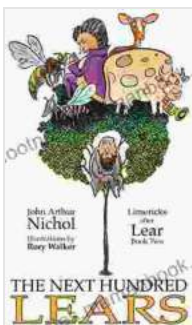


The Next Hundred Lears: Limericks After Lear

In 2016, poet Jane Hirshfield published a collection of 100 limericks, titled *The Hundred Limericks*. The book was a critical and commercial success, and it has been praised for its wit, humor, and insight. One of the most popular limericks in the collection is "Lear's Daughters," which reimagines Shakespeare's play *King Lear* in limerick form:

1. There once was a king named old Lear,
2. Whose daughters he asked, "Who loves me most, dear?"
3. Goneril and Regan,
4. They lied like a pagan,
5. While Cordelia said, "Actions speak clear!"

Hirshfield's limerick is just one example of the many ways that poets have used the limerick form to retell and reimagine Shakespeare's plays. In this essay, I will explore the history of the limerick after Lear, and I will discuss some of the most successful and innovative examples of the form. Along with discussing works by Edward Lear, Ogden Nash and Dorothy Parker will also be mentioned.



The Next Hundred Lears: Limericks After Lear

by Rory Walker

★★★★☆ 4.5 out of 5

Language : English

File size : 6353 KB

Text-to-Speech : Enabled

Screen Reader : Supported

Enhanced typesetting : Enabled

Print length : 122 pages
Lending : Enabled



The History of the Limerick After Lear

The limerick is a five-line poem with a distinctive rhyme scheme and meter. The first, second, and fifth lines rhyme, and the third and fourth lines rhyme. The lines are also all the same length, with five anapests (two unstressed syllables followed by a stressed syllable). The limerick was first popularized in the 19th century by Edward Lear, who published a collection of limericks in 1846. Lear's limericks were often nonsensical and humorous, and they quickly became a popular form of light verse.

After Lear, many other poets began to write limericks, including Ogden Nash and Dorothy Parker. Nash's limericks were often witty and satirical, while Parker's limericks were often dark and humorous. In the 20th century, the limerick continued to be a popular form of verse, and it was used by poets such as W.H. Auden, Elizabeth Bishop, and John Ashbery.

Limericks After Lear

In recent years, there has been a resurgence of interest in the limerick. A number of contemporary poets have used the form to retell and reimagine Shakespeare's plays. These poets include Billy Collins, Paul Muldoon, and Jane Hirshfield.

Collins' limerick "Hamlet" retells the story of Shakespeare's play in just five lines:

1. Young Hamlet, a prince of great sorrow,
2. Had a father who died, just like tomorrow.
3. His mother remarried,
4. He got mad and he tarried,
5. And killed everyone, including his marrow.

Muldoon's limerick "Macbeth" reimagines Shakespeare's play as a horror story:

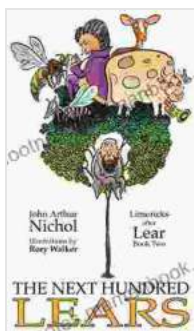
1. Macbeth, a thane with ambition,
2. Murdered Duncan, his king, with derision.
3. But the witches' decree,
4. Brought him misery,
5. And he died in a fit of contrition.

Hirshfield's limerick "Lear's Daughters" retells the story of Shakespeare's play in a more sympathetic light:

1. There once was a king named old Lear,
2. Whose daughters he asked, "Who loves me most, dear?"
3. Goneril and Regan,
4. They lied like a pagan,
5. While Cordelia said, "Actions speak clear!"

These are just a few examples of the many ways that poets have used the limerick form to retell and reimagine Shakespeare's plays. The limerick is a versatile and adaptable form, and it can be used to tell stories, make jokes, and explore complex themes. In the hands of a skilled poet, the limerick can be a powerful and moving form of verse.

The limerick is a beloved form of verse that has been used by poets for centuries. In recent years, there has been a resurgence of interest in the limerick, and a number of contemporary poets have used the form to retell and reimagine Shakespeare's plays. These poets have shown that the limerick is a versatile and adaptable form that can be used to tell stories, make jokes, and explore complex themes. In the hands of a skilled poet, the limerick can be a powerful and moving form of verse.



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