

Performing Poems as Monologues:

In this activity we will perform a section of a poem by Jack Prelutsky (Narrator and Poet of this week's program) as a monologue, then create and perform our own original poem monologues inspired by everyday objects.

Materials Needed:

A piece of paper and a writing utensil.

Bonus: crayons, markers, and/or color pencils. It may be helpful to print out this page, but not necessary.

“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... Or I write about things I like or don't like. I love spaghetti and wrote a poem about it.”

- Jack Prelutsky, *interview on Scholastic.com*

Directions:

Step 1: Read & Discuss the Poem

- Read this first stanza* of *I Found a Four-Leaf Clover* by Jack Prelutsky:

*I found a four-leaf clover
and was happy with my find,
but with time to think it over,
I've entirely changed my mind.
I concealed it in my pocket,
safe inside a paper pad,
soon, much swifter than a rocket,
my good fortune turned to bad.*

- Think about how the person telling the story in this poem feels. How does it change from the beginning to the end of the stanza? Write or draw a picture of the feeling from the beginning at the top of the paper. Write or draw a picture of the feeling they have by the end near the bottom.
- Which words stand out to you? Put a line under them or highlight them.
- Which words are funny? Put a squiggly line or a line of a different color under them.
- Which words are important for the audience to hear so that they will understand the story? Circle those words.

*a stanza is a grouped set of lines in a poem.

Step 2: Perform the Poem as a Monologue**

- Read the lines again and let your voice, face and body show how your feelings are changing.
- Experiment with a variety of ways to say the words you have underlined, circled and/or highlighted.
- Take turns performing the monologue for each other. Each person who performs it will do it a little bit differently.

**a monologue is when one character in a play speaks a set of lines to express their thoughts and feelings out loud, to themselves, another character or the audience.

Step 3: Create an Original Monologue Poem

- Choose an object to inspire your monologue poem. Jack Prelutsky chose a four-leaf clover for this poem, but he has also found inspiration from pencils, toys and even spaghetti. What will you choose? Remember, any choice you make is right – it's your poem!
- Choose a feeling for the beginning of the poem, and a different one for the end.

Example A: My object is a ball of yarn. At the start I feel calm, at the end I feel frustrated.

Example B: My object is a stuffed tiger. At the start I feel sad, at the end I feel happy.

- Tell your story as a poem monologue. You can improvise out loud (make it up as you go along), write it down or have someone take dictation (write it down for you) as you tell it.
- Remember that a poem can rhyme, but it doesn't have to.

Example A: I love this yarn, I love it all. I'm going to wind a little ball. It makes me calm with every touch. I really love it so, so much. Hey wait, how do I do this thing? It's getting tangled on my ring. This yarn is not so nice to me, it's really very frustrating!

Example B: I'm feeling sad today. Nothing to play, no one to play with. I'll just lie here on my bed I guess. Ouch, what's this lump under my back? Oh, this old tiger. How did you get here? Hey what's this little note tied on your tail? I love you? Tiger, did you write this? You are so sweet! Hmm, this handwriting looks like Grandma's...what a coincidence!

Closing:

Put all of your poem monologues together for a grand poem monologue performance!

Bonus:

Read and perform more of Jack Prelutsky's poetry! He has written over 70 children's books including many books of poetry. Sample some of his poems, including the complete poem excerpted above, on the Poetry Foundation website at <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/jack-prelutsky>