



# South Kent School

## IV Form Summer Assignments - Poetry

### “A Boy Named Sue” by Shel Silverstein

Well, my daddy left home when I was three,  
and he didn't leave much to Ma and me,  
just this old guitar and a bottle of booze.  
Now I don't blame him because he run and hid,  
but the meanest thing that he ever did was  
before he left he went and named me Sue.

Well, he must have thought it was quite a joke,  
and it got lots of laughs from a lot of folks,  
it seems I had to fight my whole life through.  
Some gal would giggle and I'd get red  
and some guy would laugh and I'd bust his head,  
I tell you, life ain't easy for a boy named Sue.

Well, I grew up quick and I grew up mean.  
My fist got hard and my wits got keen.  
Roamed from town to town to hide my shame,  
but I made me a vow to the moon and the stars,  
I'd search the honky tonks and bars and kill  
that man that gave me that awful name.

But it was Gatlinburg in mid July and I had  
just hit town and my throat was dry.  
I'd thought i'd stop and have myself a brew.  
At an old saloon in a street of mud  
and at a table dealing stud sat the dirty,  
mangy dog that named me Sue.

Well, I knew that snake was my own sweet dad  
from a worn-out picture that my mother had  
and I knew the scar on his cheek and his evil eye.  
He was big and bent and gray and old  
and I looked at him and my blood ran cold,  
and I said, "My name is Sue. How do you do?  
Now you're gonna die." Yeah, that's what I told him.

Well, I hit him right between the eyes and he went down  
but to my surprise he came up with a knife  
and cut off a piece of my ear. But I busted a chair  
right across his teeth. And we crashed through  
the wall and into the street kicking and a-gouging  
in the mud and the blood and the beer.

I tell you I've fought tougher men but I really can't remember when.  
He kicked like a mule and bit like a crocodile.  
I heard him laughin' and then I heard him cussin',  
he went for his gun and I pulled mine first.  
He stood there looking at me and I saw him smile.

And he said, "Son, this world is rough and if  
a man's gonna make it, he's gotta be tough  
and I knew I wouldn't be there to help you along.  
So I gave you that name and I said 'Goodbye'.  
I knew you'd have to get tough or die. And it's  
that name that helped to make you strong."

Yeah, he said, "Now you have just fought one  
helluva fight, and I know you hate me and you've  
got the right to kill me now and I wouldn't blame you  
if you do. But you ought to thank me  
before I die for the gravel in your guts and the spit  
in your eye because I'm the nut that named you Sue."  
Yeah, what could I do? What could I do?

I got all choked up and I threw down my gun,  
called him pa and he called me a son,  
and I came away with a different point of view  
and I think about him now and then.  
Every time I tried, every time I win and if I  
ever have a son I think I am gonna name him  
Bill or George - anything but Sue.