comes a loss of the enthusiasm, curiosity, and fearlessness that so often define childhood. At the same time, however, the poem seems to suggest that acknowledging this reality can provide one with a sense of acceptance and allow one to move on from the past—that is, to grow up without any bitterness.

Throughout the poem the speaker observes how her younger self embodies qualities of innocence, enthusiasm, and curiosity. For example, this younger self fearlessly uses her physical body, “balancing on [her] hands or on the tightrope.” Unlike the speaker, this younger girl doesn't worry about the physical pain of falling. Indeed, she would “rather run than walk, rather climb than run / rather leap from a height than anything.” This younger self wants to enthusiastically engage with the physical world around her without fearing the consequences, and as such seems to embody the power of living in the moment.

This exuberance marks a clear difference between this girl and the speaker's adult self. Now, speaking from the present, the speaker says she has “spoiled this body we once shared.” The verb “spoiled” implies physical destruction. The speaker's body, therefore, has physically deteriorated since she was young. Moreover, the speaker's body is full of “scars” and signs of wear. Her present self moves “careful[ly]” because of a “bad back or a bruised foot.” She moves much slower than her younger self who “run[s],” “climb[s],” and “leap[s] from a height.”

Perhaps all this youthful movement is what ultimately led to the adult speaker's aches and pains, but the speaker harbors no resentment; she doesn't want to “cloud” her younger self with the burdens of the future. Childhood is something precious, the poem implies, and something that mustn't be tainted by the painful realities of adulthood.

Thus, though the speaker would “like to say that [she and her younger self] could be friends,” she also admits that they “have nothing in common” other than a shared past. So different are they, in fact, that the speaker does not even believe they would

like each other.

Nevertheless, the speaker moves on in a state of acceptance rather than bitterness. At the end of the poem, she states that she will "leave [her past self]," not wanting to dampen the younger girl's "ecstasy" with her own, more world-weary adult perspective. The poem thus ends on a poignant note, as growing up is associated with a loss of joyful innocence. However, the poem also suggests that people can find peace in simply appreciating one's younger self and, ultimately, in letting that self go.

Where this theme appears in the poem:

- Lines 1-32



LINE-BY-LINE ANALYSIS

LINES 1-5

*You must forgive ...
... height than anything.*

"To My Nine-Year-Old Self" is written in the form of a dramatic [monologue](#) delivered by an adult woman speaking to her nine-year-old self. The setting of the poem is [metaphorical](#); the speaker is not *literally* traveling through time, but rather is envisioning talking to the girl she once was.

The speaker begins with asking her younger self for "forgive[ness]" for intruding upon her. The speaker therefore recognizes that she is an unwanted adult presence in the mind of her younger self. Kids are often squirmy when under an adult's gaze, so this response seems normal! And while the speaker recognizes her younger self, she is a stranger to this nine-year-old girl. The speaker therefore tells her younger self not to "look so surprised, / perplexed, and eager to be gone" as she wants her younger self to remain and listen to her.

The speaker then quickly establishes her intimate knowledge of her past self. She knows her past self might depart "balancing on [her] hands or on the tightrope." This [imagery](#) in line 3 depicts the nine-year-old self's character and personality as playful and fearless, as her younger self is unafraid of falling and potentially getting hurt. These difficult and strenuous acts of balance also imply that the nine-year-old's body is fit, limber, and energetic.

The speaker goes on to list her younger self's preferences as she would "rather run than walk, rather climb than run / rather leap from a height than anything." The acts of running, climbing, and leaping again suggest an enthusiastic and playful personality, as well as a physically fit body. These acts build up in intensity, underscoring the younger girl's bravery and enthusiasm. Moreover, the younger self does not simply like to leap from a stepping stone or across the grass, but rather "from

a height" despite the danger. Thus, the imagery in lines 4-5 continues to develop the nine-year-old's distinctive and fearless character.

Additionally, the [repetition](#) of "rather" at the beginning of the clauses in lines 4-5 is an example of [anaphora](#). The anaphora reflects the building intensity of these actions and provides a sense of rhythm to the lines, much like the rhythm that exists in the acts of running, walking, and climbing. The [enjambment](#) at the end of line 4 also speeds up the poem for a beat, reflecting the burst of energy required for running and leaping:

... rather climb than run
rather leap ...

The poem is not written in any particular form, meter, or rhyme scheme. Rather, the poem is written in [free verse](#). This lack of form and structure mirrors the free-spirited nature of the speaker's nine-year-old self, whose world the speaker and reader now inhabit.

LINES 6-8

*I have spoiled ...
... a bruised foot.*

In lines 6-8, the speaker shifts from observing her nine-year-old self's physicality to observing her own. In doing so, the speaker makes apparent the vast differences that exist between these two versions of herself.

In line 6, the speaker states that she has "spoiled this body [they] once shared." To "spoil" something is to ruin or destroy it. The speaker's body has physically deteriorated. "Spoil" can also refer to indulgence (think of spoiling a child with sweets). The speaker is thus saying that she is the one responsible for this physical deterioration, and there is also the subtle implication that it has been through indulgence—perhaps food, drink, and so forth. Whereas the younger self can enjoy life without a care, the adult speaker must temper her indulgences; to spoil herself now has consequences. She is not as carefree and innocent as her younger self.

The description of this "spoiled" body contrasts sharply with the preceding stanza, which established the limber, fit, and energetic qualities of the nine-year-old self's body. Indeed, in lines 7-8, the speaker goes on to elaborate on the ways in which her body is now "spoiled." She invites her younger self to "[l]ook at the scars, and watch the way [she] move[s]." The pause created by the comma here, an example of [caesura](#), seemingly invites the nine-year-old self to take the time to look at those scars.

Scars can also mean emotional trauma in addition to physical trauma. Therefore, the presence of "scars" imply the speaker's emotional damage as well.

The speaker also asks her younger self to observe the "careful"

and timid way she now moves because of "a bad back or a bruised foot." This slower movement again emphasizes the difference between the adult speaker and the younger self, who liked to "run," "climb," and "leap."

All in all, it's clear that the adult speaker is burdened emotionally and physically in ways her younger self is not. Though they "once shared" a body, the years have changed the speaker in ways that are unalterable.

LINES 9-11

*Do you remember ...
... the summer morning?*

The use of "we" here is new; before this the speaker referred to her younger self as "you" and her own self with "I." Now, the use of the shared pronoun reflects a sort of unity between these two figures, as the adult speaker relives a happy childhood memory. Specifically, the speaker thinks about a morning routine that again points to her younger self's fitness, fearlessness, and playfulness.

The speaker wonders if her nine-year-old self remembers how they would, shortly after waking up, "jump straight out of the ground floor window." The act of engaging in such a physical activity just "three minutes after waking" implies that the speaker's younger self is full of energy and enthusiasm to take on the day. The [enjambment](#) at the end of lines 9 and 10 speeds up the reading of the lines, mirroring the speed and liveliness with which the younger self leaps out of the window:

... three minutes after **waking**
we'd jump straight out of the ground floor **window**
into the summer morning?

This contrasts with the first three lines of the second stanza, where the plodding [end-stops](#) slowed the pace of the poem and reflects the adult speaker's need for slow, careful movement. Indeed, jumping out of a window certainly requires a certain degree of fearlessness and physical fitness that the adult speaker lacks.

The [imagery](#) of the younger self jumping out of a window in line 10 takes an unusual turn in line 11. Rather than jumping out of the window and onto the grass outside, the younger self jumps "into the summer morning." Summer is a season that [symbolizes](#) new life, hope, and potential, while the morning is full of light and the promise of a new day. Therefore, a "summer morning" represents a combination of these factors—hope, youthfulness, liveliness, and potential. Jumping "into the summer morning" again reveals that the speaker's younger self fully embraces the day, and has so much potential ahead of her.

LINES 12-15

*That dream we ...
... sherbet lemons –*

In the beginning of the third stanza, the speaker continues to refer to shared experiences she has with her younger self and to use the shared pronoun "we." In doing so, she fully engages in her sense of nostalgia for the past.

The speaker refers to a particular "dream [they] had" without describing or explaining the details of this dream to the reader. The lack of explanation makes this reference inside knowledge between the speaker and her younger self. This increases a sense of camaraderie between the speaker and her nine-year-old self (though this camaraderie will be subverted in the following stanza).

The dream is "fresh" in the younger girl's mind because it's much more recent for her. Using a [simile](#), the speaker compares this freshness of the dream in her younger self's mind to "the white paper to write it on." This "white paper" is an image [symbolizing](#) innocence and youth, a blank slate. This dream, then, reflects the hope and potential embodied by the speaker's younger self, who still has her whole life ahead of her. By describing the world of her youth with these words, the speaker creates an idealized vision of her childhood. The speaker goes on to say that they "made a start" on the dream before then admitting that they got distracted. The speaker begins to name several such distractions, such as "a baby vole, or a bag of sherbet lemons."

This is an unexpected and playful combination, reflecting the free-spirited, impromptu, and playful way of life of the younger self. A vole is a small rodent similar to a mouse, while "sherbet lemons" are a kind of hard candy. Thus even these distractions are innocent and sweet, further developing the innocence and sweetness of the speaker's childhood. The em-dashes at the ends of line 14 and 15 also create starts and stops in the reading of the lines. These [end-stopped lines](#) mirror the distractions and interruptions that kept the speaker from completing her dream.

LINES 16-18

*and besides, that ...
... by the cesspit.*

In lines 16-18 of "To My Nine-Year-Old Self," the speaker continues to list the distractions that kept her younger self from completing their shared dream. The distractions the speaker describes further highlight her younger self's playfulness, enthusiasm, fearlessness, and desire to live in the moment.

In line 16, the speaker mentions a "summer of ambition." This is the second mention of "summer" in connection with the speaker's youth. As explained earlier, summer is a season that [symbolizes](#) innocence, new life, and hope. By so closely associating "summer" with her youth, the speaker also associates these qualities with her childhood.

During this particular summer, the speaker's younger self

decided to "create[] an ice-lolly factory, a wasp trap / and a den by the cesspit." The speaker's younger self did not simply laze about. Rather, she decided to actively create and pursue various projects. The verb "create" therefore suggests empowerment and accordingly associates this quality of empowerment with the speaker's younger self.

An "ice-lolly factory" produces sweets, which are often associated with children. A "wasp trap" requires a fearlessness to make, as one needs to be unafraid to be stung by wasps. A "den" is burrow or hole, while a "cesspit" is a pit of waste. A "den by the cesspit" is therefore a combination of holes in the ground. This combination enhances the sense of depth in the poem's [imagery](#). One who digs by a pit of waste and explores the depths of the earth also requires a certain fearlessness and curiosity. Therefore, these activities that the speaker lists all suggest the younger self's sweetness, youthfulness, fearless, and curiosity.

Additionally, the [enjambment](#) in lines 16-19, in comparison with the two [end-stopped lines](#) of 14 and 15, speed up the poem's pace here:

and besides, that summer of ambition
created an ice-lolly factory, a wasp trap
and a den ...

This speed reflects the full engagement of the younger self in these distractions, which transform from interruptions to enriching experiences. The speaker does not view these distractions from her dream as anything negative. Neither does she view them with a sense of regret. The summer, after all, inspires "ambition" just as the aforementioned "dream" does. The speaker's younger self does not have to follow any prescribed plan, and can instead go wherever her curiosity takes her. This contrasts with the adult speaker, who is saddled with adult responsibilities and considerations—and as such less able to seize the day in the same way.

LINES 19-21

*I'd like to ...
... keep you then.*

In the beginning of the fourth stanza, the speaker concludes that the differences between her adult self and her nine-year-old self are vast. The speaker first declares that "[she'd] like to say that [they] could be friends," implying that she looks upon her younger self with fondness and tenderness. The use of [enjambment](#) at the end of line 19 draws attention to the word "friends" by ending the line on that word, highlighting the speaker's longing for camaraderie for her past self:

I'd like to say that we could be friends
but the truth is we have nothing in common

However, the enjambment also emphasizes the turn the next line takes. All too quickly, the speaker realizes that "the truth is [they] have nothing in common." After taking the time to observe her younger self's physicality and character, the speaker realizes they are far too different to be friends.

In line 21, the speaker makes a small concession that they do have "a few shared years" in common, but nothing more. Nevertheless, despite the concession, the speaker goes on to declare that she "won't keep [her younger self] then" and will return to the present time. The [caesura](#) in line 21—a full stop after "years"—slows down the reading of the line. The caesura also marks the importance of the speaker's declaration to leave by separating it from the rest of the line.

To "keep" another can mean to cause them to continue to be in a particular state. In this case, the speaker "keep[s]" her younger self standing before her. "Keep," however, can also mean to possess. Therefore, the sentence also suggests that the speaker will let her younger self, and thus the past, go. The poem implies that acknowledging the differences between her past and present self will help the speaker move on without bitterness or regret.

LINES 22-26

*Time to pick ...
... from that tree*

Now that the speaker has decided to leave, she encourages her younger self to continue with her various, playful activities. In line 22, the speaker says that it is "[t]ime to pick rosehips for tuppence a pound." Rosehips are the fruit of the rose plant and often used as an herbal remedy to treat various ailments. The [imagery](#) of picking rosehips builds on the idyllic, pastoral qualities of the world the younger self inhabits.

In line 23, the speaker suggests that it is "time to hide down scared lanes / from men in cars after girl-children." The [repetition](#) of "time" in the beginning of lines 22 and 23, an example of [anaphora](#), provides structure to the list of activities. Line 23 does not idealize the younger self's world, instead making vivid the fears of childhood, such as strange men who might kidnap girls. The [personification](#) of "lanes" as "scared" emphasizes the power of the younger self's fear, which affects even her physical surroundings.

In the beginning of stanza 5, the speaker continues listing various childhood activities of her younger self. The speaker suggests her nine-year-old self might also like to "lunge out over the water / on a rope that swings from that tree." The imagery of a child swinging on a rope over the water is an idyllic one, again building on the pastoral charms of her childhood world.

Furthermore, in lines 25 and 26, the various open /o/ sounds in "or," "out," "over," and "rope" echo the howling cries the younger self might make swinging over the water. Additionally, in line

26, the [consonance](#) of rolling /r/ sounds in "rope," "from," and "tree" provides a rhythm to the line and resonates with the imagery of a swinging rope. The verbs "lunge" and "swings" suggest rigorous physical movement, emphasizing as in previous lines the physical vigor and fitness of the speaker's younger self. The enjambment here is also striking:

... lunge out over the **water**
on a rope that swings from that **tree**
long buried ...

The lines rush forward, evoking the rush of the speaker's younger self swinging across the water.

LINES 27-29

*long buried in ...
... us both –*

In line 27, the speaker realizes that the tree her younger self likes to swing from no longer exists. Indeed, the tree is "long buried in housing." The [enjambment](#) at the end of line 26 emphasizes this in line 27, the tree itself seemingly swept under the next line.

The act of burying is also notably associated with death. One buries creatures that are dead or things that are no longer of any use. Generally speaking, the act of burial is final; what is buried will never return. Therefore, the "tree," an [image](#) that reflects the speaker's childhood, can never return for the adult speaker. Indeed, the tree is "long buried," and therefore long gone. The em dash at the end of the line allows for the speaker to pause, reflect, and mourn that fact.

Then, in line 28, the speaker stops herself from mourning and regretting all the changes that have occurred over the years. Instead, she declares that "no, [she] shan't cloud [her younger self's] morning." A "cloud" blocks the sunlight and casts shadows onto the earth. Therefore, clouds are often [symbolic](#) of misery and sorrow. To "cloud" a "morning," particularly a bright "summer morning," would be to cast misery and sorrow over the day. Thus, the speaker does not want to damage her younger self's innocence, joy, enthusiasm, and free-spirit.

The speaker admits that "God knows / [she] [has] fears enough for [them] both." Thus, speaker again acknowledges the emotional distance between her bright and sunny younger self and her anxious, timid, and "fear[ful]" adult self.

LINES 30-32

*I leave you ...
... on your tongue.*

In the last stanza of "To My Nine-Year-Old Self," the speaker decides to "leave [her nine-year-old self] in an ecstasy of concentration." To be in a state of "ecstasy" is to experience euphoria or overwhelming joy. Thus, the speaker's younger self currently exists in this state of joy and happiness. Rather than

wanting her younger self to suffer, the speaker decides to leave her younger self in peace and move on from the past.

The nine-year-old self is "slowly peeling a ripe scab from [her] knee / to taste it on [her] tongue." A scab also indicates that the younger self hurt her knee earlier. However, physically hurting herself does not make her more timid and cautious of pain. For example, the younger self "peel[s]" the scab despite the pain it might cause. The younger self remains fearless and, in fact, only becomes *more* curious about her body and its healing process. The younger self even goes so far as to "taste" the scab.

The [enjambment](#) at the ends of lines 30 and 31 again speeds up the reading of the stanza. As the stanza has no [caesuras](#) or [end-stopped lines](#), the reading experience is entirely uninterrupted. This lack of interruption resonates with the younger self's state of intense focus and concentration on her current activity. Consequently, this concentration suggests that the younger self very much lives in the moment and deeply experiences all the joys and "ecstas[ies]" of life. The vivid [imagery](#) of the lines also highlights the immediacy of the world around the younger self.

As the adult speaker departs, she departs in a state of peace and filled with poignant nostalgia. She does not want to affect her younger self with her pain, anxieties, or fear. Rather, by acknowledging the differences between them, the speaker can move in on a state of acceptance.



SYMBOLS



SCARS

Scars are marks left on the skin after an injury has healed. Scars can also be [metaphorical](#) in nature, such as mental scars from emotional trauma. In "To My Nine-Year-Old Self," scars [symbolize](#) the adult speaker's physical and emotional deterioration, as well as the younger self's resilience and physical fitness.

In the second stanza, the speaker uses [imagery](#) to show her younger self the "scars" on her body. These scars are proof of the way the speaker has "spoiled" or ruined her body. These scars, therefore, are an example of the vast difference between the adult speaker and her younger self, whose body is limber and fit. The speaker now moves "careful[ly]" because of the way her body has deteriorated. The speaker is more timid and fearful than she was when she was younger, suggesting she has been "scar[red]" by her experiences.

In the last line, the speaker leaves her younger self joyously "peeling a ripe scab from [her] knee / to taste it on [her] tongue." Scabs frequently leave scars behind. However, her younger self is unafraid of the pain "peeling [this] ripe scab" may cause. Instead, her younger self is filled with curiosity about the resilience of the body and fully embraces the

moment of physical exploration. For her younger self, the scab does not cause her to move more "careful[ly]" and cautiously, but rather to live more fully in the moment.

Where this symbol appears in the poem:

- **Line 7:** "Look at the scars"
- **Lines 31-32:** "slowly peeling a ripe scab from your knee / to taste it on your tongue."



WHITE PAPER

In stanza 3, the speaker, using a [simile](#), compares the "fresh[ness]" of a dream in her younger self's mind to "the white paper to write it on." This "white paper" [symbolizes](#) innocence, youth, and potential. Readers can think of "white paper" as a kind of blank slate, something full of potential and promise because it does not have any marks on it yet. This blank slate may also be associated with youth and innocence, as a blank slate has not yet been tainted by anything; it remains pure, untouched. The speaker associates this innocence, youth, and hope with her nine-year-old self. Both are essentially blank slates, full of potential, unmarked by the trials of time. This contrasts with the speaker's adult self, which has been scarred and "spoiled."

Where this symbol appears in the poem:

- **Lines 12-13:** "That dream we had, no doubt it's as fresh in your mind / as the white paper to write it on."



SUMMER

Summer is a season of growth, warmth, and sunlight. Summer, therefore, is filled with positive emotional associations. As such, in "To My Nine-Year-Old Self," summer [symbolizes](#) the speaker's happy, idyllic childhood.

In stanza 2, the speaker asks if her younger self remembers "how, three minutes after waking / [they'd] jump straight out of the ground floor window." The physical act of jumping out a window after waking up suggests a fearless, enthusiastic, energetic, and playful attitude. However, rather than jumping out onto the grass outside, the speaker's younger self jumps "into the summer morning." The "jump," therefore, transforms from a physical act to a [metaphorical](#) one. This jump reflects the younger self embracing and living fully in the moment of this "summer morning." As summer is a time of warmth and happiness, the younger self is embracing this joy.

In stanza 3, the speaker refers to a "summer of ambition" she once experienced. Although that particular summer distracted her from her "dream," the speaker "created an ice-lolly factory, a wasp trap / and a den by the cesspit" during that summer. Thus, that summer was still productive and fun. The speaker's

various creations represent her inventiveness, free-spirit, fearlessness, and curiosity. The summer, therefore, symbolizes a period of creativity and free-time during the speaker's childhood and, consequently, evokes a sense of nostalgia in the adult speaker.

Where this symbol appears in the poem:

- **Lines 9-11:** "Do you remember how, three minutes after waking / we'd jump straight out of the ground floor window / into the summer morning?"
- **Line 16:** "and besides, that summer of ambition"



THE ROPE SWING

The rope swing mentioned in lines 25-27 represents the joy and exuberance of the speaker's past, while the "housing" above it symbolizes the inevitable passage of time. The fact that the swing and tree it was once attached to have "long" been "buried in housing" in the present day thus represents how time—and, thus, growing up—eventually buries the freedom and wonder of childhood. The use of the word "buried" is particularly interesting. The line might mean that the tree has been cut down and its wood used to build a house, or that a house now stands where the tree once did. Either way, the word implies that these remnants of the speaker's childhood are dead. That is, the speaker's childhood is over and done with, and can never come back.

Where this symbol appears in the poem:

- **Lines 25-27:** "or to lunge out over the water / on a rope that swings from that tree / long buried in housing —"



POETIC DEVICES

IMAGERY

[Imagery](#) is abundant in "To My Nine-Year-Old Self." Throughout the poem, Dunmore uses imagery to engage the reader, develop the character of both the speaker and her younger self, and establish [symbolism](#).

In the first stanza, the speaker observes that her past self might leave "balancing on [her] hands or on the tightrope." An individual who walks on their hands or on the tightrope is playful and unafraid of falling. Therefore, the imagery associates the speaker's younger self with these qualities of playfulness and fearlessness. The imagery of these physical acts also highlights the fact that the nine-year-old self's body is physically fit and flexible, again highlighting her youthful vigor (which will be contrasted against the speaker's adult body in the next stanza).

In the second stanza, the speaker shows her younger self the

way she has "spoiled" their body. The speaker displays her "scars" and "the way [she] moves, / careful of a bad back or a bruised foot." The imagery of the speaker's "scars" and "careful" movement emphasizes her physical frailness and cautiousness. Scars can be understood [metaphorically](#) as a sign of emotional trauma as well.

At the end of stanza 2, the speaker refers to a routine she shared with her younger self. "[T]hree minutes after waking," the speaker explains, "we'd jump straight out of the ground floor window." Rather than jumping out of the window onto the lawn outside, the imagery here takes an unusual turn. The speaker's younger self, in fact, jumps "into the summer morning." Summer represents growth, warmth, and potential, and as such the act of jumping "into the summer morning" is a symbolic embrace of these qualities. The imagery, therefore, suggests that the younger self embodies joyful exuberance and lives fully in the moment.

Throughout the poem, the vivid imagery also highlights the dynamism of the speaker's childhood world. At the end of stanza 4 and the beginning of stanza 5, the speaker leaves her younger self to her own devices, suggesting that she "pick rosehips," "hide down scared lanes / from men in cars after girl-children," or "lunge out over the water / on a rope that swings from that tree." The imagery of "picking rosehips" and swinging "over the water ... on a rope" hanging from a tree develops the idyllic sense of the speaker's childhood. The act of "hid[ing]" in the streets from imagined kidnappers, while not an idyllic image, nevertheless vividly evokes the emotions and fears of children. Her younger self's world is, therefore, extremely dynamic, containing within it a range of powerful emotions and beauty.

Where Imagery appears in the poem:

- Line 3
- Lines 4-5
- Lines 7-8
- Lines 10-11
- Lines 12-13
- Lines 15-18
- Lines 22-28
- Lines 30-32

ANAPHORA

[Repetition](#), specifically [anaphora](#), appears twice in "To My Nine-Year-Old Self" in stanzas 1 and 4. In both cases, Dunmore uses anaphora in order to provide structure to a list, draw attention to certain phrases, and emphasize the importance of particular ideas.

In the first stanza, the speaker observes that her younger self would "rather run than walk, rather climb than run / rather leap from a height than anything." The repetition of "rather" at the

beginning of each clause clearly structures the speaker's observations and allows them to build up in intensity. Anaphora adds a sense of rhythm to lines 4-5 that resonates with the rhythm of running, walking, and climbing—thereby making the lines all the more vivid for the reader. By bringing repeated attention to the younger self's physical activities, the anaphora also firmly establishes her physical fitness, playfulness, and fearlessness.

In stanza 4, the speaker decides to leave her younger self to her own devices and advises her younger self to go off and play. The speaker suggests that it is "[t]ime to pick rosehips for tuppence a pound, / time to hide down scared lanes / from men in cars after girl-children." The repetition of "time" in the beginning of lines 22 and 23 is another example of anaphora. As with the previous instance of anaphora, this use of anaphora provides structure to the speaker's various suggestions. The repetition draws attention to each particular activity, highlighting wide range of emotions and experiences in the younger self's dynamic world.

Where Anaphora appears in the poem:

- **Lines 4-5:** "rather run than walk, rather climb than run / rather leap from a height than anything."
- **Lines 22-23:** "Time to pick rosehips for tuppence a pound, / time to hide down scared lanes"

CAESURA

[Caesura](#) occurs in the first five stanzas of "To My Nine-Year-Old Self." In each instance, Dunmore uses caesuras to vary the rhythm of the lines, to create pauses that mirror the speaker's experiences, and to draw attention to certain phrases and ideas.

In line 7, for example, the speaker directs her younger to "[l]ook at [her] scars, and watch the way [she] move[s]." The comma in the middle of the line creates a pause that provides time for the speaker to display her scars and for her younger self to carefully observe them. This caesura, therefore, brings the poem's [imagery](#) to life for the reader.

Later, in the third stanza, the speaker references a dream she shares with her younger self. However, this dream was interrupted: they "made a start, but something else came up." The caesura reflects this interruption. The speaker then goes on to list the various activities that distracted them from completing their dream, such as "a baby vole, or a bag of sherbet lemons - / and besides, that summer of ambition / created an ice-lolly factory, a wasp trap." Every line from line 14 to line 17 includes a caesura, a pause. These caesuras draw attention to the distinctiveness of each distraction by separating it off from the others. Again, these caesuras create interruptions in the rhythm of the lines, mirroring the interruptions that the distractions create for the speaker's

younger self.

Where Caesura appears in the poem:

- **Line 1:** "me. Don't"
- **Line 2:** "perplexed, and"
- **Line 4:** "walk, rather"
- **Line 7:** "scars, and"
- **Line 9:** "how, three"
- **Line 12:** "had, no"
- **Line 14:** "start, but"
- **Line 15:** "vole, or"
- **Line 16:** "besides, that"
- **Line 17:** "factory, a"
- **Line 21:** "years. I"
- **Line 28:** "no, I," "morning. God"

ENJAMBMENT

[Enjambment](#) appears in every stanza of "To My Nine-Year-Old Self." Dunmore uses enjambment to play with the rhythm of the lines, to emphasize turns and contradictions in succeeding lines, and to mirror the speaker's experience in the poem.

In the first stanza, the speaker lists her younger self's preferences regarding various physical activities. The speaker states that her younger self "would rather run than walk, rather climb than run / rather leap from a height than anything." The activities she lists emphasize her younger self's energy, enthusiasm, fearlessness, and physical fitness. The activities also suggest a preference for vigorous activities and speed, as running is faster than walking, climbing is more vigorous than running, and falling is fastest above all else. At the end of line 4, the enjambment, and therefore lack of interruption, mirrors the unbroken speed of the younger self's physical activities; it is as if the younger self runs right across the line break.

Enjambment can also complicate the meaning of previous lines. In stanza 4, the speaker would like to say they "could be friends / but the truth is [they] have nothing in common / beyond a few shared years." Therefore, although the speaker desires friendship with her younger self, this desire can never be realized due to their differences. The enjambment at the end of line 19 means there is no time to linger on the possibility of being "friends"; the line barrels forward into the "truth" that they "have nothing in common." In line 21, however, the speaker concedes that they do at least share a past. The enjambment at the end of line 20, then, adds poignancy to speaker's assertion of their irreconcilable differences. They share something as meaningful as a past, yet will never be friends.

The enjambment of each line in the last stanza resonates with the younger self's experience in the poem. In the last stanza, the speaker observes her younger self in a state of uninterrupted "ecstasy of concentration" as she "peel[s] a ripe scab from [her] knee" to examine and explore. The enjambment,

in conjunction with the lack of [caesuras](#) in the lines, mirrors the younger self's focus and concentration on her activity. The speaker's younger self is entirely absorbed in the moment, thus living life deeply and to the fullest.

Where Enjambment appears in the poem:

- **Lines 4-5:** "run / rather"
- **Lines 9-10:** "waking / we'd"
- **Lines 10-11:** "window / into"
- **Lines 12-13:** "mind / as"
- **Lines 16-17:** "ambition / created"
- **Lines 17-18:** "trap / and"
- **Lines 19-20:** "friends / but"
- **Lines 20-21:** "common / beyond"
- **Lines 23-24:** "lanes / from"
- **Lines 25-26:** "water / on"
- **Lines 26-27:** "tree / long"
- **Lines 28-29:** "knows / I"
- **Lines 30-31:** "concentration / slowly"
- **Lines 31-32:** "knee / to"

ALLITERATION

[Alliteration](#) occurs frequently in "To My Nine-Year-Old Self." Dunmore uses alliteration, sometimes in conjunction with [imagery](#), to enhance the musicality of the lines and emphasize particular phrases and ideas.

In the second stanza, the speaker shows her younger self the ways in which her body has physically deteriorated. She displays her various scars and "the way [she] move[s], / careful of a bad back or a bruised foot." The speaker, therefore, must move more slowly and cautiously due to her physical aches and pains. The alliteration of plodding /b/ sounds in "bad," "back," and "bruised" slow down the reading of the poem, reflecting the adult speaker's own slow and cautious pace navigating the world. The thudding /b/ sounds also mirror the heavy, thudding footsteps of someone with a "bad back or a bruised foot" who can no longer move as nimbly as they used to.

Another striking moment of alliteration comes in the poem's final stanza, with the mix of [sibilant](#) /s/ sounds and bright /t/ sound. The /s/ sounds of "slowly" and "scab" are like a whisper, reflecting the intensity of the younger self's concentration in this moment. The final /t/ sounds of "to taste" and "tongue" then end the poem on a moment of sharpness and brightness reflecting the intensity of the younger self's joy and wonder.

Where Alliteration appears in the poem:

- **Line 1:** "so," "surprised"
- **Line 4:** "would," "rather," "run," "walk," "rather," "run"
- **Line 5:** "rather"
- **Line 6:** "spoiled"
- **Line 7:** "scars," "watch," "way"

- **Line 8:** “bad,” “back,” “bruised”
- **Line 9:** “waking”
- **Line 10:** “we’d,” “window”
- **Line 12:** “dream,” “doubt”
- **Line 14:** “start,” “something”
- **Line 15:** “baby,” “bag”
- **Line 16:** “besides”
- **Line 21:** “years,” “you”
- **Line 22:** “Time,” “to,” “pick,” “tuppence,” “pound”
- **Line 23:** “time,” “to”
- **Line 29:** “fears,” “for”
- **Line 30:** “concentration”
- **Line 31:** “slowly,” “scab”
- **Line 32:** “to,” “taste,” “tongue”

CONSONANCE

[Consonance](#) appears abundantly throughout every stanza of "To My Nine-Year-Old Self." Dunmore uses consonance to draw out the beauty of the language, draw attention to certain words and phrases, and mirror the speaker's experience in the poem.

In the fourth stanza, for example, the speaker decides to leave her younger self to her own devices. The speaker suggests it is "[t]ime to pick rosehips for tuppence a pound," among other activities. The act of "pick[ing] rosehips" is a playful, physical, and youthful act. The consonance of sharp /t/ and /p/ sounds in "[t]ime," "pick," "rosehips," "tuppence," and "pound" trip on the tongue, mirroring the energetic physicality of the speaker's younger self.

Later, in the last stanza, the speaker decides to stop bothering her younger self and leave her younger self to her own devices. As the speaker departs, she observes her younger self in "an ecstasy of concentration / slowly peeling ripe scab from [her] knee." In lines 30 and 31, the consonance of soft /s/ sounds in "ecstasy," "concentration," "slowly," and "scab" slow down the reading of the lines and emphasize the details of the scene. The consonance, therefore, enhances the focus of the scene, mirroring the younger self's own intense concentration in her act.

Where Consonance appears in the poem:

- **Line 1:** “must,” “so,” “surprised”
- **Line 2:** “perplexed,” “eager,” “gone”
- **Line 3:** “balancing”
- **Line 4:** “would,” “rather,” “run,” “than,” “walk,” “rather,” “than,” “run”
- **Line 5:** “rather,” “from,” “than,” “anything”
- **Line 6:** “spoiled,” “this,” “once”
- **Line 7:** “Look,” “scars,” “watch,” “way”
- **Line 8:** “careful,” “bad,” “back,” “bruised”
- **Line 9:** “remember,” “minutes,” “waking”

- **Line 10:** “we’d,” “jump,” “ground,” “window”
- **Line 11:** “into,” “summer,” “morning”
- **Line 12:** “dream,” “had,” “doubt,” “mind”
- **Line 13:** “paper”
- **Line 14:** “start,” “something,” “else,” “up”
- **Line 15:** “baby,” “bag,” “sherbet”
- **Line 16:** “besides,” “summer”
- **Line 17:** “ice,” “wasp,” “trap”
- **Line 18:** “cesspit”
- **Line 20:** “common”
- **Line 21:** “keep”
- **Line 22:** “Time,” “to,” “pick,” “rosehips,” “tuppence,” “pound”
- **Line 23:** “time,” “to,” “hide,” “down,” “scared,” “lanes”
- **Line 24:** “from,” “men,” “cars,” “girl,” “children”
- **Line 25:** “lunge”
- **Line 28:** “no,” “shan’t,” “morning,” “knows”
- **Line 29:** “fears,” “enough,” “for,” “us”
- **Line 30:** “leave,” “ecstasy,” “concentration”
- **Line 31:** “slowly,” “peeling,” “ripe,” “scab”
- **Line 32:** “to,” “taste,” “it,” “tongue”

ASSONANCE

Like [consonance](#) and [alliteration](#), [assonance](#) also occurs frequently in "To My Nine-Year-Old Self." Dunmore uses assonance in order to enhance the sonic quality of the lines and highlight particular phrases and ideas.

In the second stanza, the speaker shows her younger self the ways her body has physically deteriorated. She shows her "scars" on the body and the "careful" way she moves due to a "bad back of a bruised foot." The assonance of long, sighing /a/ sounds in "bad back" slow down the reading of the line, mirroring the slow, careful movements of the speaker. The sighing /a/ assonance also evokes the groans the speaker might make while moving due to the pain of her "bad back" or "bruised foot."

In the fourth stanza, the speaker decides to leave her younger self alone and return to the present. The speaker suggests that her younger self go back to her own activities, such as "pick[ing] rosehips for tuppence a pound." The assonance of clipped, lively /i/ sounds in "pick" and "rosehips" resonate with the playful and energetic act of picking rosehips.

In the last stanza, the speaker finally departs as her younger self is completely immersed in the act of "slowly peeling a ripe scab from [her] knee." The assonance of long /e/ sounds in "slowly," "peeling," and "knee" draws out the beauty of the language and calls attention to the younger self's act of "concentration." Moreover, the assonance also resonates with the younger self's immersion in her act as it slows down the reading of the line.

Where Assonance appears in the poem:

- **Line 1:** "Don't," "so"
- **Line 2:** "eager," "be," "gone"
- **Line 3:** "on," "on"
- **Line 7:** "scars"
- **Line 8:** "bad," "back," "bruised"
- **Line 9:** "Do," "you"
- **Line 10:** "out," "ground"
- **Line 12:** "dream," "we," "mind"
- **Line 13:** "white," "write"
- **Line 14:** "made," "came"
- **Line 15:** "baby," "sherbet," "lemons"
- **Line 18:** "den," "cesspit"
- **Line 19:** "I'd," "like," "we," "be"
- **Line 20:** "nothing," "common"
- **Line 21:** "beyond," "years," "keep"
- **Line 22:** "Time," "pick," "rosehips"
- **Line 23:** "time," "hide"
- **Line 25:** "over"
- **Line 26:** "rope"
- **Line 28:** "no," "your," "morning," "knows"
- **Line 29:** "enough," "us," "both"
- **Line 30:** "leave," "ecstasy"
- **Line 31:** "slowly," "peeling," "knee"

SIMILE

[Simile](#) appears once in "To My Nine-Year-Old Self" in lines 12-13. Dunmore uses simile in order to deepen the [symbolic](#) and [figurative](#) meaning of the poem as well as enhance the vividness of the [imagery](#).

In the third stanza, the speaker refers to a "dream" that she and her nine-year-old self had. The speaker observes that it is likely "as fresh in [her younger self's] mind / as the white paper to write it on." The dream is fresher in the younger self's mind, of course, because for her it is more recent than it is for the adult speaker.

This specific simile here is particularly telling, though, as the speaker compares the "fresh[ness]" of the dream in her younger self's mind to a piece of "white paper" that her younger self might use to write that dream down. A dream and a "white paper," a kind of blank slate, both connote hope and potential. The "white paper" is unmarked, and thus also symbolizes innocence and youth. Therefore, it is a fitting image to associate with the speaker's younger self, who embodies this innocence and youthfulness. This younger self is still unmarred by the world, still full of potential for the future.

Where Simile appears in the poem:

- **Lines 12-13:** "That dream we had, no doubt it's as fresh in your mind / as the white paper to write it on."

**VOCABULARY**

Perplexed (Line 2) - Confused; puzzled. The speaker's nine-year-old self is confused and puzzled at the speaker's appearance.

Sherbet lemons (Line 15) - Lemon-flavored hard candy.

Ice-lolly (Line 17) - The British term for popsicle. Here, the speaker's nine-year-old self starts her own popsicle factory.

Cesspit (Line 18) - A pit that holds waste.

Rosehips (Line 22) - The fruit of the rose plant. Dried rosehips can be used for medicinal purposes. In the poem, the speaker's nine-year-old self picks these rosehips to sell to others.

Tuppence (Line 22) - British slang for "twopence," a type of British currency equivalent to two pennies.

Shan't (Line 28) - A contraction of "shall not." The speaker shall not bother her nine-year-old self with her adult fears and anxieties.

Ecstasy (Line 30) - A sense of euphoria and overwhelming happiness. The speaker's nine-year-old self is in a state of euphoric concentration as she picks at her scab.

**FORM, METER, & RHYME****FORM**

"To My Nine-Year-Old Self" is made up of six stanzas of varying lengths. It is not written using any particular meter, rhyme scheme, or traditional form, however. Rather, the poem is structured as a dramatic [monologue](#) composed in [free verse](#). The general lack of structure resonates with the free-spirited nature of the speaker's nine-year-old self.

That said, there is an unusual pattern occurring when it comes to the poem's stanza lengths. Stanza 1 is a quintet, or five-line stanza. Stanza 2 is a sestet, or six-line stanza. Stanza 3 is a septet, or seven-line stanza. Stanza 4 is a sestet. Stanza 5 is a quintet. Finally, stanza 6 is a tercet, or three-line stanza. Therefore, the stanza lengths *increase* successively from the first to third stanza before *decreasing* successively until the end of the poem.

The stanza length pattern is related to the content of the poem. In the first to third stanza (which build in length from five, to six, to seven lines), the speaker attempts to connect with her younger self and reminisces about their shared past. The increasing stanza lengths reflect the adult speaker trying to journey deeper into her childhood world.

However, in the fourth stanza—the point at which the stanza lengths begin to decrease—the speaker admits they have "nothing in common / beyond a few shared years" and could not even be friends. This is the point in the poem at which the

speaker acknowledges and accepts the differences between them, and that nothing she says or do can change the past. Consequently, the speaker delivers fewer and fewer lines each stanza until she decides to depart from the past entirely. The stanza lengths, therefore, enhance and emphasize the speaker's emotional development over the course of the poem.

METER

"To My Nine-Year-Old Self" is written in [free verse](#), meaning it does not have any particular meter. The *lack* of meter suits the form of the poem, which is framed as a dramatic [monologue](#) delivered by a speaker to her nine-year-old self. As a dramatic monologue, the language of the poem mimics the natural patterns of everyday speech. Moreover, the lack of structure and rigid metric patterns resonates with the free-spirited and playful nature of the speaker's younger self.

RHYME SCHEME

"To My Nine-Year-Old Self" is written in [free verse](#), therefore it is not composed in any particular meter or [rhyme scheme](#). This lack of rigid rhyme scheme resonates with the free-spirited character of the speaker's nine-year-old self. This younger self is, after all, the focus of the poem, and her childhood world is the world which the speaker now inhabits.

The poem does, however, contain a few instances of [slant rhyme](#) within various lines. Dunmore uses these moments to enhance the musicality of the language, draw attention to certain ideas and phrases, and play with the rhythm of the poem.

In the second stanza, for example, the speaker shows her younger self the ways in which her body has physically deteriorated. The speaker displays the "careful" way she moves due to a "bad back or a bruised foot." The [assonance](#) of the long /a/ sound and [consonance](#) of the /b/ sound in "bad back" make this an arguable slant rhyme that focuses the readers' attention on the speaker's physical ailments. There is a great deal of such assonance and consonance throughout the poem, making it rich with sound despite the absence of a true rhyme scheme.

All this implies that growing up entails a loss of innocence, and that the purity and wonder of childhood is something that, once lost, can never be regained. Rather than be bitter about this, however, the speaker decides to leave her past self alone to her own devices. Although the speaker has plenty of fears she could share with her younger self, the speaker does not want to corrupt her younger's self innocence and happiness. This allows the speaker to move on in a state of peace and acceptance, rather than one of bitterness and regret.



SETTING

The setting of "To My Nine-Year-Old Self" is the speaker's childhood, specifically when she was nine years old. The adult speaker seems to be standing before her nine-year-old self. This is almost certainly not meant to be taken as literal time travel! Instead, readers can think of this as the speaker remembering various moments from her past and placing herself there, in her imagination, as an adult.

This (presumably re-imagined) childhood world then moves through various settings. The speaker recalls summer mornings in particular, and the act of jumping out of bed. The setting moves through various outdoor scenes as well, with the speaker's younger self rambunctiously playing in and exploring the natural world. The specifics of this location, however, are never detailed. This creates a sort of impressionistic vision of the younger self's world that is in keeping with her childlike viewpoint. The adult speaker focuses on what matters to her younger self—the animals, sweets, and natural wonders that occupy a child's mind. Fittingly, there are no specific references beyond that—no dates or proper nouns—likely because those are what really matter to a little girl simply enjoying the world.

There are also hints as to how that world has since changed, though. In lines 25-27, the adult speaker reveals that the rope swing and tree her younger self used to play on has since been "long buried in housing." This brief glimpse of the present is a sad reminder that this idyllic childhood landscape no longer exists apart from in the speaker's memories.



SPEAKER

The speaker of "To My Nine-Year-Old Self" is an anonymous adult woman who is reminiscing about her past. It's possible that Dunmore herself is the speaker, but this is by no means certain. Regardless, the speaker is clearly someone experiencing nostalgia for her childhood and who longs to connect with her younger self. However, the more she observes that younger self, the more the speaker realizes how different she has become from this girl over the years. The adult speaker, for one thing, is physically frailer than her younger self. Moreover, she is more cautious and fearful, lacking the unbridled exuberance of the younger girl.



CONTEXT

LITERARY CONTEXT

Dunmore published "To My Nine-Year-Old Self" in her ninth poetry collection *Glad of These Times* in 2007. Like other poems in the collection, "To My Nine-Year-Old Self" explores themes related to the brevity of life, the necessity of living in the moment, and the beauty and pleasures of the natural world. At this point in her career, Dunmore had been shortlisted for the T.S. Eliot Prize for Poetry and won the Orange Prize for her novel *A Spell of Winter*. A prolific writer, Dunmore wrote published children's books, short story collections, young adult

novels, literary novels, and poetry collections during her acclaimed career.

Stylistically, "To My Nine-Year-Old Self" fits into contemporary trends of writing in [free verse](#) and from first-person perspectives. Yet the poem is also written in a narrative, lyrical style that contrasts with the often experimental nature of contemporary poetry.

Like other contemporary poems that meditate on identity and the self, "To My Nine-Year-Old Self" is influenced by poems such as Whitman's American epic "[Song of Myself](#)," Thomas Hardy's "[The Self-Unseeing](#)," and Seamus Haney's "[Blackberry-Picking](#)." Related contemporary poems that also explore one's childhood from an adult perspective include Carol Ann Duffy's "[In Mrs Tilscher's Class](#)," Li-Young Lee's "[Persimmons](#)," and Levi Romero's "[Woodstove of My Childhood](#)."

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

In the 1990s, activism regarding climate change began to take hold in the global consciousness. Climate change is part of a larger environmental movement which began in the 19th century partially as a reaction to the Industrial Revolution. Ideas like conservation, anti-pollution, and green politics are part of environmentalism.

Many contemporary writers address issues of environmentalism in their work. Sometimes, the loss of natural resources is a primary focus of the work; at other times, the irrevocably changing world due to pollution and consumerism exists in the background. For Dunmore, the threat that humans pose to the natural environment is a pressing concern. Moreover, the loss of the natural world is one that, like the past, can never be fully possessed again. In "To My Nine-Year-Old Self," the speaker is physically transported to her childhood and immersed in the world of the past, which is depicted with pastoral and natural imagery. Much of this natural world is, however, like her childhood, lost to time. For Dunmore, the current structure of human society is inextricably tied to loss and destruction, of both childhood innocence and joy, as well as the natural beauty of the world.



MORE RESOURCES

EXTERNAL RESOURCES

- [Helen Dunmore's Legacy](https://www.nytimes.com/2017/06/15/books/helen-dunmore-dead-british-historical-novelist.html) — Read about Dunmore's lasting legacy after her death. (<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/06/15/books/helen-dunmore-dead-british-historical-novelist.html>)
- ["To My Nine-Year-Old Self" Read Aloud](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R58xUU9-pf4) — Listen to a reading of the entire poem. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R58xUU9-pf4>)
- [Dunmore's Obituary](https://www.theguardian.com/books/2017/jun/05/helen-dunmore-obituary) — Read about Dunmore's life and accomplishments in her obituary published in 2017. (<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2017/jun/05/helen-dunmore-obituary>)
- [Helen Dunmore on Conflicts](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-oOLO82lxD4) — Listen to poet and author Dunmore speak on the theme of conflict in her work. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-oOLO82lxD4>)
- [Tribute to Helen Dunmore by Her Son](https://www.penguin.co.uk/articles/2019/mar/patrick-dunmore-tribute-to-helen-dunmore-girl-balancing/) — Read a tribute to Dunmore written by her son. (<https://www.penguin.co.uk/articles/2019/mar/patrick-dunmore-tribute-to-helen-dunmore-girl-balancing/>)



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