



Please Announce to your Classes:

**The Really, Really Big
Lit/Lang Holiday
Workshop Bash**

Friday, December 15th, 2000
4:30-6:07
in N-115

The Ballad of Mr Potato

WE PROVIDE BELOW partial annotation of a fragmentary classic. The literary epoch to which this piece belongs, “The Heroic Age of Spuds,” deserves to be better known. In its original form, this poem was almost certainly a lengthy oral epic consisting of hundreds of stanzas. Much is now lost. Still, the ending seems fit to celebrate upcoming

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The night was long an darksom cold
Still Potato kept a ridin,
The task at hand was his alone—
This tuber wouldna go hidin.

As a Sprout he took lore at his gammer’s knee
Tis certain the lesson he learned:
When the pot gets hot an the water’s boilin,
Tis better to swim than to burn.

When the blade appeared there was nary a shrug;
He laughed at the sight of the pepper;
When the kitchen help came with garnish in hand
He pleasantly asked what ha’ kept her.

With one mighty blow was he cloven in twa
The better to fit him for salad,
In several more dicings he chopped down to size
So we come to the end of his ballad.

Mr Potato Head, mealy & stout,
The Pride of Ulster’s soil,
Served among friends, at year’s end, no doubt,
With pepper & mustard & oil.

Variant titles include *The Legend of Bag of Taters*, *Boiled Alive!*, *Dirt Apples Arise!* and *The Bonny Earl of Potato*.

A variant reads:

Oft was he bent o’er his old tater’s knee,
An many a peelin he had:
Yet after each lick he’d smile and laugh
“ I’m better with na skin on, Dad!”

Other fragments confirm that *pleasantness* even to the point of *blandness* was a key trait of our hero.

An unusual last line for the penultimate stanza, suggesting that in some versions, this completes the poem. It is a rather dark and ambiguous ending! Perhaps audiences demanded more closure and the uplifting final stanza was appended.

Place name attributions vary. Most widely used include *Ulster*, *Leinster*, *Campbell*, and *Idaho*, although the editors have seen *Tom’s Garden Center*, *Starns* and *PotatoBuds*.