<u>**Rhymes and Limericks.**</u>   p.1.

rhyme – *n.* a poem with a pattern of similar sounds at the ends of lines.

limerick – *n.* a five-line humorous poem or stanza with regular meter, rhyme patterns, and punning wordplay, often with risqué subject matter, and typically opening with a line such as "There once was a lady called Jenny."

A popular form in children's verse, the limerick is often comical, nonsensical, and sometimes even lewd. Although no one knows for sure, the limerick form is thought to have germinated in France during the Middle Ages, after which it crossed the English Channel. An 11th century manuscript demonstrates the limerick's cadence:

> The lion is wondrous strong
> And full of the wiles of wo;
> And whether he pleye
> Or take his preye
> He cannot do but slo (slay)

The limerick appeared throughout Irish and British literature in the mid-19th century, most notably the printing (1846) and reprinting (1863) of Edward Lear's A Book of Nonsense, the latter celebrating Lear's 40-plus years of writing what he called "nonsense verse."

https://www.poets.org/poetsorg/text/limerick-poetic-form
http://www.webexhibits.org/poetry/explore_famous_limerick_background.html

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The form contains five lines with trimeter (three-beat) measures in the first, second, and fifth lines and dimeter (two-beat) measures in the second and fourth. While this rhyme scheme of abccb differs from an Irish limerick, the similarity is unmistakable.

<u>Writing a Limerick</u>

Limericks are "closed form" poems that adhere to the following strict guidelines. The rhyme scheme is always AABBA.

1. The last word in lines 1 (A), 2 (A), and 5 (A) must rhyme with each other and contain 8-9 syllables each.

2. The last word in lines 3 (B) and 4 (B) must rhyme with each other and contain 5-6 syllables each.

But many poets bend some of the rules giving rise to other variations of the form.

Syllables and wording emphasis creates a sing-song effect when correctly pronounced. The pattern can be illustrated with dashes denoting weak syllables, and back-slashes for stresses:

1. There was an Old Man with a beard,	1) - / - - / - - /
2. Who said, "It is just as I feared!	2) - / - - / - - /
3. Two Owls and a Hen,	3) - / - - /
4. Four Larks and a Wren,	4) - / - - /
5. Have all built their nests in my beard!	5) - / - - / - - /

- Edward Lear's self-illustrated Book of Nonsense, from 1846.