

NICAPOPOLUS

By Warren Swenson

©2021

The ancient Greek philosophers
Would teach at the acropolis
But they were not as wise and learned
As Mr. Nicapopolus
Who, though he's never been to Greece,
Still knew their ways and manners
And taught the same to all his students
In south Louisiana.

He was rather absent minded
And famous so I am sure
You are wondering why you never
Heard of him before.
That may be because he happens
To be a nutria
So, he looks much like a beaver.
He is all covered with fur

Except for his long tail
Which isn't round and flat
Like a beaver's but it's skinny
So, he looks more like a rat.
Still, you'll find he is well mannered,
Well-spoken and well read
But he simply can't remember
The last thing that he said

So, he often will repeat himself.
In circles he'll talk round
But his words are worth repeating
For they often are profound.
He loves to speak in riddles
In rhythms and in rhymes.
For example, here's something
He tells his students all the time,

“You should never spend your time
Looking for lost time because
You are only wasting more time
Looking for the time you lost
But if you ever want to find
For yourself a little time
You will have to take the time
To make the time to find the time.”

NICAPOPOLUS

By Warren Swenson

The only thing more interesting
Then what he has to say
Is the story about how it was
He came to be this way.
When he was just a youngster
Mr. Nicapopolus
Wasn't always so well mannered.
He could be quite obnoxious.

He often asked hard questions
No one knew the answers to
Just to show how smart he was
For he the answers knew.
He was an educated genius
Even though he was quite young
But he simply had no common sense
And even less wisdom.

To be wise one must be humble
And humble he was not
But the lesson he was soon to learn
Is one he never forgot.
Though how and where he learned it
He simply can't remember.
It all happened on a Christmas Day
One very cold December.

When the temperature was very low
For several days and nights
Every morning there was frost
And the bayous filled with ice.
And so it was that Christmas Eve
The northern winds were blowing
And they woke up to discover
Christmas morning it was snowing.

Now a snowfall in the bayous
You will find is very rare
But to snow on Christmas happens
Once every hundred years
The snowflakes kept on coming down
Each bigger than a quarter
Covering all of the ground
And the ice upon the water

NICAPOPOLUS

By Warren Swenson

Nicapopolus could feel
Their cold kiss upon his hand
As he watched the bayou change
Into a winter wonderland
Though there were presents to be opened
He did not want to go
Back inside. He wanted to play outside
In the snow.

His father simply smiled and said,
“Now Nicapopolus,
Snow can be a lot of fun
But it can be dangerous.
You must be very very careful
Where you place your feet
The snow’s not very deep
And you don’t know what’s underneath

You will find the snow is very wet
And it’s very slippery
If you lose your balance you could slide
Headfirst down the levee.
And should the sun come out
And start shining very bright
Then you could go snow blind
That’s when everything looks white.

So maybe after dinner
Later on today
Your mom and I will take you
And your sister out to play.
But for now it’s time for all us
To go inside and see
What Papa Noel left us
Underneath the Christmas tree.

While they opened up their presents
On that Christmas day
Nicapopolus was worried
That the snow might melt away
Before he had a chance
To go outside to play.

NICAPOPOLUS

So, he was trying to figure out
If he could find some way
To go out before dinner
Then he thought, perhaps,
His father, in his easy chair,
Would doze off to take a nap.
Then, while his mom was getting
Christmas dinner preparation done.
He would sneak outside unnoticed
To have a little fun.

He figured he could get back
Before they knew that he was gone
And with them none the wiser
There would be no harm done.
But he would soon find out
He could not have been more wrong.
You should never go out in the snow
To play there all alone.

If something were to happen
There would be no one to help
And you would be there all alone
To take care of yourself.
But he was still determined
To see all that he could see.
So, he snuck out and he climbed
To the top of the levee

When he tripped over a branch
That was underneath the snow
He went sliding down the levee
Headed straight for the bayou
When he reached the levee's bottom
He sailed up into the air
But he thought he'd land in water
So, he really wasn't scared.

He forgot that it was frozen
And was rock hard I've been told
So, when he hit the ice head first
He was knocked out cold.
When Nicapopolus came to
His head was all abuzz
He didn't even have a clue
As to where or who he was.

NICAPOPOLUS

By Warren Swenson

When finally he realized
That he was home in bed
Under several covers
With an ice pack on his head.
Where he had a very nasty bump
That was sensitive and sore
But how or when it happened
He wasn't very sure.

The doctor said he'd be okay
But he would probably
Have trouble in the future
With his short-term memory.
It wasn't long before
His memory he regained
But they say from that day forward
He was never quite the same.

He was somewhat absent minded
And forgetful, but what's more
He was kinder and more humble
Then he'd ever been before.
With humility comes wisdom
And they say that that explains
How Nicapopolus became
The great teacher he became.

He's compassionate and patient
With the slow and simple minded
And his best and brightest students
Are oft by him reminded
You can learn much from experience
But fools learn from no other
The wise learn more by listening
To their father and their mother.

So, if you think you're really smart
To the truth you may be blinded
So don't be proud or arrogant
Lest you end up absent minded.

NICAPOPOLUS

By Warren Swenson

PS

If you don't know that you don't know
What you don't know
Then you won't learn what you don't know
Until you know that you don't know
What you don't know
And you start listening.
For listening as we all know
Is how you learn
What you don't know.

Mr. Nicapopolus

