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# Level: Intermediate

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# The Art of the Limerick

# Student worksheet

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A limerick is a rhyming five-line poem. The first, second, and fifth lines rhyme and have the same number of syllables. The third and fourth lines rhyme and have the same number of syllables. Limericks are said to originate from Limerick in Ireland.

For example:

*There was an old man with a beard,*

*Who said, “It is just what I feared! –*

*Two owls and a hen,*

*Four larks and a wren,*

*Have all built their nests in my beard.”*

*There once were two cats from Kilkenny,*

*Each thought that was one cat too many,*

*So they started to fight*

*And to scratch and to bite –*

*Now, instead of two cats there aren’t any.*

1) *How would you describe the rhyming pattern of a limerick? Choose from one of the options below.*

1. A A B B A
2. A A A B A
3. A B B A B

****2) *Match the words on the left with their definitions on the right.*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 1. malignancy | a) dry dirt in the form of powder that covers surfaces inside a building |
| 2. growth | b) awareness of one’s place in a system of social class, especially (in Marxist terms) as it relates to the class struggle |
| 3. excise | c) tissue that is growing in the body because of a disease process and that is likely to cause death |
| 4. class consciousness | d) the journey ahead is full of… |
| 5. the road is paved with… | e) follow the rules |
| 6. dust | f) to remove something, especially by cutting |
| 7. obey | g) a lump growing on the outside or inside of a person that is caused by a disease |

****3) *Your teacher is going to read some political limericks to you from the website* [*King of Limericks*](https://kingoflimericks.com/limericks-about-civil-unrest/)*. Fill in the missing words.*

a)

**Malignancy**   
There’s a growth in our system we’ve got to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  
A \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ the size of a baby blue whale  
We roundly \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ it  
But try to excise it  
The doctors all say that it’s too big to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

b)

**Class Consciousness**Amazing what some folks will do for a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  
But look for a job and I \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ you’ll find any  
The road for the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  
To become \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  
Is paved with \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and dust for the many.

c)

**The Best Of All Possible Worlds**It’s \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ if you learn to obey  
Just follow the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ don’t \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  
We all have our place   
In the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ race  
No \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ for mistakes when you do what they say

*Note: With this last limerick, the writer has used some artistic licence and hasn’t stuck religiously to the syllable rule we learnt earlier.*

4) *Answer the following questions with a partner:*

* What do you think the messaging is of each poem?
* What do you think the political views of the author are?
* Do you agree with the political message of each poem?
* Which one is your favourite? Why?
* Do you think the rhythm and rhyming scheme of a limerick works well with more serious topics like politics?

*****5) You are going to write your own limerick. First, decide on your first line. Here are some ideas:*

There was once a woman named **Sally**…

There was an old man from **Peru**…

There was a black cat from **Rye**…

Benjamin Gregory **Berry**…

6) *Now brainstorm a list of words that rhyme with the final word of your first line. Try and think of as many as you can. You can use these when writing the second and fifth lines of your limerick.*

For example:

Sally  alley, valley, rally, tally, Allie, etc.

7) *Now write your limerick. Don’t forget to follow the rhyming pattern we learnt earlier.*

*Alternatively, you can fill in the missing words in this limerick:*

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ park

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ dark

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ lake

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ snake

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ shark!