

**Adam Mickiewicz**

**A BOOK FOR ALL AGES**

**FABLES / BAJKI**

Imagined and Written by

**Adam Mickiewicz**

Translated and Illustrated by

**Marek Kazmierski**

London

Warsaw

**2019 > 2026**

***“Just tell children that they should love each other. Always.”***

***“Powiedz tylko dzieciom, niech się kochają. Zawsze”***

The last words Adam Mickiewicz reputedly said...

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ADAM MICKIEWICZ

BAJKI / FABLES

**2019 > 2026**

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Precious Pearls of Polish Poetry & Prose  
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## **ABOUT OUR BOOK**

You may be wondering why only the poems are in Polish and English, while all other texts are in English only... Pewniesz ciekaw czemu nasza księga, poza poezją, jest jedynie po angielsku...

I do not ever translate from English to Polish, and hardly ever write in Polish, this is why...

Also, so much has already been written about Mickiewicz in his native tongue, why waste trees and inks on printing things people already know?

And were made to forget by a terrible education system,

Which makes so many of us allergic to poetry?

## **How Best to Enjoy Poetry and Fables**

I have tried to make this book as fun and as painless as possible. Reading books of poetry is not like reading books of prose. Read a poem, then read it out loud, then pick up a pencil and make notes on the page (yes, writing in books is allowed, if it is for love and not for school). Then go for a walk, think about it, let the poem roll about on your tongue and through your mind, and then sit and read another and compare.

If prose is like running a marathon – poetry is sprinting. Don't for goodness sake try to run at full pelt for miles and miles and miles – it will be painful. Prose is weekday garb – poetry is your Sunday best – both are great, but they serve different purposes.

Think of it like champagne, like finest chocolate – not for consumption every day, but without it certain moments in life are just less than special. Read poetry so you can handle – job interviews, romantic dates, arguments with those you love – yes, poetry is no ordinary language, not to be overdosed on, but having some in you can really help you live a longer, happier life – for in times when you needed to say the right words, thanks to reading poetry you have them on the very tip of your tongue...

Oh, and if you think some of these verses are unsuitable for young readers, remember – in days of old, there was no such thing as “children's literature”. Books were published for all the family to enjoy – they were very rare and very expensive – hence they had to suit everyone – as these little stories show, something which is worth revisiting even today.

*Marek Kazmierski, your translator, illustrator and publisher*

## **Adam Mickiewicz BAJKI / FABLES**

### **in English for the First Time Ever**

Imagine William Shakespeare had written a dozen rhymed poems based on classic fairytales and fables, which were then lost for 400 years, and were now rediscovered...

Poland has given us some truly remarkable poets over the ages - Wislawa Szymborska, Czeslaw Milosz (both Nobel Prize winning authors), Zbigniew Herbert, Maria Konopnicka, Julian Tuwim, Jan Brzechwa, Zuzanna Ginczanka and so many more...

Yet none in Poland are as feted as Adam Mickiewicz, a poet, dramatist, essayist, publicist, translator, professor of Slavic literature and political activist born December 24, 1798 in Zawosse (formerly Russia, now Belarus), he died on November 26, 1855 in Constantinople (former capital of the Roman and Ottoman empires, now Turkey), and is buried in Wawel Cathedral, Kraków, Poland, along with Kings and other Polish luminaries.

Streets and monuments named after him are to be found in countless Polish towns and cities - there is even a brand of vodka named Pan Tadeusz, after a character in one of his epic poems (a bit like the English Hamlet cigars).

Mickiewicz not only wrote some of the finest Polish language poetry, drama and prose (during the age of Romanticism, Mickiewicz worked on a Verne-like science fiction novel *A History of the Future*, long before Stanislaw Lem would become one of history's best selling sci-fi writers), he was passionately devoted to fighting for Polish liberation (for 123 years, Poland was partitioned by neighbouring empires and erased from world maps until the end of World War I), organising armed resistance campaigns to free Poland from colonial oppression.

## **AESOP, LA FONTAINE and MICKIEWICZ**

Few in Poland and beyond know that Mickiewicz wrote his own Polish language adaptations of classic Fables by Jean de La Fontaine, a 17<sup>th</sup> century French author who based his Fables on texts by Greek and Roman writers of antiquity, such as Aesop, Babrius and Phaedrus.

These rhymed verses, featuring a range of animal characters used to represent human foibles, have been forgotten by Polish language readers, most of whom associate Mickiewicz solely with serious poetry, drama and his dramatic life story.

Although playful and fantastic in nature, they were not written solely for children - these pearls of Polish poetry have stood the test of time, offering profound and entertaining insights for readers of all ages and backgrounds - now for the first time ever available in English.

## **Julian Tuwim WIERSZ NIEZNANEGO POETY**

### **A VERSE BY AN UNKNOWN POET**

Julian Tuwim, Poland's best loved poet of our era, admired Mickiewicz's poetry so much that when in 1952 he discovered a single poem in a 19<sup>th</sup> century journal he suspected might have been written by a young Adam Mickiewicz (under a pseudonym), he spent years trying to prove it really was Mickiewicz... and wrote a whole book about this one poem - see cover on the opposite page...

And yet now, in 2019, on the 24<sup>th</sup> of December 2019, Adam Mickiewicz's 221<sup>st</sup> birthday, we have:

**A DOZEN FABLES BY ADAM  
MICKIEWICZ**

(SHEPHERD doesn't count in the dozen, for it is unfinished – so we get a Baker's Dozen)

HAPPY BIRTHDAY ADAM!!

AND MERRY CHRISTMAS TO YOU ALL  
DEAR FABLE FANS !!!

*Marek Kazmierski, your humble editor,  
translator, illustrator and publisher...*



## **BAJKI MICKIEWICZ**

**Spis treści** **Strona**

### **FABLES MICKIEWICZ**

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**THE END OF A NEW START 44**

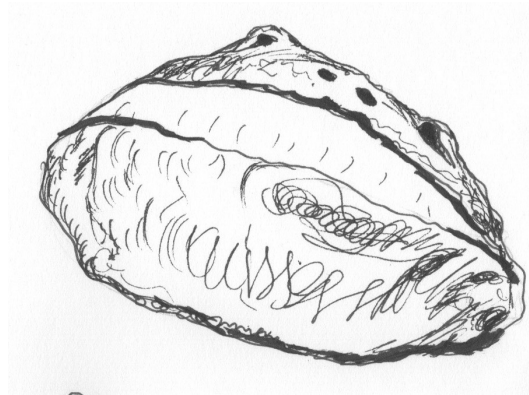
***Stop & Think*** - *what is the moral of this story?*

We will ask ourselves such questions after reading each fable, just to make sure we're getting all the goodness from these verses, and not just the lovely music of the language and the colourful characters having adventures...

You don't of course, have to think - if it hurts, however, I would go and see a doctor...

## **Shetato - A Wee Poem In Four Songs**

While a poet praises vegetables with his lyre  
Suddenly, a potato pipes up from the fire:  
Orders now the lute to be set to song,  
So the poet rhymes as he goes along:  
“Thanks to God's great power, the old is now new!  
From disordered worlds a construction grew;  
How then, when grand millennia passed,  
A certain Hebrew man made new faith for us.  
While the auld Greek gods, suffering sorry fates,  
Worlds made out of chaos, fleeing in great haste.  
That Columbus scared them with his brave attack,  
As he sailed the seas, then came racing back,  
And the Lord did judge, what the saints intoned,  
Of Columbus' trail ... so forth and so on!



**Stop & Think** – *what is the moral of this story?*

*What did we learn from it?*

*How can you use the lesson it is teaching in practice, in real life?*

## **Farmer & Viper**

In Aesop's beastly diaries in fact  
Mention is made of a farmer's kind act  
And of this snake's roguish deed.

From his frozen orchard, a farmer got some wood,  
But by the gate a snake dropped right at his feet:  
Frozen stiff, half-dead, all frosted over, frail,  
Breathing his very last, hardly moving his tail.  
The farmer pitied the reptile, for his heart was good,  
He grabbed the frozen tail, the snake not quite dead yet,  
Then carried it indoors, where all was warm inside,  
And put the beast to bed as if it were his child,  
(Not aware the sort of thanks he'd shortly get);

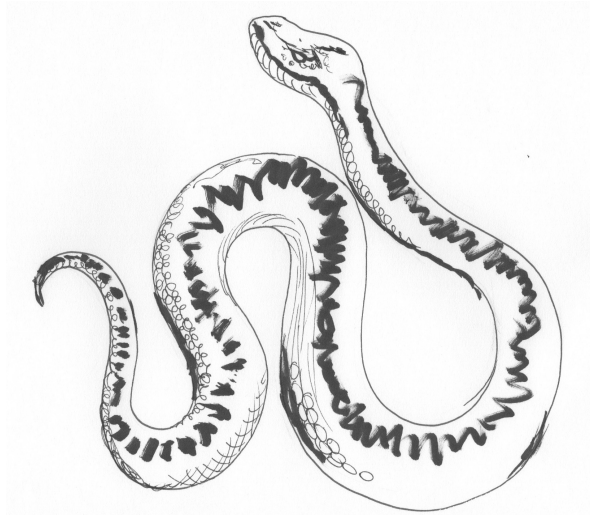
Then he huffed and puffed and prayed  
Until the half-dead snake did wake.  
Once our departed came to life,  
it got ready to cause strife:  
Twisted, tensed up, rose and hissed  
With its body whole he aimed  
To his host and saviour maim,  
Though its life he did just save!  
“What is this? What have I missed?  
To repay for kindness done  
You now bite me? Viper's son!”  
And then grabbing a kitchen knife  
He cuts the snake, ears first, slashing for dear life,  
The tail flew into one, the snout the other corner;  
Three vipers snaking round, where only one was former...  
No good them shaking,  
No point in snaking,  
The tail after the neck, the neck after the tail:  
It won't rise again, no he shan't prevail!

Good people often make this sort of sad mistake:  
They come to kindly aid ungrateful sorts of snakes;  
Yet mostly it turns out that this ingrate, if you wait,  
Will meet a sorry fate.

**Stop & Think** – what is the moral of this story?

*What did we learn from it?*

*Is it ever a good idea to judge books by their covers?*



## Great Bell and Little Bells

Little Church Bells tinkled, high up in a tower,  
To Great Bell which had lost its place and power:  
“See, brother, though smaller, it's our song that's sang;  
So what good your greatness, when you're deaf and dumb?”  
“Oh, my wee, loud brothers!” sad Great Bell did sound,  
“Be grateful to that pastor who stomped me to the ground!”



**Stop & Think** – what is the moral of this story?

*Why do Little Bells laugh at Great Bell?*

*Do they have a point?*

*Why is Great Bell sad?*

*Who made him sad and why?*

*Most importantly, what is the lesson to be learnt from this poem?*

*Is it useful in real life? And if so, how?*

## Shorn, Shaved

When we feel quite ill today  
We call doctors straight away,  
But when weak so long ago,  
To this couple we did go.  
He and she had pharmacies  
To help treat those who had gout,  
And arthritis, ear disfunction,  
Dry consumption, dumb  
presumption  
Manage. And without a doubt  
They knew all the remedies.

Close to Zgierz this Mazur lived  
His guard dog, a bitch, was gone,  
Leaving him all sad and peeved.  
With great sadness, growing  
greater,  
He searched, but to him unknown  
She returned a whole week later.  
Barely did he know it's her;  
She was half shaved of her hair.

"Oh, the bandits! Hoodlums grave,  
Using tricks when hiding her,  
My poor girl in half did shave!"  
"Best you say they cut her hair,"

His wife made her feelings plain:  
"Dogs are shorn, and never shaved."  
"Ah, there, we are truly saved!"  
Mazur said in his own name,  
"Oh, how learned you are, dear  
dame!

Being female, you don't shave,  
Yet you teach us hairy men,  
About razors, scissors? Brave!  
But it's good, my doggy dear,  
That you're back, though shaved, I  
fear."

"And I'm pleased that she's back  
home,"

His wife shouts, so he will hear.  
"Though she's had her hair all  
shorn!"

Yet our sir, his head quite bald,  
of his dog he claims so bold:

"Think you she has been shorn  
short?"

"Your moustache, drooping crook,"

Now the wife does stern retort,  
"Like a catfish makes you look,  
Shining as if it was waxed,  
Do you have it clipped or axed?"  
"Ah to hell with catfish, wax!

And your scissors and your cuts!"  
In a swell mood Mazur cries:  
"Good thing that the dog is home!

Though so badly shaved," he moaned.  
"Truth you speak, sir, and no lies,  
I too am glad, as you see,"  
The wife said in a pleased tone,  
"That the bitch is back, indeed.  
Though her hair's shorn to the bone."  
"With your scissors daft you talk!"  
"You with razors run amok!"  
"That she's shaved, look all can see!"  
"That she's shorn, her hair cut clean!  
A sad thing the cutting's crass,  
Cutting like a scythe does grass."  
"And her skin is scratched, alas,  
Like some surgeon cut her fast."

And so argued husband, wife,  
That the folks of Zgierz came round,  
Meanwhile shouts and screams  
abound,  
"She is shaved!" "No, shorn!" they  
strife!

Tired of shouting, once all went home,  
the husband asked his wife alone:  
"Know you now what we agreed?"  
She is silent, cursed it seems.  
Their dog greets them by the door,  
"Come here, lass, shaved, that is  
clear!"  
Husband cries, his wife wants more:  
"Come here, shorn, hair cut, my dear!"

Mazur's fuming, silent sighs,  
To his wife he won't reply.  
He just grabs her by her sleeves  
To the pond he drags her, heaves  
And throws her into the depths!  
She, not used to diving yet  
Swallows waters, almost drowned.  
Holding her by sleeves now torn,  
Cruel Mazur screams: "And now?  
Was she shaved or was she shorn?"  
His wife's poor, but she be strong,  
Feeling death is close, she fights,  
And sticks up two fingers long  
Then those fingers really move  
Just like scissors, all to prove  
To her husband that she's right.

Seeing that, he ran away,  
While she at the inn did play.  
He ran off to Zgierz, still smarmy,  
Soldiering, he joined the army.

**Stop & Think** - *what is the moral of this story?*

*How do you think the dog feels to be home now?*

*How can you use the lesson it is teaching in practice, in real life?*

## Goat, Doeling and Wolf

\* "kid" is the name for baby goats \*  
"doeling" is the name for young female goats

Our neighbouring goat, a lady divorcee  
Of the family Sharpshorne, so sprightly was of mind  
She even battled ox, just in argument, mind,  
Her goatee unruffled by anyone, you see...  
Last night, going to the woods for the things she needs,  
Foods like linden bark and some drinking water,  
She left her farm in the care of her daughter,  
Which being a doeling was by Mum named Kid. \*

And seeing as young people when mothers are not home  
Can get themselves in trouble, in danger all alone,  
So Mother lectured Kid in harsh and heavy tones:  
"Don't you move a hoof, out the house dare roam,  
And let no one come in, that really means no one!

There is a wolf about; I know his wicked game,  
Ugly thoughts he thinks, a danger is this wolf;  
Watch the door until I knock using my hoof,  
And do not open Kid, unless I say your name:  
Too careful you can't be, and never too foolproof,  
Do that, and don't be rash, don't suffer that old fate:  
Young goats be wise too late..."

As they talked of wolf inside,  
Outside the wolf did hide;  
He spied mother go out, and knew what was in store:  
Knock, knock on Kid's front door.

Wolves tend to howl or threaten wrong;  
But when to ask they need,  
They fake a good goat song;  
As goatly as he could, Wolf called: "Open up, Kid!"

But goatling Kid replies: "I can't, I'm sorry, very,  
My Mum is not around, I'm home alone and so."  
Wolf cries: "Kid, open up! It's me, your Mum, you know!"  
Yet our Kid is still quite wary:  
"The voice is Mum's, indeed; but are you Mum? Not Sure.  
How can I tell it's you by looking through a door?"

"Come to the window please, and offer me some proof,  
Show me the sign agreed. I want to see your hoof..."  
The wolf left, swearing blind, at Kid and her wise Ma.  
All round the world this tale is known, both near and far:  
But for you now to learn this lesson wise perchance,  
Let us pretend it comes from a fable from old France.

**Stop & Think** - *what is the moral of this story?*

*What did we learn from it?*

*How can you use the lesson it is teaching in practice, in real life?*

## **THE FOX AND THE GOAT**

Hop, into the garden, the geese now to greet,  
Fox leapt and fell down in a barrel set deep  
In solid ground to rainwater keep!  
No way, Fox now sees, of leaping out free.  
Not a lot of water was there in that box,  
But its walls were tall, too tall for our Fox.

The bar is set high  
And a fox cannot fly...

The walls were too smooth to let him climb.  
Now imagine yourself in that Fox's spot!  
Other animals would just drop their paws  
And give into grief, to despair and deep woes,  
Calling for lightning to strike them quite dead,  
But not our Fox, if truth now be said.

He knows to despair is to make things worse.  
So he nibbles around, smart scheming, of course.  
Then he looks up to see there a goat,  
Standing and looking down at his moat.  
And so Fox ducks low, lapping the ground,  
Licking his lips, so mighty proud,  
Talking to himself, talking quite out loud:  
“Now, this water's nice!  
Best long as I live,  
Tastes like sweetest ice, pure, I do believe!  
I'd love to bathe now in it,  
But that would spoil, demean it.  
A shame!  
Best I sip again!”

The goat was thirsty, its patience at its limit:  
“Hey!” he called down, “You ginger beast gross!  
Get thee gone from the water's source!”  
Goat hopped on down, Fox leapt on his back, from the back to  
the horns,  
From the horns back out – far gone, of course!

**Stop & Think** - *what is the moral of this story?*

*What did we learn from it?*

*How different is the Fox in this fable compared to the one before it?*

## **DONKEY and DOG**

“If you wish, Donkey, for dogs to love you,  
Best love you love dogs,” so Lokman said.

Donkey heard that, no foal was he – true,  
But did not listen, hollow his head,  
I will now tell, cattle daft, you!

To carry loads was Donkey's due.  
Behind his master, following at last,  
Watching the loads, to enemies harangue,  
Barely visible in clouds of dust  
Ran the watchdog, flapping his tongue.  
God praise such guardians! Not once did he  
Take any bites out his master's heels;  
To entertain, Dog danced aside,  
Or else ahead proud did he stride,  
His tail a swinging from side to side,  
Oh, to egg on, to make time fly by.

They walked like this up until noon,  
His master moaning about the wild heat,  
Then stopped by a tree, where he fell asleep.  
Which is when Donkey aside did creep.  
Looked round the road, grasses did nip,  
The edge of a meadow did he then spy;  
Across the ditch - Hop! Did he fly -  
Upon the meadow not knowing why  
All tasty morsels there did he see,  
No thistles foul, no other rank weeds,  
Only tall clover up past his thighs.

“You'll do me fine! Now, dearest sir,  
Have mercy, sleep!” He munched without care.  
The dog keen to nibble too:  
“Donkeydoo, I've not eaten all morn, I'm feeling slack,  
You've smoked meats in the packs on your back;  
Do let me give them a tiny kiss.  
And you know how? On my hind legs I will now stand,  
While you go down on just one knee.”  
Our selfish ass did no such thing,  
Nibbling and chewing silently, Donkey commands  
Talking, his mouth of clover full: “What you doing here?  
You best go, heel doggie! When master does rise,  
Breakfast he'll serve you, that's no surprise!”  
Ignoring the dog, in the grass like a toad,  
Donkey munched hard, munching a hole,  
Swearing at the dog for barking back.  
But suddenly from over the road,  
A were-wolf peeked, his eyes bloody whole,

Donkey begged Dog: “Brother, save, defend!”  
Dog: “I no Rescue, no Guardian Friend,  
Don't scream, don't trample this lovely grass,  
Wait for your master to wake, you ass.  
To your defence and rescue he'll come.”  
The wolf the donkey then ate all in one!

Such was the end.

**Stop & Think** – *What did we learn from this poem?*

*Can you imagine a real life situation where you might make use of the moral of this story?*

*Are the characters here plainly either*

*Good*

*or*

*Bad?*

## DOG AND WOLF

One poor, skinny Wolf, a sad bag of bones,  
Was digging through frosts, his paws solid cold,  
When he saw by chance a huge Dog alone,  
A St Bernard breed, with a belly bold;  
His fine coat shone proud, glowing so to please!  
Chubby was its neck, hanging to his knees.  
“Ah! Hello, dear pal! Ho there, Mr Clean!  
Years it must have been, neither heard nor seen!

Back then you was puppy: cuddly and quite frail,  
but how grown you are! How are you today?”  
“No complaints there, Wolf,” the great dog did say  
Grateful for such words, he did wag his tail.  
“Well, well! Well you look! I can see from here!  
Tall, heavy, what head!” the wolf called aloud.  
“Shoulders, belly, wow! You don't fear kicks, clogs!  
Belly mighty, yes! I swear by female dogs!  
If the truth be told, not in all my years  
Have I seen a pig with such belly proud!”  
“Joke you well, Wolf dear: but beyond a joke,  
if you wish, you can stuff your hide and sides...”  
“How is that, you say?”  
“Simple: nowt to hide,  
Woods you should give up to the devil broke,  
And your wicked ways stop, cease doing harm,  
Go among the folks - and serve on their farms!”  
“Serve them? In what way?” Wolf asks: “Tell me, please.”  
“In what way?... you child! A servant's life's a breeze:  
You do this and that. It's not at all hard!  
O'er the farmstead borders you stand on proud guard,  
When guests do arrive, you bark with a shout,  
Bark at the old man, throw the Jew about, \* \*  
To lords bow, don't fail,  
At servants wag your tail;  
For this, brother dear, you won't lack a thing:  
For lords, ladies, dames morsels will then bring,  
Crumbs, bones, drinks that taste of delightful fire,  
In a word, all that your soul does desire.”

As Dog spoke, Wolf heard with ear, snout and nose,  
Missing not a word; wolfed down the whole speech,  
Dreams of luxuries he does now compose,  
And already sensing treasures within reach.  
Then Wolf looks... “What's that?”  
“Where?”  
“Here, upon your neck?”  
“That's a joke! Why care?...”  
“What is that, by heck?!”  
“Well, you see my hair  
has been trimmed a jot... for at night they fit a collar on my neck,  
To help me guard their homes, at their call and beck!”  
“Is that so? Well, well, you left that till last!...”  
“Won't you, Wolf, join up?”  
“No, not that, you pup!  
Best be free, at large, nibbling weeds at least,  
Than to be a slave, even if you feast.”  
Wolf said proud and then far off did he leap,  
And from that day on, free and poor he'll keep.

***Stop & Think*** – what is the moral of this story?

*What did we learn from it?*

*\*\* Yes, the mention of a Jewish person being attacked by a dog is antisemitic and racist in nature – was our author a bad person to write such lines? What was acceptable in his day and age which we could never accept now?*

*Should we admit to past mistakes, or pretend our histories do not contain wrong and shameful aspects?*

## **BEST FRIENDS**

No friendships true are there left in our world;  
In Ashmyany the last such friendship failed, I'm told.  
It was home to Mieshek, said his buddy Leshek:  
"Where you, there go I, and what's mine, is yours."  
Even when they had a peanut, tiny, of course,  
They'd split it in two halves, sharing such, because  
That's the sort of friendship Mieshek's, Leshek's was,  
A special brotherhood as everybody knows.  
You might say - one spirit in two bodies grows.  
Yet, one day they stood in a shaded glade,  
Talking of their friendship, talking well and good,  
While cuckoos and rooks songs of joy there made,  
Something roared aloud, right next to where they stood!  
Leshek climbs an oak tree; like woodpeckers - hop!  
Mieshek cannot climb, doesn't quite know how.  
He reaches up his hands, calling now: "Dear pal!"  
But his pal, done climbing, was right at the top.  
Mieshek just had time to shut tight his eyes  
To go pale and fall, as a bear forth strides.  
Finding Mieshek there - stretched out like a corpse,  
Bear does sniff, but won't come closer, come near,  
The stink probably caused by Mieshek's mortal fear.  
Bear sees a dead body, and unfresh, what's worse.  
And so growling, bear to the woods retreats -  
Lithuanian bears only eat fresh meat.  
And so Mieshek moves... "Oh boy, that was close!  
His friend Leshek calls: "Mieshek, not a scratch!  
But what took so long, why he huffed so much?  
Did he whisper things in your ear... who knows?"  
"He told me a proverb - bears are wise indeed!  
True friends you shall know in your hour of need."

**Stop & Think** – *How many animals are listed in this Fable?*

*What did we learn from it?*

*How can you use the lesson it is teaching in practice, in real life?*

## VOTING WEASEL

After the animals suffered a defeat,  
All their army ranks looked in chaos beat.  
So some set up a warring committee  
Ready to lecture country and city:  
Everyone moaning at everyone,  
Everyone boasting of all they'd done,  
And each one blaming some odd someone,  
Only the Weasel not blamed, not harmed.  
Citizen Weasel did not join the board,  
Nor did he serve in army ranks.  
Politics aside, he sought out thanks,  
Trusting his record, unblemished, he roared:  
"Comrades! Citizens! Agree at least:  
What is to blame for our failed campaign?  
Is it our leaders, all talentless beasts?  
No! We let tyrants trump us again.  
In old sinful ways, without ado,  
The candidates we give our votes up to  
Are not the ones with talent and brains;  
For we alone worship, by Gahd,  
Only those born of predator blood,  
The haves who have, and always have had,  
Set up in life so rich and so glad.  
These leaders of ours, look, who are they?  
Lion? A bossy fleabag of addictions;  
Bison the brute, his horns sow afflictions;  
What will Bear the bore to our armies say?  
Panther a maybe, though silly his brains;  
Sir Wolf is a robber, a thief, that's no fiction,  
Famed for the court case he lodged against Lamb;  
While quartermaster Fox, about him please  
We best not say nowt, it seems to me,  
Let's best not look into his private accounts  
He does not deny he's still on the lam.

Forget commander Boar: that gent only wants  
To nibble on nuts and lounge in the swamp,  
Forget he had power, his star now just fizzles.  
Now that jester Donkey, he was and is a fool!"  
Once Weasel stopped talking, the beastly board drooled,  
All animals prepared, for Weasel's oration,  
To hand him the keys to ruling their nation.  
The wild council screamed; "Long live our Sir Weasel!"  
While Weasel confused by this public affair,  
Lost his train of thought and made it quite plain,  
That stricken with worry and fear he remained.  
So protests ensued: "Go back to your lair!"  
His den was nearby - chased by loud laughter  
He fell deep within and bawled wildly after.  
Until the next day, when all too easily  
He said to himself with oddly clean conscience:  
"Now there you go, but for birthright nonsense,  
I would be chosen chief, if I wasn't weaselly!"

**Stop & Think** – *How many animals are listed in this Fable?*

*What did we learn from it?*

*How can you use the lesson it is teaching in practice, in real life?*

*Is it in any way still relevant,  
200 years on,  
to politics today?*

## **HARE AND FROG**

Our hare was in trouble and fear often stuck,  
Not losing all heart, though gone round the bend,  
Now he seemed down on his hare luck.  
Felt he'd come to a sticky end.

From deep in his heart he dared to declare:  
“It's worst in the world to be born a hare!  
Each day dogs and foxes, crows and that kite  
And birds of prey,  
Yes, even they,  
They all chase to bite!

“At night when asleep, my eyes never close,  
At any mosquito, or spider or bat  
My hare-heart trembles - I knows that shows,  
I coward more cowardly than your scaredy-cat.

“Life's lost its sheen, from fear I can't hide,  
I decided to end it today - suicide.  
Farewell then fields, when young I did manage  
To taste loves of youth, sweet turnips and cabbage!  
My farewell tears now on you rain down!  
I hereby declare, I'm off to be drowned!”

With tears in his eyes he crept to a bog,  
Nearing a pond, he stepped on a frog.  
The frog like a flare our hare did abscond,  
Diving head-first, it splashed in the pond.

The hare then declared: “Let none moan and groan  
That they be coward, for all the world's scared!  
We all have our frogs, which run from us home,  
And hares that we fear,” now wise Hare declared.

**Stop & Think** – *What is the central point of this Fable?*

*How would you say it in your own words?*

*Does it deal with subjects unsuitable for children?*

*If so, can you explain your answer?*

## **FROGS AND THEIR KINGS**

The Frog Commonwealth in lands, lakes and seas  
Grew for centuries, yet was not at peace.  
Every citizen of that froggy state,  
Be they small or great,  
Jumped around, you see,  
Fed and bred freely.

This excess of freedom could not last,  
And the frogs did then see in nearby states  
That to have a king gives you order great.  
Lion be the king of four-legged beasts,  
Eagle o'er the birds, Bees have queens, not least;

So they call to Jove: "King! Father to Gods,  
A king to us gift, please! A king fit for us frogs!"

Agreeing to help, Jove, mighty god of gods,  
Sent a tiny tadpole, half-frog, polliwog,  
Falling from the skies, landing in deep mud.  
The fogs bowed low down, for their king now glad.  
Silent they all fell, at night breathing low...

The next day they asked: "How's our king? Good show?  
Any royal news?" Whence braver, older frogs  
Go to face their monarch, wearing their best togs,  
At first far, afeared, with respect, held back;  
And then, fearing less, their worries at an end,  
As one with their king they become best friends.  
And they started climbing all over his back.  
"This is our king?... Oh dear, it does seem,  
We won't really have any use for him;  
This king we caress on his neck so slack,  
Let him abdicate, right now, helpless fool!  
We need real rule, a throne, not a stool!"

Jove, on hearing that frogs were all agog,  
Demoted that King Polliwog.  
And appointed Snake the New King of Frogs.  
This crawler, swimmer, slider,  
Spy, venom provider,  
Climbed all rocks and stones, tress both far and near,  
Looking to oppress and punish severe.

From the off, Frog nobles all upset they were,  
Snake King acting tough, mean as Snakes can be;  
Frogs all poor and beat, but the Snake won't care!  
And that poverty is their economy;  
Complainers bitten hard, for crying their hearts out,  
Abstainers bitten too, for sitting, doing nowt.

Thus biting Frogs freely, Snake King parties, sings,  
While his subjects scream to Jove upon high,  
But Jove did ignore their calls for new kings,  
Tired of Frog fancies, happy in his sky.

**Stop & Think** - *How many animals are listed in this Fable?*

*What did we learn from it?*

*How can you use the lesson it is teaching in practice, in real life?*

*What sorts of bosses and rulers are best?*

*Kind or unkind?*

*Sweet or Hard Hearted?*

## **Tears Came Raining...**

My tears came raining so clear – why dear?  
For my lost childhood, angelic, a relic,  
For my lost youth, elated, ill-fated,  
For my adulthood, defeated, no good:  
Tears came running, a waterfall clear...

## **WHY END HERE???**

We end on this tiny little verse, NOT because we want to finish on a sad, sour note...

In it, the great sage (wieszcz) of the Polish nation tells us – NOT that sadness and disappointment is inevitable in life – no...

He is telling us what is waiting at the end of a life lived without passion, poetry, learning, adventuring, growing, playing and all the things we seem to associate with our childhood years, but which we abandon as grown ups.

So:

Keep reading poems...

Keep reciting them out loud...

Keep trying to read between their lines to learn as much as you can

Keep trying to apply their wisdoms to your lives

Keep crafting new verses,

That way good folks

And good living lies...

## **THE END OF A NEW START**

In 2019, on the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of my publishing house OFF\_PRESS UK, I am releasing the first ever English Language translations of Adam Mickiewicz's classic BAJKI / FABLES on Christmas Eve 2019, which also happens to be the 221<sup>st</sup> anniversary of Adam Mickiewicz's birth.

It will also be the last book we will ever publish... why?

OFF\_PRESS UK, based in London, UK, has published some of Poland's most prominent contemporary poets in English translation - Adam Wiedemann, Julia Fiedorczuk, Jacek Dehnel, Justyna Bargielska, Eugeniusz Tkaczyszyn-Dycki, Zuzanna Ginczanka, Jakobe Mansztajn, Irit Amiel, Roman Honet and Wioletta Greg (shortlisted for the Griffin Poetry Prize in Canada and the International Booker Prize in the UK for her prose writing).

But books of poetry do not sell, not in numbers which justify the expense, so now it is time for us to shut up shop and rest on our humble laurels.

It's been a fun, mind-bending ride, but to quote from the baddie in the Matrix: "*Everything That Has A Beginning Has An End...*"

*Marek Kazmierski, your illustranlator and publisher...*

**Marek Kazmierski** - a Polish born British translator and writer, winner of the 2007 Decibel Penguin Prize in the UK and trustee of the Griffin Poetry Prize in Canada. He has published numerous translations of Polish authors such as Zbigniew Herbert, Julian Tuwim, Irit Amiel, Jan Brzechwa, Wioletta Greg and now... the very truly mighty great Adam Mickiewicz!

### **THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED TO:**

**Robin Williams** - Oh Captain My Captain! 30 years ago, in 1989, you showed the world how not to fear poetry, how to think for ourselves, how to live life to the full... we miss you, Captain, and each time we sing and dance and rhyme, we do so with you in our hearts...

**Wonder Women of Warsaw** - you know who you are:

To AB, who always stood by me and led the way through the legal minefield that is Poland, when all about me were quitting...

To MB, who started OFF\_PRESS with me, and gave her all to each and every book and event and film we ever produced - all for the love of poetry, all from the goodness of her poetic heart...

To E&M, who saved me from the mermaids and mermen of Warsaw, the priestesses of the temple home all poets need to last...