

Exploring Contemporary Canadian Voices

the spoken word

Shane Koyczan



- One of the world's premier spoken word performers.
- Born in Yellowknife, Northwest Territories, he grew up in Penticton, British Columbia.
- First poet from outside the USA to win the prestigious American National Poetry Slam.
- His book *Visiting Hours* was hailed as a Book of the Year by The Guardian and the Globe and Mail.
- Acclaimed for his riveting performances, worldwide.
- Koyczan's lyricism inspires audiences and readers alike because his poems speak directly to the heart.



Before Viewing

Shane Koyczan

Before viewing *This is My Voice*:

- Who are your heroes? (who do you admire, e.g., a family member, a public figure, a comic book hero, a character in a novel). Why do we need heroes?
- There are lots of problems in the world. What's one problem you would like to see fixed and what do you suggest as a solution?



View *This is My Voice*

2 minutes, 52 seconds



After Viewing

Shane Koyczan

After viewing *This is My Voice*:

- What is Koyczan's view of the world we live in?
- What does he suggest we do in order to change the world for the better?
- How does he keep your attention? What devices does he use? (e.g., repetition, speed of delivery, changes in volume). Give examples.
- Koyczan uses a lot of historical context in this poem (e.g., Gandhi, John Lennon, Martin Luther King, Galileo). Look up at least three of the people he mentions and find out what their 'voice' consisted of, what they did to change the world.



Activities

Shayne Koyczan

- WRITE a journal entry about something you would like to see happen in your school or community, something that isn't happening now. How could you make it happen?
- WRITE a journal entry stating three problems you see in the world, and suggest three solutions.
- WRITE a poem, short story or skit, or draw a cartoon, comic strip or portrait of one of your heroes.
- FREE WRITE. Shane says "This is my voice. There are many like it, but this one is mine." Start with this statement. Keep writing for 5 or 10 minutes. Don't stop, don't listen to your inner critic.
- PERFORM a poem or dramatic piece using some of Koyczan's techniques.



Before Viewing

Shane Koyczan

Before viewing *The Crickets Have Arthritis*:

- Have you ever known someone that was in the hospital? Or someone with a terminal illness? What were they like (e.g., angry, accepting, depressed, scared)? How did their emotions affect you?
- What do you think it would be like knowing you were dying?
- Do you believe in angels?



View *The
Crickets Have
Arthritis*

6 minutes, 45 seconds
Mature Content



The image shows a screenshot of a YouTube video player. At the top left is the YouTube logo with the tagline "Broadcast Yourself™". To the right are navigation links for "Home", "Videos", and "Channels". Below this is the video title: "Shane Koyczan, 'The Crickets Have Arthritis', 2007, Canada". The video player itself shows a man with glasses and a dark shirt speaking. At the bottom of the player is a progress bar with a play/pause button on the left and a volume icon on the right.

After viewing *The Crickets Have Arthritis*:

- What does Shane say he's scared of?
- What did Lewis teach Shane while he was in the hospital?
- Do you think that Lewis made Shane believe in angels?
- What keeps your attention or stands out in your mind about this poem? What was your favourite part? What made these parts memorable?



Activities

Shane Koyczan

- WRITE a journal entry responding to this poem and the experience it relates.
- WRITE a short story or poem about a person you knew, even if only very briefly, that influenced you in an important way (either positively or negatively).
- MAKE a list of items, or personal attitudes, that you would take to a child in a sick kid's hospital. Explain why you would bring each item or attitude, or how you think each would help.
- DRAW or paint a picture, cartoon or comic strip of Shane and the child in the hospital. Choose one part of the poem to illustrate. Or create a storyboard of a sequence of images from the poem.



Before Viewing

Shane Koyczan

Before viewing *Interview with Shane Koyczan*:

- What do you think it would be like to travel the world doing something you love?
- What would you like most about it? Dislike most?



View *Interview* *with Shayne* *Koyczan*

7 minutes, 9 seconds

Note: the “Clifton Joseph” label
is a mistake!



After Viewing

Shane Koyczan

After viewing *Interview with Shane Koyczan*:

- What does Koyczan suggest that teenagers do to get involved in the poetry scene?
- What was his worst performance or experience?
- How would you feel, and what would you do, if you were put in a situation like that?



Activities

Shane Koyczan

- WRITE a poem, short story or journal about a time you were in an uncomfortable or awkward position.
- WRITE a poem backwards, starting with the ending.
- WRITE a journal entry summarizing Koyczan's experience as a kid, and the state of his life at this point. What is your response to his life right now?
- BREAK into pairs. Interview your partner about his or her own life, goals and passions. Share what you learn with the class.
- STAGE an interview as a performance.



- [House of Parlance](#), Koyczan's publisher
- Shane Koyczan and the Short Story Long on [MySpace](#)
- [Author Profile](#) on Quill & Quire



Credits

Videos – Filmed at the 2007 Words Aloud 4 Spoken Word Festival based in Durham, ON. The videos were produced/directed by Liz Zetlin and Myke Dyer.

Words Aloud 4 Festival 2007 – Presented by the Words Aloud Poetry Collective in collaboration with the Durham Art Gallery.

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