

Name _____



LIMERICKS

A limerick is a humorous five-line poem that follows a definite rhyme pattern and has a particular rhythm.

Just as music is written in groups of notes called measures, poetry is written in groups of syllables called feet. A foot usually contains several unstressed syllables but only one stressed syllable. A particular verse form gets its characteristic rhythm, beat, or meter from the number of unstressed syllables and the position of the stressed syllable in each foot, and from the number of feet in each line.

In the limerick, each foot contains one or two unstressed syllables followed by one that is stressed. There must be three of these feet in each of the first two lines, two in each of the second two lines, and three again in the last line.

Structure:

Lines 1, 2, and 5 each have three feet (that is, three stressed, or accented, syllables) and rhyme with one another (A).

Lines 3 and 4 each have only two feet (that is, two stressed, or accented, syllables) and rhyme with each other (B). These two lines are always indented.

Example: Read the poem aloud, noting the rhyme pattern and which syllables are stressed. Syllables marked with a ♪ are unstressed. Syllables marked with a ♫ are stressed. Vertical lines separate the feet.

| | | |
|------------------|---|---|
| 3 feet | There once was a boy at our school | A |
| 3 feet | Who thought he was ter- ribly cool. | A |
| 2 feet, indented | He wore fancy jeans | B |
| 2 feet, indented | Strode around with the teens | B |
| 3 feet | But end ed up play ing the fool. | A |

Say the poem aloud one more time. This time, clap the rhythm. Try to feel the rhythm of the limerick. Now write a limerick of your own:

There was an old _____ from _____

Who liked to _____ on a _____
