Limericks

A limerick is a poem of five lines, which is meant to be absurd and witty. It is often thought of as ‘nonsense’ verse, and tells of unlikely events.

The limerick form

- The first, second and fifth lines rhyme and have the same number of beats.

- The third and fourth lines rhyme and have the same number of beats. These lines are shorter than the others.

- The rhyme scheme is a, a, b, b, a.

- The rhyme depends on sound, and not necessarily on spelling.

- The humour is contained in the ‘punch line’ — the last line — of the limerick.

- You can create humour by playing with words and ‘forcing’ rhymes.

There was a young man of Bengal
Who went to a fancy-dress ball.
He went, just for fun,
Dressed up as a bun,
And a dog ate him up in the hall.

A greedy young maiden named Firkins
Would recklessly gorge on raw gherkins
Till one day on a spree
She consumed eighty-three
And pickled her innermost workin’s.

A right-handed fellow named Wright,
In writing ‘write’ always wrote ‘rite’
Where he meant to write right.
If he’d written ‘write’ right,
Wright would not have wrought rot writing ‘rite’.

There was an old man of Blackheath,
Who sat on his set of false teeth.
Said he, with a start,
‘O dear, bless my heart!
I’ve bitten myself underneath.’

A thrifty young fellow of Shoreham
Made brown paper trousers and woreham;
He looked nice and neat
Till he bent in the street
To pick up a pin, then he toreham.
1. Complete the following limericks by matching the stem (the first two lines) from column 1 with a suitable response (the last three lines) from column 2. Rewrite each limerick in your notebook.

**Column 1**

(a) There was a young man named Murray Who got a good job in a brewery.

(b) There was a young lady of Ryde Who ate a green apple and died.

(c) A sea-serpent saw a big tanker, Bit a hole in her side and then sank her.

(d) There was a young lady of Lynn Who was so excessively thin.

(e) There was an old person of Crewe Who found a dead mouse in his stew.

(f) A wonderful bird is the pelican His beak can hold more than his belican.

**Column 2**

It swallowed the crew In a minute or two, And then picked its teeth with the anchor.

Said the waiter: 'Don't shout And wave it about, Or the rest will be wanting one too!'

He can take in his beak Enough food for a week, I'm blowned if I know how the helican.

He got scared by a rat And fell into a vat So he got very drunk in a hurry.

That when she essayed To drink lemonade She slipped through the straw and fell in!

The apple fermented Inside the lamented And made cider inside 'er inside.

2. Complete the following limericks. The first two lines have been done for you in each case.

(a) There was an old dog from Kowloon whose head looked just like a balloon . . .

(b) There was a young fellow called Pete Whose nose was as big as his feet . . .

(c) A lovely young lady from Lorne Loved to sing and to dance until dawn . . .
3. In pairs, make up your own limericks using the following first and last lines:
   (a) There was an old cow at the Show
       
       And now she’s stir-fry, don’t you know?
   
   (b) A fellow who lives in our street
       
       But he keeps tripping over his feet.
   
   (c) A woman who hailed from Calcutta
       
       And now has a terrible stutter.
   
   (d) There was a green alien from Mars
       
       So he put all of them in green jars.
   
   (e) A giggling gaggle of geese
       
       And they each got one leg apiece.

4. Choose what you think is your best limerick to share with the class.