

In this lesson you will read two poems written by teenagers. The Icarus story has always been popular with adolescents because it shows a boy who dares to test his growing power, regardless of the consequences. In the first poem, however, the Icarus figure is a girl. Read the first poem, writing your questions and comments in the **Response Notes** column. Note, especially, the effect of using questions in the poem.

Jennifer and Icarus by Erin Keenan

Tell me, Jen,
 Did anybody see you fall?
 And did anybody hear you call,
 If call you made, before you gave
 Your body over to the grave?

Did you run, or leap, or cry,
 And did you have time enough to lie
 Inside, and believe that you had learnt to fly,
 Or that you truly didn't care,
 And allowed yourself to die?

Tell me, Jen, why?
 Explain to me, Jen,
 I want to understand.
 They loved you and you made them cry.
 Tell me then, Jennifer,
 Why did that not make you fold your wings and stay? ❖

❖ In this poem, not only time and place are changed. What else changes?
 How does the figure of Jennifer take on characteristics of the Icarus story?

I want you to come
and walk beside metal barges
that have eroded into the tide.
I want to comb your tired feathers.
Let me brush your solemn wings.
Icarus, come with me,
come with me.

My child has fallen.
His wings have melted
into summer clouds.
His eyes have grown soft
from looking at the sun too long.
His once-beautiful blonde feathers
have grown dark and dull.
Icarus, why did you try
to make love with the sun,
with its evil chariot,
with its mirrored beauty.
You should have come with me, Icarus,
I loved you. ❖

❖ Who is speaking in this poem? Is it one person or two?

❖ The poet was a young man who was trying to find himself and his way in life. How does that information affect the way you read the poem? Write your ideas about his poem here:

What are some ways contemporary writers make the story of Icarus relevant to their lives?