

## Writing With Writers: Jack Prelutsky Poetry

### Step 1: My Poem

#### **Louder Than a Clap of Thunder**

By Jack Prelutsky

Louder than a clap of thunder,  
louder than an eagle screams,  
louder than a dragon blunders,  
or a dozen football teams,  
louder than a four alarmer,  
or a rushing waterfall,  
louder than a knight in armor  
jumping from a ten-foot wall.  
Louder than an earthquake rumbles,  
louder than a tidal wave,  
louder than an ogre grumbles  
as he stumbles through his cave,  
louder than stampeding cattle,  
louder than a cannon roars,  
louder than a giant's rattle,  
that's how loud my father SNORES!

“Louder Than a Clap of Thunder” from *The New Kid on the Block*,  
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## Step 2: Brainstorming

### Word Warm-Ups

Just as you would stretch before you go running, you need to warm up before you start writing poetry.

Here are some of my favorite exercises to help you stretch your mind:

#### **1. Word Play**

Pick a word, any word, and think of all the words that rhyme with that word. Try first with one-syllable words, and then with words of two or more syllables.

#### **2. Object Observations**

Pick an object — a pencil, a brick wall, a clock, a tomato — anything. Then write down everything you notice about that object.

#### **3. Synonym Silliness**

Think of an adjective, such as happy, soft, tall, or sleepy. Then write down all the words you can think of that have the same meaning as that adjective. This list will help a lot when you're trying to describe things.

Here are a few tips for you to follow that have always helped me with my writing. I recommend that you try them!

1. Write as often as you can. That's what writers do — they write.
2. Carry a notebook and jot down your ideas immediately.
3. Keep a diary or journal — and try to write at least a little in it every day.
4. Write first about the things closest to you — yourself, or your family, friends, and pets. It's a lot easier than writing about things you know little or nothing about.
5. If you're writing poems, don't worry about trying to make them rhyme. It's much more important to say what you really want to say.
6. Try writing two or three different poems about the same subject. Use different points of view.
7. Look in the mirror and write about the person looking back at you. Write about how that person is feeling at that moment.
8. Take a walk around your neighborhood — and write about the things you see there. Don't forget to take notes in your notebook.

9. Don't expect to get things right the first time. You do sometimes, but it's definitely the exception. Rewriting is an important step.
10. Sometimes, no matter how hard you try to write, nothing comes out. Forget about writing for a while, and go off and do something else. Then try writing again later.

# Writing With Writers: Jack Prelutsky Poetry Unit

## Step 3: Write Your Poem

Are you all warmed up? Then you're ready to write your own poem. If you want, you can choose one of the poem-starters below. You can use it to get going, and add as many stanzas of your own as you like.

### Poem 1

When I awoke one morning,  
A stork was on my head. I asked,  
"What are you doing  
there?"  
It looked at me and said . . .

*Hint:* If you wish, you may substitute any one-syllable bird, bug, or mammal for the stork. You may also change the word was to "sat," "stood," "snoozed," "perched," or any other verb you think is appropriate. You'll probably wind up with a very different poem if there's a mouse on your head instead of a moose.

## Poem 2

Almost every afternoon,  
I eat pickles with a spoon.  
Every evening right at six,  
I eat pickles stacked on bricks.

*Hint:* You can have a lot of fun writing about other ways to eat pickles. You can also use jellybeans, bananas, or potato chips instead of pickles — and explain the different ways that you eat them. It's up to you.

### Revising Guidelines

By now, you should have a first draft of your poem, which means you're ready to begin revising. To me, rewriting is the most important part of writing because nothing ever comes out right the very first time. Here are some guidelines I find helpful when I begin revising my own poetry:

1. Rewrite your poem at least once. I rewrite most of my own poems at least four or five times. Some I've even rewritten as many as 100 times!
2. Don't rush! Poems can take as long as a week, a month, or even a year to write.

3. How will you know when your poem is done? I find that the poem lets me know when it's done. It's just like being full when you eat. Sometimes if you take one more bite, you get a stomachache. But, if you don't take that extra mouthful, you'll feel perfectly satisfied. Well, it's the same with poetry — you'll just know when it feels right.
4. When you get frustrated, and feel that the poem is not coming out the way you'd like, put it aside and do something else for a while. When this happens to me, I work on another poem, or just go to a ballgame!
5. Sleep on it! If you're stuck, try thinking about your poem as you drift off to sleep. When I do this, I find that I dream the solution.

When you're happy with what you have written, share it with other students by publishing it online in our Poetry Collection.