

The Limerick

A limerick is a humorous poem consisting of five lines. The first two are trimeters, the next two dimeters, and the last one is a trimeter. The rhyme scheme of the limerick is aabba (in other words, the first two lines rhyme with the fifth and the 3rd and 4th lines rhyme).

Examples:

There were three young women of Birmingham,
And I know a sad story concerning 'em:
They stuck needles and pins
In the reverend shins
Of the Bishop engaged in confirming 'em.

A major, with wonderful force,
Called out in Hyde Park for a horse.
All the flowers looked round,
But no horse could be found;
So he just rhododendron, of course.

A maiden at college Ms. Breeze
Weighed down by B.A.'s and Lit. D's,
Collapsed from the strain,
Said her doctor, "It's plain
You are killing yourself—by degrees!"

Notice that, although there is a little flexibility with rhythm, typically the first two lines contain one iambic foot, followed by two anapestic feet, then the rest of the poem is straight anapestic rhythm.