

Name: _____

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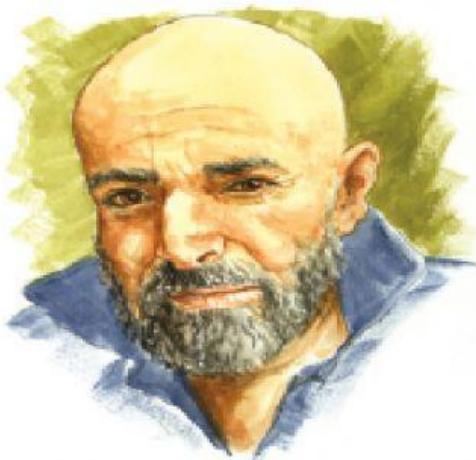
Subject: Reading Comprehension

Topic: Steps in an event

Where the Poetry Begins

What is your favorite poem? Who is your favorite poet?

- 1 Who is your favorite poet? For many young people, the answer is Shel Silverstein. Shel's first book was published in the 1960s, and since then his children's books have sold more than 20 million copies! Young people recognize that Shel really understood his audience.
- 2 Shel Silverstein was born in Chicago, Illinois, in 1932. He began writing poetry when he was young. He was not familiar with the work of any famous poets, so he invented his own style. This turned out to be a good thing, because style is one of the most distinctive things about Shel's poetry.
- 3 Although he was best known for writing children's literature, Shel was creative in many ways. He began his career in the arts as a cartoonist. He also was a talented singer, songwriter, composer, and illustrator. In fact, Shel illustrated all of his children's books himself. This is one reason the pictures seem to accompany the poetry so perfectly.



4 *Where the Sidewalk Ends*, first published in 1964, is one of the most beloved children's books of all time. But what makes Shel's poetry so timeless and popular? His poems are often hilarious, and young people love Shel's type of humor.

5 In one poem, he told the story of a girl who refused to take out the garbage. It piled up higher and higher until it finally threatened to take over the town. Many kids have experienced the feeling of not wanting to do a chore. They love how out of control the author let the situation get because they know that it would never happen that way in real life.

6 In another popular poem, a girl pretends to be sick so that she will not have to attend school. Shel made fun of the situation by having the character exaggerate her symptoms to the point where they became ridiculous. The punch line of the poem occurs at the end. The girl discovers that it is Saturday, and she would not have had to go to school anyway.

7 Shel also liked to play with language in his poetry. He often used elements like alliteration in his work. *Alliteration* is the use of words that begin with the same sounds. In the poem about the girl who refused to take out the garbage, the character's name is Sarah Cynthia Sylvia Stout. This type of alliteration can make poetry fun to read aloud. Shel's poems also often rhymed and had a good rhythm, two more elements that make his work easy and interesting to read.

8 In 1999, Shel Silverstein died in his home in Key West, Florida. Children and adults will miss his quirky humor and incredible imagination. But a bit of Shel Silverstein is captured in his work, which will live on and bring joy to children for many generations to come.

Vocabulary Skills

Rewrite the following address without using the abbreviations.

1. Dr. Hannah Tyrrell
19052 Inglewood Dr.
Lincoln, NE 68512

Fill in the blanks below with the possessive form of the word in parentheses.

2. Shel Silverstein is best known for his _____ literature. (children)
3. One of Shel _____ books is called *Falling Up*. (Silverstein)
4. The _____ name in one poem is Sarah Cynthia Sylvia Stout. (character)

Reading Skills

1. Number the events below to show the order in which they happened.

_____ Shel's first book was published.
_____ Shel died in 1999.
_____ Shel began his career as a cartoonist.
_____ Shel Silverstein was born in Chicago.
_____ *Where the Sidewalk Ends* was published.

2. What does it mean when the author says that Shel Silverstein illustrated all his children's books himself?

3. About how many copies of Shel's books have been sold?

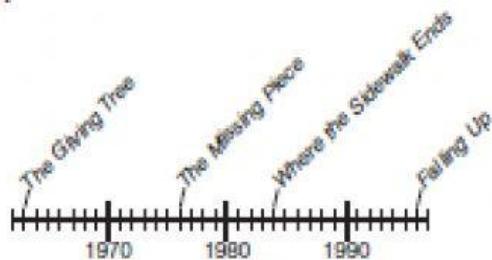
4. Write your own example of alliteration.

5. Check the words that describe Shel Silverstein.

_____ funny
_____ lazy
_____ talkative
_____ artistic
_____ clever

Study Skills

A time line shows the order in which things happened. Use the time line below to answer the questions that follow.



1. What was the most recent book published?

2. Which book was published in 1984?

3. In what year was *The Giving Tree* published?
