

## POEMS By Brian Binyamin Meyer

### Shongololos

After thunder and the pelting rain,  
Clear skies beckoned to swim again,  
Air crispy clear, day new and cool,  
We rushed down to the sparkling pool.

At water's edge I halted, and drew back in alarm,  
For the sparkling water had for me now lost its rippling charm;  
I could not countenance my swimming because of what I saw:  
Lying on the bottom, a curled-up shongololo.

In fact not one, but many more, I knew not how they got there,  
Before the storm the pool was clean, of that I can declare,  
So with an eek, a gasp and shriek, we used the net on the long pole,  
To lift them from their watery grave, but caused them just to move and roll.

From the curvature of waters' waves our aim was made quite rotten,  
But then at last success we had, and they were soon forgotten  
As we tossed these creepy crawlies back onto garden soil,  
Not waiting to discover if their bodies would uncoil.

Into the water we then jumped, to get up to our antics,  
Not thinking twice of possible centipede semantics;  
Diving underwater then I almost broke my jaw:  
For a curled up shongololo is the only thing I saw;

Oh what a whoosh and splash I made as panicked I did try  
To straighten up and out the pool with movements gone awry,  
How had we missed that awful thing I really do not know,  
But there it was a-lying in the water down below.

I could not would not should not swim the entire afternoon,  
Cos if I 'd see another, I knew that I would swoon,  
Creepy crawlies aren't for me, I do admit this flaw,  
I shudder, (to this very day), at the harmless shongololo.

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## Swimming Lessons

Under her floppy large-brimmed hat  
Shirley Read taught us to swim:  
From basic doggie-paddle stuff  
To every stroke stylishly trim.

There I was afraid of water;  
Ankle deep just one step down,  
Rainbows glistened on ceramics;  
Petrified that I would drown.

No-nonsense-lady Shirley was,  
She gripped me tight against her waist,  
Off we went across the pool,  
Me chocking on the chloride taste,

Flailing, crying, kicking loud,  
Back and forth under the brim,  
On that day in sparkling water,  
Shirley taught me how to swim.

Hail the achievement, feigning bored  
Shirley set my first award:

Star on my shirt, Jelly-gums in hand,  
You're a Goldfish, Shirley said  
Sugar hit high with excited smiles,  
Swimming no longer would I dread.

Right onto Athol from Louis Botha,  
Left onto Knox past Waverley Girls' High,  
Past rolling lawns and mansions' walls  
Shirley Read is now close by.

Week after week off we went,  
Meyer cousins also there,  
Shirley had a heated pool;  
We swam in weather foul or fair.

But not when lightning split the sky,  
And thunder boomed a Transvaal storm,  
We shivered on the stoep awaiting,  
To rush back into waters warm.

Breast-stroke, back-stroke, free-style crawl,  
"Don't slap the water; bend your ARMS!"  
She'd stride along the side announcing:  
"Push the water; outward PALMS!"

Shirley in her floppy hat,  
Round sunglasses sun-tanned skin,  
Taught us, trained us and she changed us,  
From fish to porpoise, to dolphin.

And so the final day arrived,  
Two lengths each style and then some diving,  
Tis for this we had been striving:  
Perfect breathing: two strokes, exhale,  
Up from Dolphin to a Whale.

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## Radio vs Teevee

On the day Telefunken  
arrived in our lounge,  
We tossed aside the radio  
For teevee's mediocrity,  
And it's short two hour show.

More's the pity  
that we did so,  
For the plays on radio,  
Were pretty good in letting  
Our imaginations grow.

On Friday nights we gathered,  
sitting crossed-legged on the floor,  
Me, my sis and older bro,  
As Squad Cars prowled the empty streets  
On the radio.

On Monday eve we always had  
Lux Radio theatre fun,  
The drama as we heard it grow,  
With sound effects so very real  
Transmitting through the radio.

And Springbok sekerlik did give us  
much comic relief too:  
Men from the Ministry having a go,  
Or Father, Dear Father's daughter's new beau,  
Letting us laugh by the radio.

And how about Tuesday's  
Consider Your Verdict,  
Or if you prefer a quiz or games show:  
Pick a Box (or the money) and go Check Your Mate,  
Oh what fun from the radio!

Then along came the year  
Nineteen Seventy Five  
When experiments started (Alice sat on the floor),  
An hour of English and then Afrikaans,  
Glued to the screen there we did sit,  
Whilst giving the radio nary a glance.

It didn't take long to establish  
our favorites,  
Biltong and Potroast, Blitzpatrollie,  
(Heretical dubbing of The Sweeney),  
Such were the wonders  
Of SA teevee.

Kojak, Columbo and a dubbed  
Angelique,  
The Carol Burnett Show and Bob Newhart too,  
Homework completed with alacrity,  
So we could watch, ASAP,  
All those wonders of SA teevee.

Little House on the Prairie,  
The Villagers home grown,  
The A-Team, Knight Rider, the Ewings of Dallas,  
Such were the wonders on SA teevee,  
Cowboy Shane and A Town Like Alice.

Now come to think of it,  
Telefunken it wasn't,  
In the end we all voted to get JVC,  
To better sample the wonders and blunders of colour  
Broadcast by good, new SA teevee.

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## **Poems by Brian Binyamin Meyer**

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