



## Making Friends with Poetry

### How to Write a Limerick

**Age group:**



9-12 year olds YELLOW

***Upper Elementary***

#### **PREMISE:**

Reading limericks offers a world of delight in listening, training our ears to hear both rhythm and rhyme. Limericks are usually nonsensical poems which makes them even more fun, especially when you want to engage boys in the process. Limericks have a set pattern: They are always only 5 lines with a distinct pattern—

The 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 5th line have the same end rhyme

And the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> do as well, making this an easy poem pattern to follow.

**Edward Lear** was the master of this style and often published them with his own (outlandish) illustrations. Here are two of his more well-known limericks:

***There was an Old Man with a beard,***

*Who said, 'It is just as I feared!*

*Two Owls and a Hen,*

*Four Larks and a Wren,*

*Have all built their nests in my beard!'*

***There Was An Old Man in a Garden***

*There was an old man in a garden,*

*Who always begg'd every-one's pardon;*

*When they asked him, 'What for?'*

Pg. 1



--He replied, 'You're a bore!

And I trust you'll go out of my garden.'

You can find a great collection of Lear poems online at [nonsenselit.org/Edward Lear](http://nonsenselit.org/Edward Lear)

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## PRACTICE

Use the template below as a pattern, (or start with your own first line).

Remember the limerick pattern above: The **first, second and fifth lines** will have the same end rhyme.

The **third and fourth** lines will have the same rhyme as well.

Of course, you don't have to write a rhyme about a grouchy old man;  
what if you wrote about -

a young boy or girl

an old bird

a nice man,

a cool kid....and so on?

And substituted different places and expressions for where your character was and what they were saying? You can be as silly or serious as you want.

Like this:

*There was a young girl in a rowboat*

*Who was paddling while fighting a sore throat.*

*She said, "Oh dear me, how I'd like some warm tea."*

*What she needed was a muffler and topcoat.*

*-J L Collins*

**Limerick Template: Copy the first sentence on another paper (or start with your own sentence).**

There was a(n) \_\_\_\_\_ in a \_\_\_\_\_

Young girl

House? School? Tree?

Cool kid

School bus? Highchair?

Nice man

Pg. 2



New mom

Old dog

Whatever the **last word** is in your **first sentence** will drive your rhyme scheme. Brainstorm some words that rhyme with *house, school, tree, school bus, highchair* or whatever you pick and go from there.

Have fun!