

Classic Poetry Series

Jack Prelutsky
- poems -

Publication Date:

2012

Publisher:

Poemhunter.com - The World's Poetry Archive

Jack Prelutsky(8 September 1940)

Jack Prelutsky is an American writer of children's poetry. He lives in Seattle, Washington with his wife, Carolynn.

Early Life

Jack Prelutsky was born on September 8, 1940 in Brooklyn, New York to Charles, an electrician, and Dorothea, a homemaker. While he was still a baby, a fire burned his family's apartment and he was saved by his Uncle Charlie, who was a stand up comic who played the Borscht Belt. He was poor growing up, and he said he was "...a sensitive kid in a working class neighborhood. I got beat up a lot. I was a skinny kid with a big mouth. A bad combination."

He attended local public schools in the Bronx, hated the experience, and was bored in class. Prelutsky claims to have hated poetry when he was younger. He stated that "sometime in elementary school I had a teacher who, in retrospect, did not like poetry herself. She was determined to inflict her views on her captives. The syllabus told her she had to recite a poem once a week. She would pick a boring poem from a boring book and read it in a boring voice, looking bored while she was doing it."

After teachers discovered he had musical talents, they suggest he attend The High School of Music & Art. While there, he was happy and was able to train his beautiful singing voice and even took part in the musicals. He graduated in 1958, and went on to Hunter College for two years. He studied philosophy, psychology, and flunked English three times before dropping out.

Before becoming a writer, he worked odd jobs including driving a cab, moving furniture, busboy, potter, woodworker, and door-to-door salesman. In the late 1960's, he was working in a bookstore in Greenwich Village and singing in coffeehouses, and while doing the latter he met Bob Dylan, became friends, and Dylan even stated that Prelutsky sounded "like a cross between Woody Guthrie and Enrico Caruso".

Prelutsky also loved to draw imaginary animals, and a friend of his encouraged him to send it to a publisher in New York. He wrote poems to go with the drawings last minute. He met with Susan Hirshman, and was amazed when they wanted his work; not the drawings that took six months to draw, but the poems which took two hours. He was 24 at the time, and the poems appeared in his first book, *A Gopher in the Garden and Other Animal Poems*. Hirshman told him he

was a natural poet, published his book, and remained his editor until she retired 37 years later.

Poetry

Prelutsky has written more than 50 poetry collections, including *Nightmares: Poems to Trouble Your Sleep* (1976), *It's Halloween* (1977), *The Mean Old Mean Hyena* (1978), and *Something BIG Has Been Here* (1990). Nilsen, A. P. and Nilsen, D.L.F. (2000). *Encyclopedia of 20th-Century American Humor*. Phoenix, AZ: Oryx Press. He has also compiled numerous children's anthologies comprising poems of others.

He has also set his poems to music on the audio versions of his anthologies. He often sings and plays guitar on most of them.

In 2006, the Poetry Foundation named Prelutsky the inaugural winner of the Children's Poet Laureate award.

He appeared on the popular animated television series *Arthur*, in the episode "I'm a Poet."

His book *Behold the Bold Umbrellaphant and Other Poems* (illustrated by Carin Berger) won the 2007 Scandiuzzi Children's Book Award of the Washington State Book Awards in the Picture Book category.

In 1993, "The New Kid on the Block" was made into an interactive story book by Brøderbund's Living Books series.

Personal Life

Prelutsky married his wife Carolynn in 1979. They met when he was on a book tour in Albuquerque, New Mexico and she was a children's librarian who was tasked with showing him around town. He claims it was love at first sight and even asked for her hand in marriage the first day he met her. They have lived in Arizona, Boston, New York, and Olympia, Washington. They currently live in downtown Seattle and have an apartment on Bainbridge Island.

A Pizza the Size of the Sun

I'm making a pizza the size of the sun,
a pizza that's sure to weigh more than a ton,
a pizza too massive to pick up and toss,
a pizza resplendent with oceans of sauce.

I'm topping my pizza with mountains of cheese,
with acres of peppers, pimentos, and peas,
with mushrooms, tomatoes, and sausage galore,
with every last olive they had at the store.

My pizza is sure to be one of a kind,
my pizza will leave other pizzas behind,
my pizza will be a delectable treat,
that all who love pizza are welcome to eat.

The oven is hot, I believe it will take
a year and a half for my pizza to bake.
I can hardly wait til my pizza is done,
my wonderful pizza the size of the sun.

Jack Prelutsky

A Wolf Is At The Laundromat

A wolf is at the Laundromat,
it's not a wary stare-wolf,
it's short and fat, it tips its hat,
unlike a scary glare-wolf.
It combs its hair, it clips its toes,
it is a fairly rare wolf,
that's only there to clean its clothes—
it is a wash-and-wear-wolf.

Jack Prelutsky

As Soon As Fred Gets Out Of Bed

As soon as Fred gets out of bed,
his underwear goes on his head.
His mother laughs, "Don't put it there,
a head's no place for underwear!"
But near his ears, above his brains,
is where Fred's underwear remains.

At night when Fred goes back to bed,
he deftly plucks it off his head.
His mother switches off the light
and softly croons, "Good night! Good night!"
And then, for reasons no one knows,
Fred's underwear goes on his toes.

Jack Prelutsky

Be Glad Your Nose Is On Your Face

Be glad your nose is on your face,
not pasted on some other place,
for if it were where it is not,
you might dislike your nose a lot.

Imagine if your precious nose
were sandwiched in between your toes,
that clearly would not be a treat,
for you'd be forced to smell your feet.

Your nose would be a source of dread
were it attached atop your head,
it soon would drive you to despair,
forever tickled by your hair.

Within your ear, your nose would be
an absolute catastrophe,
for when you were obliged to sneeze,
your brain would rattle from the breeze.

Your nose, instead, through thick and thin,
remains between your eyes and chin,
not pasted on some other place--
be glad your nose is on your face!

Jack Prelutsky

Bleezer's Ice Cream

I am Ebenezer Bleezer,
I run BLEEZER'S ICE CREAM STORE,
there are flavors in my freezer
you have never seen before,
twenty-eight divine creations
too delicious to resist,
why not do yourself a favor,
try the flavors on my list:

COCOA MOCHA MACARONI
TAPIOCA SMOKED BALONEY
CHECKERBERRY CHEDDAR CHEW
CHICKEN CHERRY HONEYDEW
TUTTI-FRUTTI STEWED TOMATO
TUNA TACO BAKED POTATO
LOBSTER LITCHI LIMA BEAN
MOZZARELLA MANGOSTEEN
ALMOND HAM MERINGUE SALAMI
YAM ANCHOVY PRUNE PASTRAMI
SASSAFRAS SOUVLAKI HASH
SUKIYAKI SUCCOTASH
BUTTER BRICKLE PEPPER PICKLE
POMEGRANATE PUMPERNICKEL
PEACH PIMENTO PIZZA PLUM
PEANUT PUMPKIN BUBBLEGUM
BROCCOLI BANANA BLUSTER
CHOCOLATE CHOP SUEY CLUSTER
AVOCADO BRUSSELS SPROUT
PERIWINKLE SAUERKRAUT
COTTON CANDY CARROT CUSTARD
CAULIFLOWER COLA MUSTARD
ONION DUMPLING DOUBLE DIP
TURNIP TRUFFLE TRIPLE FLIP
GARLIC GUMBO GRAVY GUAVA
LENTIL LEMON LIVER LAVA
ORANGE OLIVE BAGEL BEET
WATERMELON WAFFLE WHEAT

I am Ebenezer Bleezer,

I run BLEEZER'S ICE CREAM STORE,
taste a flavor from my freezer,
you will surely ask for more.

Jack Prelutsky

Deep In Our Refrigerator

Deep in our refrigerator,
there's a special place
for food that's been around awhile...
we keep it, just in case.
'It's probably too old to eat,'
my mother likes to say.
'But I don't think it's old enough
for me to throw away.'

It stays there for a month or more
to ripen in the cold,
and soon we notice fuzzy clumps
of multicolored mold.
The clumps are larger every day,
we notice this as well,
but mostly what we notice
is a certain special smell.

When finally it all becomes
a nasty mass of slime,
my mother takes it out, and says,
'Apparently, it's time.'
She dumps it in the garbage can,
though not without regret,
then fills the space with other food
that's not so ancient yet

Jack Prelutsky

Dora Diller

'My stomach's full of butterflies!'
lamented Dora Diller.
Her mother sighed. 'That's no surprise,
you ate a caterpillar!'

Jack Prelutsky

Herbert Glerbett

Herbert Glerbett, rather round,
swallowed sherbet by the pound,
fifty pounds of lemon sherbet
went inside of Herbert Glerbett.
With that glob inside his lap
Herbert Glerbett took a nap,
and as he slept, the boy dissolved,
and from the mess a thing evolved—
a thing that is a ghastly green,
a thing the world had never seen,
a puddle thing, a gooey pile
of something strange that does not smile.
Now if you're wise, and if you're sly,
you'll swiftly pass this creature by,
it is no longer Herbert Glerbett.
Whatever it is, do not disturb it.

Jack Prelutsky

Homework! Oh, Homework!

Homework! Oh, Homework!
I hate you! You stink!
I wish I could wash you away in the sink,
if only a bomb
would explode you to bits.
Homework! Oh, homework!
You're giving me fits.

I'd rather take baths
with a man-eating shark,
or wrestle a lion
alone in the dark,
eat spinach and liver,
pet ten porcupines,
than tackle the homework,
my teacher assigns.

Homework! Oh, homework!
you're last on my list,
I simple can't see
why you even exist,
if you just disappeared
it would tickle me pink.
Homework! Oh, homework!
I hate you! You stink!

Jack Prelutsky

I met a dragon face to face

I met a dragon face to face
the year when I was ten,
I took a trip to outer space,
I braved a pirate's den,
I wrestled with a wicked troll,
and fought a great white shark,
I trailed a rabbit down a hole,
I hunted for a snark.

I stowed aboard a submarine,
I opened magic doors,
I traveled in a time machine,
and searched for dinosaurs,
I climbed atop a giant's head,
I found a pot of gold,
I did all this in books I read
when I was ten years old.

Jack Prelutsky

I Went Hungry on Thanksgiving

I was hungry on Thanksgiving
But I couldn't eat a thing
I couldn't eat a drumstick
And I couldn't eat a wing
I couldn't have the pickles
Or the gravy covered rice
The pumpkin pie was luscious
But I couldn't have a slice
I was starving for some stuffing
Or a tasty yellow yam
Or a puffy little muffin
Spread with homemade berry jam
Our dinner looked delicious
But I didn't dare to touch
I went hungry on Thanksgiving
My new braces hurt too much!

Jack Prelutsky

Last Night I Dreamed Of Chickens

Last night I dreamed of chickens,
there were chickens everywhere,
they were standing on my stomach,
they were nesting in my hair,
they were pecking at my pillow,
they were hopping on my head,
they were ruffling up their feathers
as they raced about my bed.

They were on the chairs and tables,
they were on the chandeliers,
they were roosting in the corners,
they were clucking in my ears,
there were chickens, chickens, chickens
for as far as I could see...
when I woke today, I noticed
there were eggs on top of me.

Jack Prelutsky

Pumberly Pott's Unpredictable Niece

Pumberly Pott's unpredictable niece
declared with her usual zeal
that she would devour, by piece after piece,
her uncle's new automobile.

She set to her task very early one morn
by consuming the whole carburetor;
then she swallowed the windshield, the headlights and horn,
and the steering wheel just a bit later.

She chomped on the doors, on the handles and locks,
on the valves and the pistons and rings;
on the air pump and fuel pump and spark plugs and shocks,
on the brakes and the axles and springs.

When her uncle arrived she was chewing a hash
made of leftover hoses and wires
(she'd just finished eating the clutch and the dash
and the steel-belted radial tires).

"Oh, what have you done to my auto," he cried,
"you strange unpredictable lass?"
"The thing won't work, Uncle Pott," she replied,
and he wept, "It was just out of gas."

Jack Prelutsky

Super Samson Simpson

I am Super Samson Simpson,
I'm superlatively strong,
I like to carry elephants,
I do it all day long,
I pick up half a dozen
and hoist them in the air,
it's really somewhat simple,
for I have strength to spare.

My muscles are enormous,
they bulge from top to toe,
and when I carry elephants,
they ripple to and fro,
but I am not the strongest
in the Simpson family,
for when I carry elephants,
my grandma carries me.

Jack Prelutsky

Suzanna socked me Sunday

Suzanna socked me Sunday,
she socked me Monday, too,
she also socked me Tuesday,
I was turning black and blue.

She socked me double Wednesday,
and Thursday even more,
but when she socked me Friday,
she began to get me sore.

"Enough's enough," I yelled at her,
"I hate it when you hit me!"
"Well, then I won't" Suzanna said—
that Saturday, she bit me.

Jack Prelutsky

The Visitor

it came today to visit
and moved into the house
it was smaller than an elephant
but larger than a mouse

first it slapped my sister
then it kicked my dad
then it pushed my mother
oh! that really made me mad

it went and tickled rover
and terrified the cat
it sliced apart my necktie
and rudely crushed my hat

it smeared my head with honey
and filled the tub with rocks
and when i yelled in anger
it stole my shoes and socks

that's just the way it happened
it happened all today
before it bowed politely
and softly went away

Jack Prelutsky