



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,

(10) A dangling nose, ten twisted toes
And folds of shriveled skin,
Cracked and chipped and crackled lips
That frame a toothless grin.

(15) 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.

(20) Take care to hide when the wild witch rides
To shriek her evil spell.
What she may do with a word or two
Is much too grim to tell.

by Jack Prelutsky

"wild" and "wicked" go together here. Are all wild things wicked?

all the alliteration seems to link the words and images together.

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,

alliteration
 ↓
 ↓
 simile - "pitch" is sticky black tarlike stuff.
 It's strong-smelling and unpleasant

(5)
 sounds like a chicken

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

really old lady
 ↓
 alliteration
 ↓
 ↓
 dried up and brittle. Does this mean her arms and legs would break easily?

hanging off her face (10)

A dangling nose, ten twisted toes
 And folds of shriveled skin,
Cracked and chipped and crackled lips
 That frame a toothless grin.

at least she has the normal number!
 ↓
 these are growths that irritate the skin - and they're on her eyes!
 "twisted" and "shriveled" things are bent out of their natural shape.

her lips are all dried up, too!

She hurts by, she sweeps the sky
 And hurls a piercing screech.

not a "smile" note word choice
 ↓
 goes really fast
 with her broom

she's old and falling apart - sounds like a skeleton

(15)

As she swoops past, a spell is cast
 On all her curses reach.

she uses words like weapons - her words are powerful -

Take care to hide when the wild witch rides
 To (shriek) her evil spell.

slant rhyme
 ↓
 word associated with fear
 lots of "s" and "sh" sounds here that help the reader to hear the swooshing of her flight

(20)

What she may do with a word or two
 Is much too grim to tell.

silence is more frightening than speech

terrible and frightening

Jack Prelutsky

only a few of them can hurt you!

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 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.