THIS IS A TEST

● CATHERINE LU
● BAM! Youth Slam

ABSTRACT

This spoken word poem is targeted towards anyone affected by the systematic education that continues all throughout our lives. It brings the truth out, of how this is all a cycle of testers and testing.

KEYWORDS

education, spoken
word

AUDIO LINK

TRANSCRIPT

This is a test.

Room 42, high noon, you will be tested on how well you perform on tests because you were taught how to go to school where you learned how to learn for tests testing tests in school schooling how to school teaching how to be taught for tests testing tests in school schooling school teaching how to be taught.

So test me.

Test my patience.

Test my temper.

My limits, held together by

Dermatologist-tested duct tape, chef-tasted rubber, toast my tyrant on repeat for quality demonstration, warranty recommendation, I am a tested product with a clear background check. I am a tested product with great credit history.

"Pick a number, queue in. Patient

[2-4-6-F]

how much

[pain]

do you feel on a scale of 1 to 10?"

Can I respond with a haiku?

Emotional pain

constricts its barbed wire a—
round long long healed scars.

No? Abstract answers not allowed!? On a scale of 1-10, rate my existence.

On a scale of 1-10, with one decimal point, rate. . . your mom.

On a scale of 1-10, with one decimal point. . . get it right, judges! Drum roll, please!

Score. . . the meaning of life. And score the expression
on your face right now.

Measuring cup our capability of spiritual tolerance. Does empathy
stay buoyant at 38 Celsius? On a scale of 1-10, rate
my essence
of existence that is
poetry.

Self learning algorithms can't get it right. I'm only human, neither
can I
even—
the test makers can't score perfect.

When the tested graduate to testers, they do what they've been
taught.

We are as flawed as the system that made us that made the
system that made us that made systematically standardized
testing, systematically sorting, boxing a hundred billion neurons
for witness testimony. . .
so test me.

I am a licensed product with tested references.
I am tested goods with a PhD in acronyms.
I am a qualified human resource, as in Human resource.
My mouth is certified, sealed, and stamped shut.

I finally got a test to see if I know when all the testing stops
and I am finally ready to use those results **without studying** for
another—that was a test.

A test?

This is.

A test.

AUTHOR COMMENTARY

In the Ontario education system, I have been standardized tested
since Grade 3's EQAO (Education Quality and Accountability
Office, an independent, government-funded agency that does
large-scale tests to measure learning) test. And the paragraphs
in our report cards mean less than the first four letters of the
alphabet.

I am currently in my last year of high school, and the
education system has my creative personality boxed to its limits.
English class is my worst subject, but Writer's Craft (thanks to a
more flexible teacher) is my best.

The different creative learning styles of students, when
transferred to exams and unit tests, become a numerical average

given to universities. No admissions officer will look twice at a student below the passing grade, even if only one course is dragging them down. The experience of being a number has in part compelled me to write this poem in protest. At poetry slams,

“ The experiences of being a number has in part compelled me to write this poem in protest.

competitors are graded only by a score on a scale of one to ten with one decimal point, and on some occasions the judging is biased too. But points are not *the point*, poetry is *the point* of spoken word slams.

Moving on, I want to thank and give credit to Patrick de Belen, an artist educator and my spoken word mentor. I think he shares a point of view with me on the inflexibility of being a number in the largest school board in Canada, as I have heard many poems he has written about school, learning, and children. Teaching with art as a medium has turned the lives of students around, especially in ‘Poetry Saved Our Lives’, a library-run program where we first met.

Find him on many social media platforms, like YouTube and his website here: <http://www.patrickdebelen.com/>