

Limericks

A limerick is a humorous verse. Limerick is actually a port city in the southwest of Ireland. The poem's connection to the Irish county and city of the same name is obscure.

A limerick consists of five lines with a strict rhyme scheme of a-a-b-b-a. This means that the first, second and last lines rhyme, and the third and fourth lines rhyme. Many limericks have unexpected rhymes.

Limericks were originally popularised in English by the Englishman Edward Lear (1812–1888), who also wrote the popular long poem *The Owl and the Pussycat*. Here is one of his limericks.

There was an Old Woman of Harrow,
Who visited in a Wheel barrow,
And her servant before,
Knock'd loud at each door;
To announce the Old Woman of Harrow.

However, the earliest known limericks were written by the Sicilian Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274).

Many limericks have anonymous writers. They are frequently witty and sometimes rude with humorous intent. They can be vulgar or politically or racially offensive. The limerick is also a traditional humorous drinking song with many "suspect" verses.

Many less vulgar limericks relate outrageous events and surprise endings.

1. There was an old man of Peru,
Who dreamt he was eating his shoe,
He woke in the night
In a terrible fright,
And found it was perfectly true.
2. There once was a man from Bengal,
Who went to a fancy dress ball.
He murmured, "I'll risk it,
I'll go as a biscuit ..."
And a dog ate him up in the hall.
3. There was a small maiden named Maggie,
Whose dog was enormous and shaggy.
The front end of him
Looked vicious and grim,
But the tail end was friendly and waggy.
4. There at the movies was Dan,
When in front of him sat a large man.
Dan said, "Sorry old bean,
But I can't see the screen."
Said the other, "You're lucky—I can!"

