



Jack Prelutsky

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About the Author

For years, Jack Prelutsky's rich flights of imagination have been turning children into early lovers of poetry. His witty, tongue-in-cheek poems have tickled the most resistant funny bones, while his scarier verses have been known to raise the little hairs on the back of the neck.

In Jack Prelutsky's world, children are allowed to be as illogical, messy, inventive, and creative, as they want to be. He has received thousands of letters from children all over the United States and abroad. Here are some of the questions he has been asked most frequently.

What was your favorite book when you were a kid?

It's difficult to single out any one favorite book, but among those I loved were *Wild Animals I Have Known* by Ernest Thompson Seton and stories about Robin Hood and King Arthur. Another one I liked was *The Wind in the Willows* by Kenneth Grahame.

How did you become a writer?

I'd always enjoyed playing with language, but I had no idea I would be a writer. I discovered writing as a career only by accident when I was about 24 years old. I had spent months drawing several imaginary animals, but one evening I decided to write a little poem to go with each drawing. A friend encouraged me to show the poems to an editor, and when I did, I was astonished to find that the editor—Susan Hirschman—thought I had a talent for writing verse. Susan told me I was a natural poet and encouraged me to keep writing. She published my first book, and 30 years later she is still my editor.

Where do you get your ideas?

Everywhere! Everything I see or hear can become a poem. Several toys in my studio have turned into poems. I remember things that happened when I was a kid, like the day my new baby brother came home with my mother from the hospital. Or I write about things I like or don't like. I love spaghetti, and I wrote a poem about it.

What advice do you have for young writers?

READ! READ! READ! and WRITE! WRITE! WRITE! Keep a notebook and write down things you see, hear, and think about. Ideas disappear quickly unless you jot them down. When you have an idea for a poem or a story, write down anything you can think of that has to do with that idea. Study your list, and you'll start to see connections among certain items. If you are writing a poem, don't force rhymes. It's better to work on what you want to say and create a feeling for the poem than to try to make up things just to make the poem rhyme.



Suggested Activities for Specific Books and Poems

The Baby Uggs Are Hatching

- After reading the poems, ask students to draw a creature hatching from an egg. Direct students to name the creature and write a poem about it.

The Dragons Are Singing Tonight

- This book may be used in correlation with studies on China, folklore, the Medieval period, or the Chinese New Year celebration.
- Divide the class into groups of two or three. Ask students to read the poems and to list the characteristics of each dragon.
- Read the poems to the students. Ask students to respond to the poems using prose or poetry. Display the responses on a large class-made dragon.
- Direct students to read the poems and to list the verbs used. Ask students to create a mural using the verbs from the poems.

Monday's Troll

- Divide students into groups. Instruct each group to read the poems and then select one of the creatures. Ask students to indicate why they would not be afraid of the creature.
- Ask students to create a simulated press conference or news broadcast about encounters with the creatures in the book.
- Ask each student to select one of the creatures and to list the creature's personality traits.

It's Snowing! It's Snowing!

- Read "It's Snowing! It's Snowing!" Ask students to listen for words that describe the snow. For older students, ask them to read the poem and write the phrases that are used as a metaphor or a simile (e.g., "carpets the grounds," "whiter than paper"). Direct students to create additional phrases that describe snow.
- Read "December Days Are Short." Ask students to keep logs of everything they do on a Saturday in December.



The New Kid on the Block

- Read “Today Is a Day to Crow About,” “No, I Won’t Turn Orange,” or “A Wolf Is at the Laundrymat.” Discuss with students the concept of homonyms. Direct students to name as many homonyms as they can. Write the homonyms on the blackboard. Ask students to select five homonyms and to write sentences that contain both forms of the homonyms. (Example: The wind blew the blue scarf.)
- Divide students into groups. Ask each group to select one of the poems for a choral reading. Or the students may decide to pantomime the poem.
- Read “Louder Than a Clap of Thunder!” or “I Am Flying!” Discuss with the students the concept of similes.
 - a. Ask students to write additional lines to the poem using the author’s pattern.
 - b. Write the phrases such as “softer than,” “bigger than,” or “as slow as” on the chalkboard. Ask students to write descriptions using the phrases.

The Sheriff of Rottenshot

- Read “Philbert Phlurk.” Discuss with the students the use of the suffixes. Ask students to identify words in the poem that uses a suffix.
- Read “The Ghostly Grocer of Grumble Grove.” Write the fourth and fifth stanzas on the chalkboard. Ask students to label the parts of speech.
- Discuss with students the concepts of alliteration and assonance. Use the poems in this book to demonstrate these concepts.

Tryannosaurus Was A Beast

- This book may be used as a reference for factual information and to practice pronunciation.
- Ask students to describe in writing which dinosaur is their favorite.
- After reading the poems, students may make clay models of the dinosaurs.

The Snopp on the Sidewalk

- Read “The Snopp on the Sidewalk.” Ask students to list household items. Direct students to each select one item and to create a nonsense word to rhyme with the item (e.g., board and snoard). Ask students to rewrite the first stanza, substituting their word pairs and a new second line of the stanza.
- Read “The Frummick and the Frelly.” Lead students in a discussion about commercials and advertising. Ask students to list the qualities of a good commercial or advertisement. Ask students to design a poster advertising one of the foods mentioned in the poem.



Something Big Has Been Here

* Read "I Am Growing a Glorious Garden."

- Ask students to list the music instruments in the poem.
- Ask students to research the seating arrangement of an orchestra and compare that arrangement with the instrument arrangement in the poem.

• Read "Life's Not Been the Same in My Family." Ask students to discuss the "good and bad" about having siblings or being an only child.

• Read "I'm Sorry!" Ask students to list the verbs and to identify each type of verb.

• Read "The Rains in Little Dribbles." Ask students to design a travel poster advertising Little Dribbles.

• Read "The Addle-Pated Paddlepuss."

a. Direct students to invent sports equipment like the Addle-Pated Paddlepuss, then to write a description and to draw a picture of the new equipment.

b. Introduce students to pig Latin. Pig Latin is a language formed by placing the initial consonant at the end of the word and adding a suffix of "ay" as in "igpay atinlay." Direct students to create dialogue using pig Latin.

• Read "Benita Beane." Ask students what it means to "play by ear." Discuss the concept of idioms and clichés with students. Select a few of the phrases below to discuss.

Keep it under your hat.

You're barking up the wrong tree.

I was fit to be tied.

Don't beat around the bush.

You have to read between the lines.

That's a horse of a different color.

Dot your i's and cross your t's.

Don't put words in my mouth.

Remember to mind you P's and Q's.

That's a feather in your cap.

He was dressed to the nines.

I got it straight from the horse's mouth.

I want to put my two cents in.

She passed with flying colors.

You're just pulling my leg.

Don't let the cat out of the bag.

a. Ask students to research the origin and meaning of phrases they do not know.

b. Ask students to draw pictures that illustrate specific phrases or to write poems that use one of the phrases in the first or last line.

• Show students "Don't Yell at Me," "My Snake," "Slow Sloth's Slow Song," and "Twaddletalk Tuck" as you read the poem. Lead the students in a discussion of shape or picture poems. Direct students to write shape or picture poems.

• Read "Grasshopper Gumbo."

a. This poem may be used to introduce a unit on health and nutrition.

b. Ask students to identify the alliteration in the poem.

c. Direct students to create and illustrate lunch menus using humorous writing.



- Read “An Early Worm Got Out of Bed” or “The Wumpaloons, Which Never Were.” Direct student to use the clues in the poem(s) to draw the worm or the wumpaloon.
- Read “Watson Watt.” Direct students to list the items in the poem. Ask students to research the weight of each item and to calculate how many pounds Watson Watts balanced.

Zoo Doings

- After reading the poems, ask students to list the rhyming words. Direct students to select two or more rhyming words and to each write a poem using the words selected.
- Direct students to create zoo or alphabet books using animals portrayed in the poems. Students may illustrate their books.

Suggested Activities for Books by Jack Prelutsky

- Direct students to compare the rhyming patterns of two or more poems.
- Read a poem to the students and ask the students to supply the last word.
- Read a poem and direct the students to write stories based on the character or something that happened in the poem.
- Use a related set of Prelutsky’s poems to compare family relationships and feelings.
- Discuss with students elements of poetry, e.g., meter, rhythm, imagery, sounds, and forms. Ask students to identify these elements in Prelutsky’s poems.
- Discuss with students literary devices in poems, e.g., alliteration, hyperbole, repetition, imagery, onomatopoeia, mood, and internal rhyme. Ask students to identify these devices in Prelutsky’s poems.
- Ask upper grade students to work with younger “buddy readers.”
 - a. Upper-grade students may read Prelutsky’s poems.
 - b. Buddy readers illustrate the poems using details from the poem.
 - c. Upper-grade students may tape the poems using as many sound effects as possible.
- After reading selected poems, ask students to list:
 - a. Parts of speech
 - b. Spelling patterns
 - c. Prefixes and suffixes
 - d. Sound patterns
 - e. Initial sounds
 - f. Vowel sounds
 - g. Verb tense