

Writing a limerick



The History

Variants of the form of poetry referred to as Limerick poems can be traced back to the fourteenth century English history. Limericks were used in Nursery Rhymes and other poems for children. But as limericks were short, relatively easy to compose and bawdy or sexual in nature they were often repeated by beggars or the working classes in the British pubs and taverns of the fifteenth, sixteenth and seventh centuries. The poets who created these limericks were therefore often drunkards! Limericks were also referred to as dirty.



For Everybody

The content of Limericks can often verge on the indecent, the dirty, or even the obscene, but they make people laugh! Limericks are easy to remember! Limericks are short and no great talent is necessary to compose one - Limericks are a form of poetry that everyone feels happy to try.



Edward Lear

Edward Lear's Book of Nonsense included the poetry form of Limericks. His work with limericks was not in any way indecent and this particular book proved to be extremely popular in the nineteenth century and this was contributed to by the humorous magazine Punch which started printing examples of limericks leading to a craze by its readers.



Rhyme Pattern

A limerick is a rhyming, humorous, and often nonsensical five-line poem. The first, second, and fifth lines rhyme (forming a triplet), and have the same number of syllables (7-10). The third and fourth lines rhyme (forming a couplet), and have the same number of syllables (5-7). Limericks often begin with the words: *There once was...* or *There was a...*

How to write a limerick

- Step 1: read a limerick and notice the rhyme pattern
- Step 2: choose a character and a place
- Step 3: think of some words which rhyme with your place name (These rhymes may be silly.)
- Step 4: think of a humorous ending
- Step 5: create your limerick



Examples

Benjamin Gregory Berry
Never drinks red wine or sherry
But giving him whisky
Is a little bit risky:
He tends to get terribly merry!

There was a Young Lady whose chin,
Resembled the point of a pin;
So she had it made sharp,
And purchased a harp,
And played several tunes with her chin. (E. Lear)

Guess The Word

In the drink that is brewed from the bean
There's a stimulant people find keen.
It's consumed by the folks
Who drink Pepsis and Cokes.
Can you figure which compound I mean?

Cartoon



Mark the syllables in the examples.

Vocabulary

- a nursery rhyme: a short and usually very old poem or song for young children
- bawdy: containing humorous remarks about sex
- verge: edge
- a craze: an activity, object or idea that is extremely popular, usually for a short time
- a syllable: a single unit of speech, either a whole word or one of the parts into which a word can be separated, usually containing a vowel
- to tend: to be likely to behave in a particular way

Up to you!

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