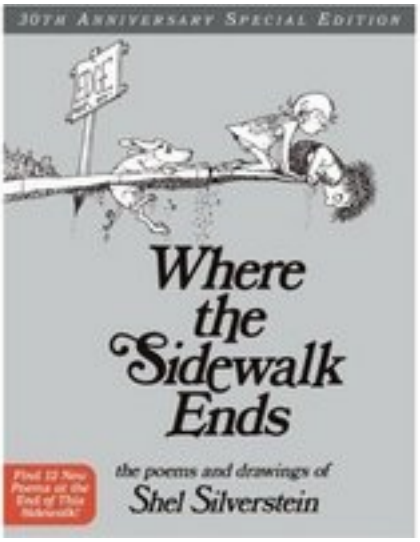
Name _____ Date _____

Shel Silverstein: A Man of Many Talents

By Brandi Waters



Shel Silverstein will always be remembered as one of the great talents in children's writing. His stories and poems have delighted readers for many years. His stories are both silly and serious. His poems are simple but also witty. It is no wonder that children love his work. It is often fun and light-hearted, but it also gives you something to think about. Shel Silverstein may have become famous for the things that he wrote for children, but he was a man of many talents. He was a true artist. He enjoyed working on many different kinds of projects. He was also quite successful with many of his projects outside of children's literature.

Shel Silverstein was born in Chicago in 1932. He grew up as many young boys do, dreaming of becoming a baseball player. He wished that he could be more popular with the girls. He didn't have the skills of a baseball player. He was a lousy dancer. Instead, Shel started to draw and write. It was something that he enjoyed. He kept working and began to learn what he liked doing best and what his strengths were. He created his own style. It made his work unique.

As a young man, Shel Silverstein traveled to Japan and Korea as a soldier. During his free time, he drew cartoons for an Army magazine, *The Pacific Stars and Stripes.* After returning home, that grew into a career as a cartoonist for adult magazines. In the early 1960s, a friend convinced him to send a story to a respected children's book editor. It was that suggestion that started Shel Silverstein's career in children's literature. His first book, *Lafcadio: The Lion Who Shot Back* was published in 1963. That book soon led to more. His next book, *The Giving Tree*, was a story that had been four years in the making. Shel had sent it to several publishers. They all loved it, but no one wanted to publish it. Some thought it was too sad. Others just didn't know what to do with it. After the publication of *Lafcadio*, *The Giving Tree* was finally published. It was a great success. Adults and children alike have grown to love *The Giving Tree.*

Along the way, Shel Silverstein learned to play the guitar. He tried his hand at writing songs. He also wrote several plays. He wrote a hit song for Johnny Cash. He was also nominated for an Academy Award for music he composed for a movie. In 1984, Shel won a Grammy Award for the audio book recording of his beloved book of poems, *Where the Sidewalk Ends.*

Shel Silverstein died in 1999. He left many wonderful works behind. Children still enjoy the poems in his classics: *A Light in the Attic*, *Where the Sidewalk Ends*, and *Falling Up.* Shel Silverstein has made his mark as an artist, storyteller, poet, songwriter, and composer.

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Questions

_____ 1. As a young boy, Shel Silverstein wanted to _____.

A. be a doctor
B. be a baseball player
C. write poems
D. be a reporter

_____ 2. Shel Silverstein drew cartoons for an Army magazine called _____ *Stars and Stripes.*

A. *Pacific*
B. *European.*
C. *The Armed Forces*
D. *American*

_____ 3. Shel Silverstein's first book was a story about a _____.

A. dog
B. lion
C. flower
D. school

4. Shel Silverstein wrote a hit song for _____.

_____

_____

_____ 5. What award did Shel Silverstein win?

A. a Grammy Award
B. an Academy Award
C. a Pulitzer Prize
D. all of the above

Choose your favorite Shel Silverstein poem. Copy it below. List the book where you found the poem. Explain why you like this poem more than others that you have read.

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