

Christa L.

Age: 19

Slam Poem

### Are You Sick?

This is a Slam Poem I wrote in high school and read to my class. I typically never spoke this deeply about cystic fibrosis to close peers as I am usually a more light-hearted person, but for the poem I felt more called to tug at my own heart strings. Writing this gave me a different perspective on my health, and I know my classmates were not expecting this either. I was unsure if I would be able to read this in front of my class, but I made it through. As I finished, two of my best friends were tearing up, as they had not realized the current state of my health was more than I would make it out to be. Facing this fear of letting people see that side of me is hard, but as I got older it was inevitable that my health was stepping on my toes in everything I did.

Everyday we wake up to fight the same battles that left us so tired the night before. As I rise I can feel my lungs growing tighter with each breath. I race to find one of the many miraculous drugs that keep me alive each day. Everyday is a struggle, they say struggle is good, but when you're struggling this much it doesn't feel like it. Throbbing headache, sharp painful cough, lungs that feel heavy and weak, just another day in the life I guess. Didn't think just living should be this hard. Before I even leave the house I can tell it is going to be a rough day. "Are you sick" they ask? "No." I say.

Walking the halls I gasp for air just trying to make it to my next class, knowing that it is not going to get any easier. “Are you sick? Cause you look sick” they say. “No, if I were sick I wouldn’t be here”

They don’t understand. I don’t want to be here. I don’t want to feel like this. I want to be in bed. I want to be resting. But If I rested everytime I didn’t “feel well” I’d never be here.

Going to work isn’t any better. My body aches, I’m exhausted. I need rest. I wish I could say that time flies, but we all know that’s not true. Kids come and go all with the same question. “Are you sick” “No. At least I don’t think so”

Finally home, ready for sleep. Well too bad, it’s time for another round of drugs, and therapy and staying up late, and for what? Just to stay alive.

I want to say that tomorrow when I wake up i’ll feel better and that all the pain will be gone, but I know that would be a lie. I worry what tomorrow holds, I worry that I won’t get a tomorrow. I worry that if I do have a future it won’t be what I want. I’m sick of feeling like a burden and an annoyance to those around me. It’s frustrating to not know why I feel like this or how to make it better. I feel helpless, as I’ve done all I can do. Things won’t get better until I can take it anymore. Until I cave and give in. I try to be brave and not let IT win, but after so long of feeling this way I just can’t take it. Knowing that the people that care about me are watching me suffer is hard and I want it to stop. I don’t want pity. I want understanding, but that’s hard unless you're in someone else's shoes. I can feel the guilt rest on my shoulders as I close my eyes for the night. But before I can sleep the words “ are you sick” run across my mind one last time. And after people say something so many times you start to believe it, so who knows maybe I am sick.