

James Whitcomb Riley

By Nathan Shepard

About His Life

- (1849-1916)
- Born in Greenfield, Indiana on Oct. 7
- Grew up in the west and knew western life very well
- Greenfield didn't have a public school until 1870- Riley left after first term
- 1870-71- Worked in odd jobs such as a clerk, a salesman, a house painter, and as a small-time writer
- Toured all around Indiana with a medicine seller and a group of signpainters called the Graphic Company until 1874, when he toured solo as a reciter
- 1877-85, contributed to the *Indianapolis Journal* regularly under the pen name of Benj. F. Johnson
- 1885- Got a job in his dad's law office but left within the year
- 1886-1890- did readings with Bill Nye- entertainer, Nye and Riley made a great team and gained popularity
- 1890-1907- During these years he published most of his books and poems.
- The Indiana Federation of Women's Clubs named a holiday, "Riley Day," in 1911 to pay homage to him.- public school holiday
- July 22, 1916- Struck by Paralysis- Died later that day

About His Work

- Collections of his poems can be found in the books, The Old Swimmin' Hole, and 'Leven More Poems, and Rhymes of Childhood, and Poems Here at Home
- Definite Hoosier accent and style in poems such as his most famous poems, "Little Orphan Annie*," "The Raggedy Man*," and "When the Frost is on the Pumpkin*"
- Cheerful, whimsical humor in poems
- Laid-back poems about everyday life in Indiana

About His World View

- Agnostic
- Concerned about life after death- consistently wanted reassurance that it existed

*Perform these Poems