

It's Raining Pigs and Noodles

by Jack Prelutsky

LEARNING ABOUT Syllables and Rhyming Words

It's silent reading time in my second-grade classroom. You could hear a pin drop as I reach for the three favorite Jack Prelutsky books that I keep on my desk. Glancing at the class list inside the front cover of each, I identify the lucky winners: "Sydney, it's your turn to read *The New Kid on the Block*. Michael, you may read *A Pizza the Size of the Sun*, and Allison, you may have *Something BIG Has Been Here*." These three students quickly rush to my desk for the coveted books.

Following our read-aloud of selected Jack Prelutsky poems, I would watch students race to the silent reading library each day in a mad stampede for these books. Introducing sign-up sheets and keeping the books on my desk became a necessity for safety reasons as well as ensuring that everyone had equal time with Jack Prelutsky's rhyming, zany, kid-friendly books.

It's Raining Pigs and Noodles, one of the latest book from the Jack Prelutsky-James Stevenson duo, has created a similar stir in my classroom. With poems like "The Chicken Club," "The Bunny Bus," "My Parents Have the Flu Today," "The Yaks Convened a Meeting," "Never Poke Your Uncle with a Fork," "Winding Through a Maze," "Burp," and "I'm Standing in the Corner," it's no wonder children go wild over these books. From a teacher's perspective, there's no better way to get kids reading with expression and fluency than to give them opportunities to read these poems independently. Whether they're beginning or avid readers, all students pore over the nonsensical lyrics when placed one-on-one with *It's Raining Pigs and Noodles*; they're motivated to read the book for themselves.

Prior to our read-aloud, I chart the title poem, deleting some words and adding some beginning letter clues. I also make a copy for each student. Then we explore syllables, rhyming words, fluency, and expression.

Rich Vocabulary

assorted *adj.*
different kinds

Mrs. L.: What is it about Jack Prelutsky's poems that makes us want to read them again and again?

Annie: The silly words.

Kristen: The rhymes.

Abby: The beat.

Chris: The funny pictures

Mrs. L.: The first time I read this book, I'd read a poem and say to myself, "This is my favorite!" Then I'd read the next page and think, "No, wait, this is my favorite." Then I realized that I liked every poem on every page! To give you a taste of these fun poems, I've charted the title poem, "It's Raining Pigs and Noodles." (I read the first part of the poem saying "blank" for the missing words.)

*It's raining pigs and noodles,
it's pouring frogs and hats,
chrysanthemums and p(blank),
bananas, brooms, and c(blank).
Assorted prunes and parrots
are dropping from the (blank),
here comes a bunch of (blank),
some hippopotami.*

Timothy: Some words are missing.

Mrs. L.: You're right. Once we identify the pattern of the poem, we can fill in the missing words. Jack Prelutsky is a master at making words fit a pattern. He uses syllables to create the pattern. Read the first two lines with me.

Class: "It's raining pigs and noodles, it's pouring frogs and hats."

Mrs. L.: Now read the first line again. Count the syllables on your fingers with me as I write the number of beats below each word:

Class: "It's rain-ing pigs and nood-les,"
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Jenny: It has seven beats.

Mrs. L.: I'll write a seven for seven syllables next to this line of the poem. Count the syllables on your fingers as you read line two.

Class: "It's pouring frogs and hats."

George: I counted seven beats again.

Dean: No, six.

Mrs. L.: Let's count it together. Put a finger up for each beat: "It's"—

Class: One.

Mrs. L.: "pour-ing"—

Class: Two-three.

Mrs. L.: "frogs and hats"—

Class: Four, five, six.

Joel: That's six!

Mrs. L.: The pattern so far is seven beats, six beats. Let's try to fill in the next line to make a total of seven beats. The first word in line three is tricky.

Maggie: I remember it—*chrysanthemum*.

Mrs. L.: Excellent remember! There is more than one so it's actually—

Class: *Chrysanthemums*.

Mrs. L.: Let's use lines to divide *chrysanthemums* into chunks to see how many syllables it has. Say it slowly. What is the first beat?

Chris: *Cr*.

Matthew: You should put the *y* with the first part.

Luke: The next part is *san*.

Mrs. L.: Great. *Chry-san*—

David: *the*

Jesse: Then *mums*. Wow! That's a four-beat word!

Jake: *And* makes five beats, so we need a two-beat word.

Hannah: And it has to start with *p*.

Mrs. L.: Is there anything else you can tell me about this word?

George: I bet it rhymes with *hats*.

Sydney: No, *pats* can't fall like rain. It rhymes with either *noodles* or *pigs*.

Amanda: *Pigs* isn't at the end of the line. I bet the word rhymes with *noodles*.

Mrs. L.: So we need a two-beat word that starts with *p* and rhymes with *noodles*.

Jenny: *Poodles!* *Chrysanthemums* and *poodles*—

Jan: That makes seven beats for this line.

Mrs. L.: Great! Keep reading.

Class: "Bananas, brooms, and"—

Kristen: *Cats!* You need a *c* word that rhymes with *hats*. That's *cats* because cats are falling like rain, too.

Mrs. L.: Let's count the syllables in this line to see if it fits the pattern. We'll draw lines on bananas to show the syllables.

David: *Ba-nan-as*.

Maggie: It's a three-beat word.

Joel: *Brooms* and *cats* makes three more beats: three plus three makes six beats.

Mrs. L.: Excellent! Jack Prelutsky did make a seven-six-seven-six pattern. The rhythm of these syllables make it fun to read the poem out loud. Let's read the first four lines all together.

Class: "It's raining pigs and noodles, it's pouring frogs and hats, chrysanthemums and poodles, bananas, brooms, and cats."

Mrs. L.: Let's find out if the next four lines follow the pattern.

*Assorted prunes and parrots
are dropping from the (blank),
here comes a bunch of (blank),
some hippopotami.*

Kristen: I think the prunes and parrots are dropping from the sky.

Mrs. L.: There's no beginning letter clue for this line. But it does make sense that these things would fall from the sky.

Kristen: It has to be *sky*.

Mrs. L.: Let's count the syllables in these next two lines. Put up a finger as I read, please:
"As-sort-ed prunes and par-rots"—

Class: Seven beats!

Mrs. L.: "Are drop-ping from the sky."

Class: Six beats!

Timothy: It follows the pattern!

Mrs. L.: "Here comes a bunch of (blank)." What do you know about this missing word?

Matthew: It starts with *c*.

Chris: "Here comes a bunch" has four beats.

Luke: *Of* is a one-beat word. That makes five beats. So it has to be a two-beat word that starts with *c*. That will make seven beats in that line.

Amanda: And it has to rhyme with *parrots*.

Michael: It's *carrots*.

Mrs. L.: "Here comes a bunch of carrots." Carrots do come in bunches. I think you're right! How many beats does the line have?

Class: One, two, three, four, five, six-seven.

Allison: That's seven beats!

Mrs. L.: Look at the long word at the end of the next line. Let's break it apart by syllables: *hip-po-pot-a-mi* (*I stress the syllables as I say the word*).

Hannah: *Hip*.

Timothy: *Po*.

Luke: *Pot*.

Jesse: *A*.

Michael: *Mi*! Doesn't he mean *hippopotamus*?

Mrs. L.: More than one hippopotamus is falling from the sky. Jack Prelutsky couldn't write *hippopotamuses*. Can you tell me why?

Kristen: It's too hard to say.

Mrs. L.: I agree. And, it's also adds too many syllables to that line. He used a play on words and made it *hip-po-pot-a-mi*, which is a fancy way to mean more than one when you're talking about animals. Octopuses are sometimes called octopi, for example. How many syllables does *hip-po-pot-a-mi* have?

Class: Five!

Mrs. L.: So "some hippopotami" would have—

Class: Six beats!

Mrs. L.: Excellent! Let's put the first part of this poem back together. Read the lines with expression.

Then students work with partners to fill in the missing words and draw lines to mark syllables on their copies of the poem. Our chart is displayed for assistance with the first part of the poem. The second verse also has deleted words. Note that only one of the four pairs of lines in it follows the rhyming word spelling pattern of the first verse.; for example, *Train* and *rain* do look and sound alike, but *nickels* and *pickles* only sound alike.

Following this independent work time, hold a discussion of look-alike and sound-alike rhyming word pairs as partners share their responses.

MORE FUN WITH THE BOOK

Share all the hilarious kid-approved poems from *It's Raining Pigs and Noodles* for read-aloud. Reread favorites to kick off silent reading time. Make a tally table of those deemed favorites by your students for even more book-based skill learning.

OUR FAVORITE JACK PRELUTSKY BOOK	
Something BIG Has Been Here	### ###
The New Kid on the Block	###
A Pizza the Size of the Sun	//
It's Raining Pigs and Noodles	### ###



Classroom sample



Pocket Chart Center

TEACHING TIP

Organize materials near a pocket chart to create an Independent learning center where students can do sequencing activities, practice sight words, sort words by attribute, and more! Write the related book titles on the front of individual 10 x 13 manila envelopes. Laminate each envelope, making sure the flap is open and the clasp is pressed flat. Use an Exacto knife to slit the opening of the envelope, slip inside a copy of the book, sentence strips, and any recording sheets. Place the envelopes in a box or tub near the pocket chart. Introduce the activities, and then invite students to choose activities to explore during free time. Our center for *It's Raining Pigs and Noodles* is shown at left.

