

ODE TO THE SPRINKLER by Gary Soto

There is no swimming
Pool on
Our street,
Only sprinklers
On lawns,
The helicopter
Of water
Slicing our legs.
We run through
The sprinkler,
Water on our
Lips, water
Dripping
From eyelashes,
Water like
Fat raindrops
That fall from
Skinny trees when
You're not looking.
I run *como*
Un chango,
In my orange
Swimming trunks,
Jumping up and
Down, pounding
The mushy grass
With my feet.
One time a bee
Stung my toe,

The next-to-the-biggest
Toe. Then that toe
Got bigger
Than my real
Big toe,
Like a balloon
On its way up.
I cried and
Sat on the porch.
The water on
My face was not
Water from the sprinkler,
But water from
Inside my body,
Way down where
Pain says, *¡Hijole!*
That hurts!
Mom brought me
A glass of Kool-Aid.
I drank some
And then pressed
The icy glass
Against my throbbing toe.
The toe
Shrank back
Into place,
And on that day
I began to think
Of Kool-Aid not
As sugar on
The tongue
But as medicine.
And as for the bees,
You have to watch
For them. They buzz
The lawn for
Their own sugar
And wet play.

FLASH CARDS rita dove

In math I was the whiz kid, keeper
of oranges and apples. *What you don't understand,*
master, my father said; the faster
I answered, the faster they came.

I could see one bud on the teacher's geranium,
one clear bee sputtering at the wet pane.
The tulip trees always dragged after heavy rain
so I tucked my head as my boots slapped home.

My father put up his feet after work
and relaxed with a highball and *The Life of Lincoln*.
After supper we drilled and I climbed the dark
before sleep, before a thin voice hissed
numbers as I spun on a wheel. I had to guess.
Ten, I kept saying, I'm only ten.