

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS

LIMERICKS

★ The limerick is a form of light verse, usually composed of five lines arranged in the following rhyming pattern:

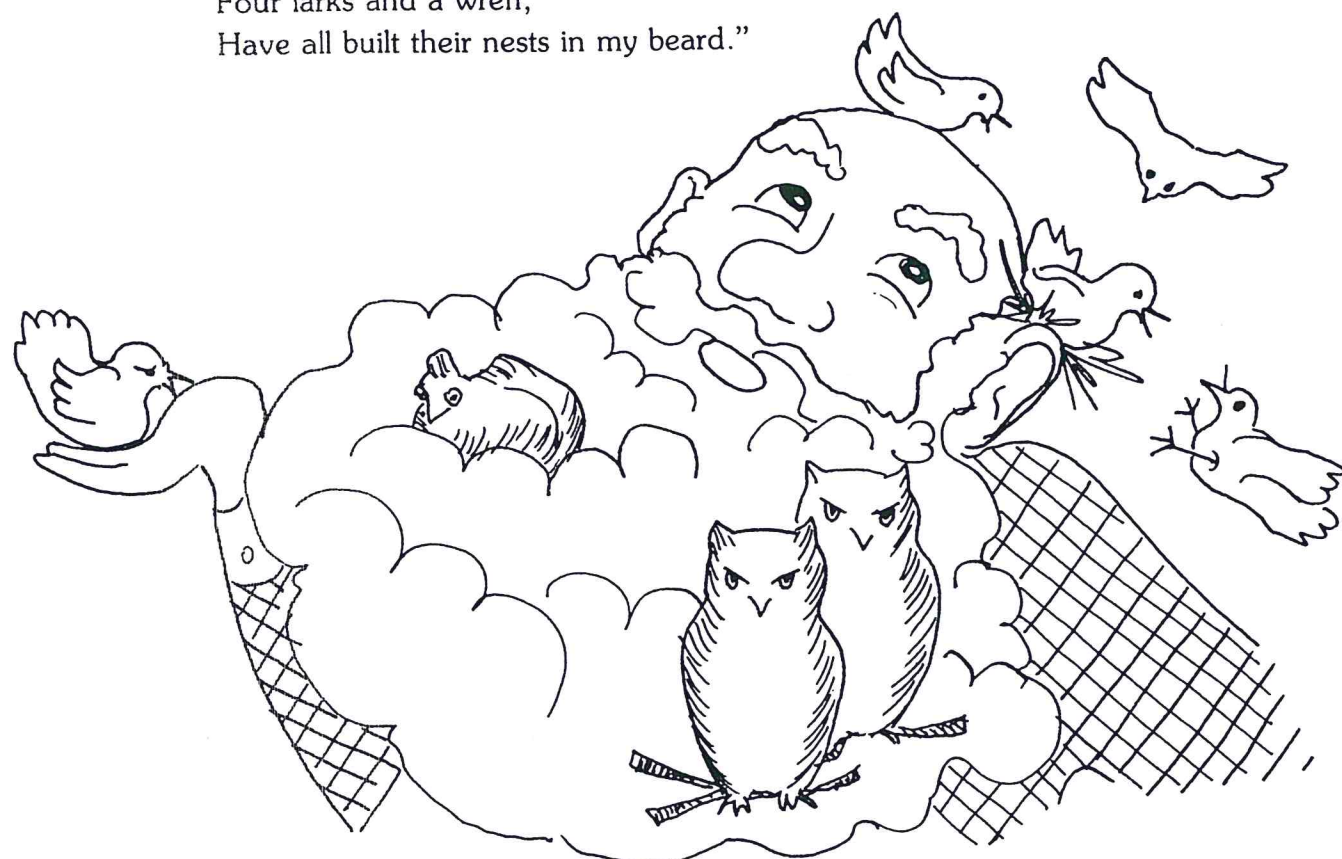
Line 1 a
Line 2 a
Line 3 b
Line 4 b
Line 5 a

As you can see, lines 1, 2, and 5 rhyme and are usually longer than lines 3 and 4 which also rhyme.

The exact origin of limericks has not been established definitely. Edward Lear is credited with popularizing the limerick in the early years of the 19th century. Limericks are humorous, witty, ironic, and sometimes nonsensical. They are often used to ridicule politics, religion, convention, human mannerisms, or people of importance. At other times, they are simply funny and quite benign.

Here are some classic examples by Lear.

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."



ring on the tongue twister, is this limerick by Lear.

A flea and a fly in a flue
Didn't know quite what to do
Said the flea, "Let us fly."
Said the fly, "Let us flee."
So they flew through a flaw in the flue.

It can be great fun to have your class select limericks to memorize and to act out. Such presentations are fun and provide a good laugh in a regular, busy school day. Your students can conduct their own library searches for limericks or you can have your librarian compile a collection of books which can provide the basis for a delightful learning center on limericks right in your room.

In the kind of learning center we're recommending, students should have all the necessary materials for:

- 1) making a poster of a favorite limerick and illustrating it
- 2) making and binding a small booklet of favorite limericks
- 3) writing limericks to various limerick starters prepared by the teacher.

After your students have enjoyed listening to and reading limericks, you will want to do some whole class writing of limericks. Be prepared with three or four starting lines. Remind your students of the rhyming pattern (have it on the chalkboard for easy reference). Now, brainstorm with your class for other limerick lines. Be an active participant yourself. More often than not, you will find that the third line gives students trouble. Anticipate this and have some suggestions ready.

You have, no doubt, noticed that certain magazines and journals conduct limerick contests. Though we do not normally encourage competitiveness, students do enjoy "market-testing" their limericks for humor.

You may want to arrange a limerick writing contest in your class or between classes in your school.

LIMERICKS

Use Your "Funny Bone" -- Write a Limerick!

1. You have probably heard the poem printed below.

There was a young lady of Niger,
Who smiled as she rode on a tiger;
They came back from the ride,
With the lady inside,
And the smile on the face of the tiger.

anonymous

This poem is a limerick. It is meant to be funny. Did you notice the rhyming pattern? Lines 1, 2, and 5 rhyme. Lines 3 and 4 rhyme also. These two lines are also a little shorter than the other three.

2. Try your hand at completing these limericks.

There was once an athlete named Sam,

A singer stepped up to the stand,

3. Copy a limerick which you think is especially good from a book!

