

The Perfect High

by Shel Silverstein

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There once was a boy named Gimmesome Roy. He was nothing like me or you.
'Cause laying back and getting high was all he cared to do.
As a kid, he sat in the cellar, sniffing airplane glue.
And then he smoked bananas which was then the thing to do.
He tried aspirin in Coca-Cola, breathed helium on the sly,
And his life was just one endless search to find that perfect high.
But grass just made him want to lay back and eat chocolate pizza a high,
And the great things he wrote while he was stoned looked like shit in the morning light,
And speed just made him rap all day, reds just laid him back,
And Cocaine Rose was sweet to his nose, but the price nearly broke his back,
He tried PCP and TC, but they didn't quite do the trick,
And poppers nearly blew his heart and mushrooms made him sick.
Acid made him see the light, but he couldn't remember it long.
And hashish was just a little too weak, and smack was a lot too strong,
And Quaaludes made him stumble, and booze just made him cry,
Till he heard of a cat named Baba Fats who knew of the perfect high.

Now, Baba Fats was a hermit cat who lived up in Nepal,
High on a craggy mountaintop, up a sheer and icy wall.
"But hell," says Roy, "I'm a half boy, and I'll crawl or climb or fly,
But I'll find that guru who'll give me the clue as to what's the perfect high."
So out and off goes Gimmesome Roy to the land that knows no time,
Up a trail no man could conquer to a cliff no man could climb.
For fourteen years he tries that cliff, then back down again he slides
Then sits — and cries — and climbs again, pursuing the perfect high.
He's grinding his teeth, he's coughing blood, he's aching and shaking and weak,
For you can see," says Roy to he, "that I'm about to die,
So for my last ride, Fats, how can I achieve the perfect high?"
"Well, dog my cats!" says Baba Fats, "I'm one more but-out soul,
Who's looking for some alchemist to turn his trip to gold.
But you won't find it in no dealer's stash, or on no druggist's shelf.
Son, if you would seek the perfect high find it in yourself."

"Why, you jive motherfucker!" screamed Gimmesome Roy, "I've climbed through rain and sleet,
I've lost three fingers off my hands and four toes off my feet!
I've braved the lair of the polar bear and tasted the maggot's kiss.
Now, you tell me the high is in myself. What kind of shit is this?
My ears 'fore they froze off," says Roy, "had heard all kind of crap,
But I didn't climb for fourteen years to listen to that sophomore rap.

Note to teachers

The Perfect High is a creative poem that provides insight into the human experience with substance use. Shel Silverstein offers readers a way to explore the inner workings of the individual and other possible ways of exploring a perfect high. Please keep in mind there are words that could be considered offensive. You may want to take time to discuss safe language in relation to the themes described in the poem.

And I didn't crawl up here to hear that the high is on the natch,
So you tell me where the real stuff is or I'll kill your ass!"

"Ok, OK," says Baba Fats, "you're forcing it out of me.
There is a land beyond the sun that's known as Zaboli.
A wretched land of stone and sand where snakes and buzzards scream,
And in this devil's garden blooms the mystic Tzu tree.
And every ten years it blooms one flower as white as the Key West sky,
And he who eats of the Tzu flower will know the perfect high.
For the rush comes on like a tidal wave and it hits like the blazing sun.
And the high, it lasts a lifetime and down don't ever come.
But the Zaboli land is ruled by a giant who stands twelve cubits high. w h a n d l .

- d. What does it mean when we say we “know” something? Do we need to have clear answers in order to have knowledge? Are there questions that do not have specific answers or that have multiple right answers?
3. Following one or more of the above strategies, invite students to write a short journal entry. They might record what they learned or found interesting from the previous discussion or they could write down one BIG question they still have.

Drug Literacy

Big ideas

- x Drugs can be tremendously helpful and also very harmful
- x As humans, both individually and as communities, we need to learn how to manage the drugs in our lives
- x We can learn how to control our drug use by reflecting on the different ways people have thought about drugs, exploring stories from various cultures and listening to each other

Competencies

- x Assess the complex ways in which drugs impact the health and behaviour of individuals, communities and societies
- x Explore and appreciate diversity related to the reasons people use drugs, the impact of drug use and the social attitudes toward various drugs
- x Recognize binary constructs (e.g., good vs bad) and assess their limitation in addressing complex social issues like drug use
- x Develop social and communication skills in addressing discourse and behaviour related to drugs
- x

