

I can't write poems. I have trouble even knowing what poetry is. Friends who are talented in this kind of writing have tried to explain what makes a piece "poetry." But, I still don't know. I know what verse is. I can compose something in "iambic pentameter" and recognize that form in literature. I can look in the dictionary and find a definition of "poem." Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary says that it is "a composition in verse." So, then, I looked up "verse." That didn't clear things up at all. "Verse," I read, is "a line of metrical writing." Or, "metrical writing distinguished by its lower level of intensity," or "poetry".

Well, that cleared things up not one little bit. So, I went for the big picture and looked up "poetry." I read this: "productions of a poet," or "writing that formulates a concentrated imaginative awareness of experience in language chosen and arranged to create a specific emotional response through meaning, sound, and rhythm."

Oh, now I know why I can't write poetry. Well, then, there's no sense in going any farther with that. I CAN write limericks, and they can be very timely, written to express a situation in the present—or in the past, or future, or in some milieu that doesn't really exist. But, just to make sure that I can do what I believe I can—i.e. write limericks, I needed to look up that word, too. Limerick—to just look at the last, pertinent part of the definition, is formed with a pattern of aabba. Runo asked me what that was, and I made up a limerick on the spot: There was a young lady from here/ Who thought she had nothing to fear/Then she stepped on a snake/And fell in the lake/ And now we can no longer see her.

Current events can inspire limericks. The protester takes his big gun/To the city to have some great fun/He's got a big task/That requires no mask/Till he's sick he thinks he has won.

Political thoughts are subject to limericks: Trump thinks that he's won the fight/And that he has the clout, and the might/To keep us from knowing/How much he is owing/To Putin and the conservative right.

But, the limericks that come spontaneously with at least a small bit of humor are the ones that are fun to do. Pick a topic, or a name, or an event, and a limerick is only aabba away.

So, here's a few just off the top of my head: There was a young fellow called Mike/Who wanted to take a long hike/As fast as he'd go/ It was still much too slow/So he went out and bought a new bike.

Or: There was an old lady named Maisie/Who always looked fresh as a daisy/Her big flowered hat/Was topped by her cat/She said "he won't move; he's too lazy."

There was an old man we called Jake/Who lived by a nice little lake/When he fell and got wet/We all said we'd bet/It was the last bath that he'd ever take.

Last one—I promise: We have a nice collie named Blue/Who smiles and shakes hands with you/But if you aren't very nice/Her blue eyes turn to ice/She'll bite you before she is through.

And, I'm through now, too.

