

La Tortuga [The Turtle]

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TURTLE POETRY

Editorial Introduction. — This section is devoted to poetry involving turtles, representing either reprinted previously published or new unpublished material. We encourage our readers to submit poetry or songs for consideration, either their own material or work by other authors. Poems may be submitted to Anders G.J. Rhodin, Chelonian Research Foundation, E-mail: RhodinCRF@aol.com.

Our desire is to share with our readers the beauty and wonder of turtles as expressed through the art of the poem or song. In the sense that the relationship between man and turtles is multifaceted, so too is turtle poetry. The poems we publish here will reflect that complexity, from poems of pure admiration for the creatures themselves to others reflecting the utilization of turtles and their products. Some poems will reflect man's use of the turtle for sustenance, others will stress man's need to preserve and protect turtles. Some will deal with our emotional interactions with turtles, others will treat turtles light-heartedly or with seeming disrespect, but all will hopefully help us to better understand both the human and the chelonian condition, and remind us that the turtle holds a sacred place in all our hearts.

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La Tortuga¹ PABLO NERUDA

La tortuga que
anduvo
tanto tiempo
y tanto vio
con
sus
antiguos
ojos,

la tortuga
que comió
aceitunas
del más profundo
mar,
la tortuga que nadó
siete siglos
y conoció
siete
mil
primaveras,
la tortuga
blindada
contra
el calor
y el frío,
contra
los rayos y las olas,

la tortuga
amarilla
y plateada,
con severos
lunares
ambarinos
y pies de rapiña,
la tortuga
se quedó
aquí
durmiendo,
y no lo sabe.
De tan vieja
se fue
poniendo dura,
dejó de amar las olas
y fue rígida
como una plancha de planchar.
Cerró
los ojos que
tanto
mar, cielo, tiempo y tierra
desafiaron,
y se durmió
entre las otras
pedras.

The Turtle² PABLO NERUDA (TRANSLATED BY JODEY BATEMAN)

The turtle who
walked
so long
and saw so much
with
his
ancient
eyes,

the turtle
who ate
olives
from the deepest
sea,
the turtle who swam
for seven centuries
and knew
seven
thousand
springtimes,
the turtle
hooded
against
the heat
and cold,
against
sunrays and waves,

the yellow
turtle
plated,
with severe
amber
scales
and feet for catching prey,
the turtle
stopped
here
to sleep,
and didn't know it.
So old
that he kept
getting harder,
he quit loving the waves
and became rigid
like a clothing iron.
He closed
the eyes which
had defied
so much
sea, sky, time and earth,
and went to sleep
among the other
stones.

Editorial Comment. — Pablo Neruda [1904–1973] was a celebrated poet from Chile who won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1971. His birth name was Ricardo Eliécer Neftalí Reyes Basoalto, but he was known by his pen name and, later, legal name of Pablo Neruda. He was also a diplomat and politician and was closely involved in high-level Chilean politics. Neruda first became known as a poet when he was only 13 years old, and wrote in a variety of styles, including surrealist poems, historical epics, overtly political manifestos, a prose autobiography, and passionate explicit love poems such as the ones in his collection *Twenty Love Poems and a Song of Despair* (1924). Many of his poems also dealt with nature, animals, and wilderness, such as this one about an ancient sea turtle. Neruda was one of the world's most gifted and celebrated poets and we are pleased to reprint his wonderful turtle poem here. May it serve to help inspire some other budding turtle poets out there.

¹ First published 1961 in *Las Piedras de Chile* [*The Stones of Chile*], by Pablo Neruda. Publisher: Losada, Buenos Aires, Argentina.

² Translation by Jodey Bateman posted online at https://motherbird.com/the_turtle.html
and at <https://spanishpoems.blogspot.com/2005/05/pablo-neruda-turtle.html>.

Submitted by Thomas E.J. Leuteritz.