

Technically a limerick, which dates back more than 500 years, is a poem that contains five lines that rhyme in an AABBA structure.

Confused? Well it is pretty simple really. All three of the A lines must rhyme with each other, and the two B lines must also rhyme with each other.

The whole thing should carry an “anapestic beat” – two short syllables followed by a long one – that goes something like:

(A) *Da da dum da da dum da da dum*  
(A) *Da da dum da da dum da da dum*  
(B) *Da da dum da da dum*  
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(A) *Da da dum da da dum da da dum*

The rhythm of a poem is called the “metre”.

But the main thing is that they are usually meant to be humorous and use a lot of word-play. Sometimes they are “dirty”, but I find those are usually not as funny.

There was an odd fellow named Gus,  
When traveling he made such a tuss.  
He was banned from the train,  
Not allowed on a plane,  
And now travels only by bus.

There once was a fly on the wall,  
I wonder, why didn't it fall?  
Because its feet stuck? Or was it just luck?  
Or does gravity miss things so small?

An elderly man called Keith,  
Misplaced his set of false teeth.  
They'd been laid on a chair,  
He'd forgot they were there,  
Sat down, and was bitten beneath.

There was an old man of Peru,  
Who dreamt he was eating his shoe.  
He woke in the night,  
With a terrible fright,  
And found it was perfectly true.

A mouse in her room woke Miss Dowd  
She was frightened—it must be allowed.  
Soon a happy thought hit her—  
To scare off the critter,  
She sat up in bed and meowed.

There was a young man from Darjeeling  
Got on to a train from New Ealing  
It said on the door  
Don't spit on the floor  
So he looked up and spat at the ceiling.

"There's a train at 4:04," said Miss Jenny.  
"Four tickets I'll take; have you any?"  
Said the man at the door,  
"Not four for 4:04,  
For four for 4:04 is too many."

A tutor who tooted the flute  
Tried to tutor two tooters to toot  
Said the two to the tutor  
"Is it tougher to toot or  
To tutor two tooters to toot?"

"You'll be king one day," the witches all said  
To the throne of Scotland Macbeth would be led  
Determined to rule  
His actions were cruel  
So MacDuff chopped his head off instead.

There was a young lady of Niger  
who smiled as she rode on a tiger;  
They returned from the ride  
with the lady inside,  
and the smile on the face of the tiger.

\*\*\*\* a couple of "dirty" ones \*\*\*\*\*

There once was a woman from Arden  
Who was blowing her man in her garden  
He said "my dear Flo,  
Where does it all go?  
She said \*gulp\* "I beg your pardon?

There was a young lady of Norway  
Who hung by her toes in a doorway.  
She said to her beau  
'Just look at me Joe,  
I think I've discovered one more way.'