

(15)

## The Witch

She comes by night, in fearsome flight, In garments black as pitch, The queen of doom upon her broom, The wild and wicked witch,

(5)	A cackling crone with brittle bones
	And desiccated limbs,
	Two evil eyes with warts and sties
	And bags about the rims,

A dangling nose, ten twisted toes

(10) And folds of shriveled skin,

Cracked and chipped and crackled lips

That frame a toothless grin.

She hurtles by, she sweeps the sky And hurls a piercing screech. As she swoops past, a spell is cast

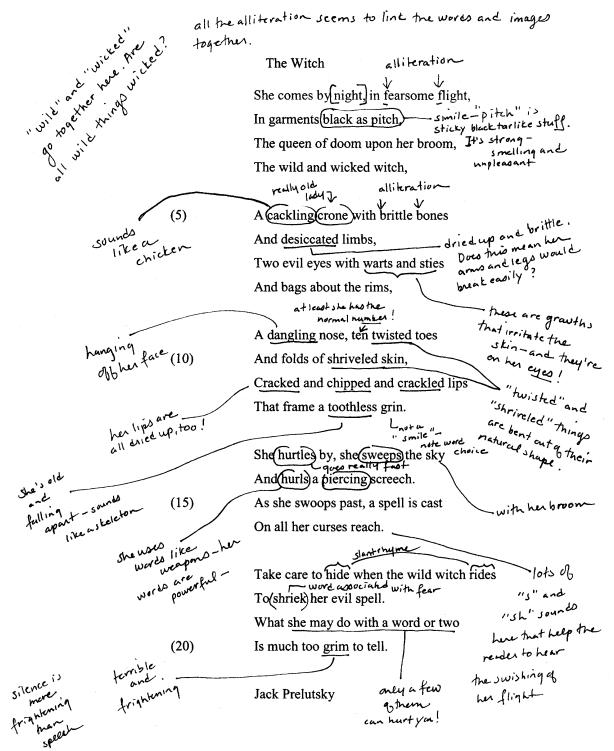
On all her curses reach.

Take care to hide when the wild witch rides To shriek her evil spell. What she may do with a word or two

(20) Is much too grim to tell.

by Jack Prelutsky





Prelutsky, Jack. "The Witch" in *Classic Poems to Read Aloud*, ed. James Berry. New York: Larousse Kingfisher Chambers, Inc., 1997.

## Peeling Back the Layers – "The Witch" Foundation Lesson

This activity will help you to understand how authors use sound devices, figurative language, imagery, and syntax to develop a certain tone in a poem.

- 1. Read the poem "The Witch" by Jack Prelutsky.
- 2. Paraphrase the poem. Explain, in prose, exactly what is happening in the poem.
- 3. Look at the sound devices in the poem. Highlight and label all the sound devices: alliteration, rhyme, and rhythm. With a partner, try to determine the pattern of rhyme in the poem. In other words, do certain lines in each stanza contain rhyming words?
- 4. Identify all the figures of speech in the poem. For lines that have a literal meaning (in other words, the line means exactly what it says: no more, no less) label with the word *literal*. In lines that have a figurative meaning, label *metaphor*, *simile*, or *personification*.
- 5. Annotate the poem for patterns in diction and connotation, using highlighters. Make notes in the margin; draw lines and arrows to connect words that might form a pattern. For instance, one pattern in the poem involves words that have to do with darkness. Try to locate at least two more patterns of diction.
- 6. Look at the imagery in the poem. Write headings of the five senses. Go through the poem and write out words or phrases that fit under those headings: sight, touch, taste, hearing, and smell. After you have identified the imagery in the poem, try to a find the patterns or strands of imagery. Your teacher will write out the words and phrases from the poem that contain imagery. With a partner or a small group, find a pattern among these words or phrases and group all the sentence strips that go together.
- 7. You will look at the syntax of the poem in different stages.
  - a. The poem contains five complete sentences. Place brackets around each one.
  - b. The poem contains four dependent clauses. (Challenge: find a fifth dependent clause; the introductory word has been omitted.) Highlight these clauses and label *dependent clause*.
  - c. Highlight and label the prepositional and infinitive phrases. Do you see a certain pattern in the placement of the infinitive phrases?
  - d. With a partner, determine the tone of the poem. Then write out the tone of the poem in a complete sentence.
- 8. With a partner, discuss the following questions:
  - a. What might the figure of the witch represent in your own lives, or in those of other people?
  - b. Why do people fear witches?
  - c. Are there people in the world who are like the witch?
  - d. What harm can these people do "with a word or two" that is "much too grim to tell"?
- 9. Write a paragraph about what makes people scary. End the paragraph with a statement about what "The Witch" teaches its readers about life.