Justin Kratz

Mrs. Billy

English II period 4

February 25, 2013

Child Innocence of Shel Silverstein

Shel Silverstein was born in Chicago, Illinois on September 25, 1930. When he was young he liked to play sports with his friends. He had very little athletic ability so at the age of twelve started to write instead. After high school in the 1950’s he was drafted into the military. During his time in the military he wrote cartoons for the *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, a military newspaper. After he completed his military service he was hired as a staff cartoonist for Playboy Magazine in 1956. While he was working at Playboy he wrote several poems such as “*The Smoke Off”* and *“The Winner”.* In 1963 a fellow author suggested he should start writing children books. He began to write the book *The Given Tree* and was first rejected by the editor, William Cole; he claimed it was to in-between the interest of children and adults. It was finally published in 1964 and it became one of his most popular books.

In 1974 four Shel wrote *Where the Sidewalk Ends,* which won the *New York Times* Best Book Award. In 1981 the book won the Michigan Young Readers Award. It also won the George G. Stone Award in 1984. In 1976 he wrote the book *The Missing Piece.* In 1981 the book *The Light in the Attic* was published which won many awards. It won the Best Book Award by School Library Journal, the Buckeye Award, and the William Allen White Award. In 1982 he wrote the sequel to *The Missing Piece* and named it The *Missing Piece the Big O,* which won the International Reading Associates Children’s Choice Award. His most recent book *Falling Up: Poems and Drawings* hit the book stores in 1986 and was praised by critics everywhere.

At a young age Shel started to listen to music and became interested in it. As a teenager he taught him self how to play guitar and write his own music. He became a respected composer and started to write songs for artists. His most famous song he wrote was the lyrics and music for a song named “A Boy Named Sue”, which became a number one hit for Johnny Cash. He then released a country music album called “The Great Conch Train Robbery”. In 1990 he co-wrote the soundtrack for the movie “Postcards from the Edge”, which was nominated for an Academy Award in 1991 for best song. In the mid-nineties he started to write plays. His most recognized play was called “The Lady and the Tiger Show”.

Shel passed away in Key West, Florida on May 10, 1999 from a heart attack. Shel always loved to write for children and was always inspired to do so. He wrote poems and books about being happy and to follow your dreams. He always said if you aren’t good at one thing find something you are good at and that is what he did as a child. Since he wasn’t such a good athlete he found something else he was good at which was writing.

Shel was a very accomplished poet, author, composer, and play write. He won many awards during his writing time. He was a huge inspiration to all kids around the world who read his books. He always said to have fun at whatever you do. He always liked to write for children the most. He feels since he started to write as a child it is easiest to write for a child. He always tried to please his readers and did whatever it to took to do so. He said that is one of the many reason why he wrote so many different genres. He wrote for an author for kids, and author for adults. He wrote many play and movie scripts and he wrote many plays to please as many people as he could.

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