

How Can We Heal the Broken Heart?

Japanese poet Shoda Shinoe was born in Hiroshima, Japan in 1910. She was exposed to the atomic bomb dropped on that city in 1945, and died of breast cancer 20 years later in 1965. Two of her tankas, short Japanese poems, tell of the sorrow of a mother whose memory is engulfed in the disaster brought on by the bomb.

Tanka (I)

In madness
a woman cries
“I left my child in the flames.
Now all I have
is my own life.”

Tanka (II)

I wonder
if there is an operation
that removes memories.
Where is a cure
for my pain-filled heart?

Questions for Reflection: Tanka 1 and Tanka 2

In “Tanka (I)” how would you describe the state of mind of the woman in the poem? Why do you think she feels the way she does? What would be your feelings if this poem represented an event that happened to you?

Are there ways that you know of to “remove memories” (see Tanka II)? What if there were an operation to remove memories? Would it be a good idea? Why or why not? What are some other ways of helping this poet deal with her sorrow?

Write your own Tanka. Use these as a model or see <www.tankaonline.com> for more information.

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