

Yertle The Turtle
by Dr. Seuss

On the far-away Island of Sala-ma-Sond,
Yertle the Turtle was king of the pond.
A nice little pond. It was clean. It was neat.
The water was warm. There was plenty to eat.
The turtles had everything turtles might need.
And they were all happy. Quite happy indeed.

They were..until Yertle,the turtle,the king of them all,
Decided the kingdom he ruled was too small.
"I'm ruler", said Yertle, "of all that I see.
But I don't see enough. That's the trouble with me.
With this stone for a throne, I look down on my pond
But I cannot look down on the places beyond.
The throne that I sit on is too, too low down.
It ought to be higher!" he said with a frown.
"If I could sit high, how much greater I'd be!
What a king! I'd be ruler of all I could see!"

So Yertle, the Turtle King, lifted his hand
And Yertle, the Turtle King, gave a command.
He ordered nine turtles to swim to his stone
And, using these turtles, he built a new throne.
He made each turtle stand on another one's back
And he piled them all up in a nine-turtle stack.
And then Yertle climbed up. He sat down on the pile.
What a wonderful view! He could see 'most a mile!

"All mine!" Yertle cried. "Oh, the things I now rule!
I'm king of a cow! And I'm king of a mule!
I'm king of a house! And what's more, beyond that,
I'm king of a blueberry bush and cat!
I'm Yertle the Turtle! Oh, marvelous me!
For I am the ruler of all that I see!"

And all through that morning, he sat there up high
Saying over and over, "A great king am I!"
Until 'long about noon. Then he heard a faint sigh.
"What's that?" snapped the king
And he looked down at the stack.
And he saw, at the bottom, a turtle named Mack.
Just a part of his throne. And this plain little turtle
Looked up and he said, "Beg your pardon King Yertle.
I've pains in my back and my shoulders and knees.
How long must we stand here, Your Majesty, please?"

"SILENCE!" the King of the Turtles backed back.
"I'm king, and you're only a turtle named Mack."

"You stay in your place while I set here and rule.
I'm king of a cow! And I'm king of a mule!
I'm king of a house! And a bush! And a cat!
But that isn't all. I'll do better than that!
My throne shall be higher!" his royal voice thundered,
"So pile up more turtles! I want 'bout two hundred!"

"Turtles! More turtles!" he bellowed and brayed.
And the turtles 'way down in the pond were afraid.
They trembled. They shook. But they came. They obeyed.
From all over the pond, they came swimming by dozens.
Whole families of turtles, with uncles and cousins.
And all of them stepped on the head of poor Mack.
One after another, they climbed up the stack.

THEN Yertle the Turtle was perched up so high,
He could see forty miles from his throne in the sky!
"Hooray!" shouted Yertle. "I'm king of the trees!
I'm king of the birds! And I'm king of the bees!
I'm king of the butterflies! King of the air!
Ah, me! What a throne! What a wonderful chair!
I'm Yertle the Turtle! Oh, marvelous me!
For I am the ruler of all that I see!"

Then again, from below, in the great heavy stack,
Came a groan from that plain little turtle named Mack.
"Your Majesty, please... I don't like to complain,
But down here below, we are feeling great pain.
I know, up on top you are seeing great sights,
But down at the bottom, we, too, should have rights.
We turtles can't stand it. Our shells will all crack!
Besides, we need food. We are starving!" groaned Mack.

"You hush up your mouth!" howled the mighty King Yertle.
"You've no right to talk to the world's highest turtle.
I rule from the clouds! Over land! Over sea!
There's nothing, no NOTHING, that's higher than me!"

But, while he was shouting, he saw with surprise
That the moon of the evening was starting to rise
Up over his head in the darkening skies.
"What's THAT?" snorted Yertle. "Say, what IS that thing
that dares to be higher than Yertle the King?
I shall not allow it! I'll go higher still!
I'll build my throne higher! I can and I will!
I'll call some more turtles. I'll stack 'em to heaven!
I need 'bout five thousand, six hundred and seven!"

But, as Yertle, the Turtle King, lifted his hand
And started to order and give the command,
That plain little turtle below in the stack,
That plain little turtle whose name was just Mack,
Decided he'd taken enough. And he had.
And that plain little lad got a little bit mad
And that plain little Mack did a plain little thing.
He burped!
And his burp shook the throne of the king!

And Yertle the Turtle, the king of the trees,
The king of the air and the birds and the bees,
The king of a house and a cow and a mule...
Well, that was the end of the Turtle King's rule!
For Yertle, the King of all Sala-ma-Sond,

Fell of his high throne and fell Plunk! in the pond!

And today the great Yertle, that marvelous he,
Is king of the Mud. That is all he can see.
And the turtles, of course... all the turtles are free
As turtles, and, maybe, all creatures should be.

Internet: From Yertle the Turtle and Other Stories

<http://theorem.ca/mycorks/humor/yertle-the-turtle.txt>

For more works of Dr. Seuss see also:

Welcome to Seussville at:

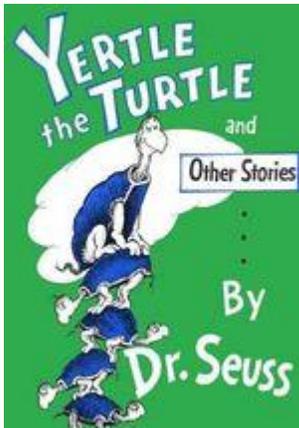
www.seussville.com

or

The Dr. Seuss Webpage at:

www.seuss.org/

Yertle the Turtle



The original 1958 cover

The story revolves around a turtle named Yertle (hence the name of the book) who is the king of a pond. He commands the other turtles to stack themselves beneath him so he may have a throne high enough to see and rule over more land "most a mile" around.

A little turtle named Mack, who is standing at the bottom of the pile, complains, "I know, up on top you are seeing great sights, but down here at the bottom we, too, should have rights." Yertle refuses to listen to Mack's pleas and commands more and more turtles to

add to his throne. When Yertle notices the moon rise above him as the night approaches, he decides to call for 5,607 more turtles for the stack to try to rise above it. However, before he can give the command, Mack, strained and angry, burps, shaking the stack of turtles and tossing Yertle off into the mud. The story ends with: "And the turtles, of course... all the turtles are free, As turtles and, maybe, all creatures should be."

It is said by Dr. Seuss himself that "Yertle the Turtle" was modeled after the rise of Hitler. The book explained his feelings about fascism, and Nazis in particular. As a matter of fact, the original drawings of Yertle had him wearing a Nazi uniform and a Hitler moustache.

Like most of Seuss' works, the poem is almost entirely in anapestic tetrameter, with very few deviations.