



## 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— This section is devoted to poetry involving turtles, representing either reprinted previously published or new unpublished material.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 Tortuga<sup>1</sup> 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 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 Turtle<sup>2</sup> PABLO NERUDA (TRANSLATED BY JODEY BATEMAN)

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.

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

<sup>2</sup> Translation by Jodey Bateman posted online at [https://motherbird.com/the\\_turtle.html](https://motherbird.com/the_turtle.html)  
and at <https://spanishpoems.blogspot.com/2005/05/pablo-neruda-turtle.html>.

Submitted by Thomas E.J. Leuteritz.