

*Selected by Myra Cohn Livingston*

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# Lots of Limericks

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This is a rich collection of limericks selected by a widely known anthologist, poet, and limerick enthusiast. Edward Lear, Ogden Nash, Theodore Roethke, X. J. Kennedy, and John Ciardi, among many others, introduce us to such unlikely and likable characters as a young lady from "Woosester" who used to crow like a "roosester," an old person of Dean who dined on one pea and a bean, and a careless zookeeper named Blake who fell into a tropical lake.

This book's eleven sections are rich with limericks about birdbrains, peculiar people, strange shapes, fabulous foods, flutes and fiddles, and the holidays. For example:

There was a young lady of Crete,  
Who was so exceedingly neat,  
When she got out of bed  
She stood on her head,  
To make sure of not soiling her feet.

With a zany drawing on each section title page, this collection offers an uproarious, imaginative feast of delights from which to choose. It will, as well, inspire readers to write limericks of their own.

*Drawings by Rebecca Perry*

All ages

Guaranteed Reinforced Binding

Melanie Smith



# Lots of Limericks

EDITED BY MYRA COHN LIVINGSTON

DILLY DILLY PICCALILLI:  
POEMS FOR THE VERY YOUNG

IF THE OWL CALLS AGAIN:  
A COLLECTION OF OWL POEMS

I LIKE YOU, IF YOU LIKE ME:  
POEMS OF FRIENDSHIP

POEMS OF CHRISTMAS

WHY AM I GROWN SO COLD?  
POEMS OF THE UNKNOWABLE  
(Margaret K. McElderry Books)

HOW PLEASANT TO KNOW MR. LEAR!

POEMS OF LEWIS CARROLL

THESE SMALL STONES

ALSO BY MYRA COHN LIVINGSTON

HIGGLEDY-PIGGLEDY:  
VERSES AND PICTURES

MONKEY PUZZLE AND OTHER POEMS

REMEMBERING AND OTHER POEMS

THERE WAS A PLACE AND OTHER POEMS

WORLDS I KNOW AND OTHER POEMS  
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CELEBRATIONS

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MYTH OR REALITY?

A CIRCLE OF SEASONS

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ESSAYS ON POETRY

EARTH SONGS

MY HEAD IS RED AND OTHER RHYMES

POEM-MAKING: WAYS TO BEGIN WRITING POETRY

SEA SONGS

SKY SONGS

A SONG I SANG TO YOU

SPACE SONGS

UP IN THE AIR



# Lots of Limericks

Selected by Myra Cohn Livingston

Illustrated by Rebecca Perry

MARGARET K. McELDERRY BOOKS

# *To Edmund, Charlotte, and Hannah Hoffman*

Margaret K. McElderry Books  
An imprint of Simon & Schuster Children's Publishing Division  
1230 Avenue of the Americas  
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Printed in the United States of America

4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data  
Lots of limericks / selected by Myra Cohn Livingston. — 1st ed.  
p. cm.

Summary: A collection of limericks on such topics as accidents and incidents, peculiar people, strange shapes, and holidays.

ISBN 0-689-50531-0

1. Limericks, Juvenile. [1. Limericks. 2. American poetry—  
Collections. 3. English poetry—Collections.]

PN6231.L5L6 1991 91-329

821'.075'08—dc20

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## INTRODUCTION

Nobody really knows how the limerick began. Some say that it was a form of popular song sung by a brigade of Irish soldiers who returned from France to Limerick, Ireland, early in the eighteenth century. Others have found that the form appears in a Greek play written sometime between 448 and 380 B.C. and in manuscripts from the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries. A limerick even appears in Shakespeare's *Othello*.

We do know that the first book of limericks was published in England as *The History of Sixteen Wonderful Old Women* in 1821. The next year another book appeared in which a verse about a man of Tobago so inspired Edward Lear that, over fifty years later, he patterned his famous nonsense verses on the form. Lear has been called the Poet Laureate of the Limerick.

Today, the limerick is a light verse form which appeals to us through its ridiculous humor, its word-play, and its bouncing anapestic rhythm. Many of the limericks we know are anonymous, but a good many others are always appearing, some written by our best contemporary poets.

This is a selection of 210 of my favorite limericks, old and new, with the hope that you will find some that will also make you laugh, read, and even sing!

—MCL





A Bundle of Birdbrains

I wish that my room had a floor;  
I don't care so much for a door;  
    But this walking around  
    Without touching the ground  
Is getting to be quite a bore.

*Gelett Burgess*

#### THE GNAT AND THE GNU

"How absurd," said the gnat to the gnu,  
"To spell your queer name as you do!"  
    "For the matter of that,"  
    Said the gnu to the gnat,  
"That's just how I feel about you."

*Oliver Herford*

"This season our tunnips was red  
And them beets was all white. And instead  
Of green cabbages, what  
You suspect that we got?"  
"I don't know." "Didn't plant none," he said.  
*David McCord*

There once was a boy of Bagdad,  
An inquisitive sort of a lad.  
He said, "I will see  
If a sting has a bee."  
And he very soon found that it had.

## KEEPING BUSY IS BETTER THAN NOTHING

There was a young lady named Sue  
Who had nothing whatever to do  
    And who did it so badly  
    I thought she would gladly  
Have stopped long before she was through.  
                                *John Ciardi*

There was a young bard of Japan  
Whose limericks never would scan;  
    When they said it was so,  
    He replied: "Yes, I know,  
But I make a rule of always trying to get  
    just as many words into the last line as  
    I possibly can."

There was a young fellow called Hugh  
Who went to a neighbouring zoo.

    The lion opened wide  
    And said, "Come inside  
And bring all the family too."

*Max Fatchen*

### THE THINKER

There was a young fellow who thought  
Very little, but thought it a lot.

    Then at long last he knew  
    What he wanted to do,  
But before he could start, he forgot.

*John Ciardi*

There's a tiresome young man from Bay Shore;  
When his fiancée cried, "I adore  
The beautiful sea!"  
He replied, "I agree  
It's pretty. But what is it *for*?"

*Morris Bishop*

There was a young person called Smarty  
Who sent out his cards for a party;  
So exclusive and few  
Were the friends that he knew  
That no one was present but Smarty.

There was a young man, let me say,  
Of West Pumpkinville, Maine, U.S.A.  
You tell me there's not  
Such a place? Thanks a lot.  
I forget what he did anyway.

*David McCord*

#### A WARNING

I know a young girl who can speak  
French, German, and Latin and Greek.  
I see her each day,  
And it grieves me to say  
That her English is painfully weak!

*Mary A. Webber*

There was a young lady from Wooster  
Who ussessed to crow like a rooster.

She ussessed to climb

Seven trees at a time—

But her sisester ussessed to booster.

Said a lady beyond Pompton Lakes

"I do make such silly mistakes!

Now the car's in the hall!

It went right through the wall

When I mixed up the gas and the brakes."

*Morris Bishop*

There was an old lady named Carr  
Who took the 3:3 to Forfar;  
For she said: "I conceive  
It is likely to leave  
Far before the 4:4 to Forfar."

There once was a man who said, "How  
Shall I manage to carry my cow?  
For if I should ask it  
To get in my basket,  
'Twould make such a terrible row."

## A MAN OF PENNANG

An honest old man of Pennang  
once borrowed a friend's boomerang.  
"I'll return it," he cried,  
and he tried and he tried  
—but it always came back to Pennang.

*N. M. Bodecker*

There was an old man of Khartoum  
Who kept two tame sheep in his room:  
"For," he said, "they remind me  
Of one left behind me,  
But I cannot remember of whom."

There was an old looney of Rhyme  
Whose candor was simply sublime:  
When they asked, "Are you there?"  
He said, "Yes, but take care,  
For I'm never 'all there' at a time!"

Said the crab: "'Tis not beauty or birth  
That is needed to conquer the earth.  
To win in life's fight,  
First be sure you are right,  
Then go sidewise for all you are worth."  
*Oliver Herford*

### THE YAK

There was a most odious Yak  
Who took only toads on his Back:  
If you asked for a Ride  
He would act very Snide,  
And go humping off, yicketty-yak.  
*Theodore Roethke*





Incidents and Accidents

There was a young farmer of Leeds  
Who swallowed six packets of seeds.  
It soon came to pass  
He was covered with grass,  
And he couldn't sit down for the weeds.

There once was a boy of Quebec  
Who was buried in snow to his neck.  
When asked, "Are you frizz?"  
He replied, "Yes, I is,  
But we don't call this cold in Quebec."  
*Rudyard Kipling*

## APRIL FOOL

At show-and-tell time yesterday  
I brought my pet skunk. Sad to say,  
    Though it had been well taught  
    Not to spray, it forgot.  
Now we can't use the schoolhouse till May.  
*John Ciardi*

## STICKY SITUATION

Muttered centipede Slither McGrew,  
"What on earth can I possibly do?  
    Here I'm late for a date  
    And foot seventy-eight  
Has some chewing gum stuck to its shoe!"  
*X. J. Kennedy*

There once was a big rattlesnake  
Who bought him a caraway cake.

When they said, "You will share  
With your neighbors your fare,"  
He said, "That's where you make a mistake!"

A skeleton once in Khartoum  
Asked a spirit up into his room;  
They spent the whole night  
In the eeriest fight  
As to which should be frightened of whom.

There once was a barber of Kew,  
Who went very mad at the Zoo;  
He tried to enamel  
The face of the camel,  
And gave the brown bear a shampoo.  
*Cosmo Monkhouse*

A thrifty young fellow of Shoreham  
Made brown paper trousers and woreham;  
He looked nice and neat  
Till he bent in the street  
To pick up a pin; then he toreham.

Going home with her books through the snows,  
Went Maude, when a blizzard arose.  
Despite winter's blast,  
Maude got home at last  
But the books had no jackets and froze.

*Wallace Tripp*

There was once a most charming young miss  
Who considered her ice-skating bliss;  
But one day, alack!  
Her skates, they were slack.  
And she ended up something like this.

There was a young lady named Hannah,  
Who slipped on a peel of banana.  
More stars she espied  
As she lay on her side  
Than are found in the "Star-Spangled Banner."

Cries a sheep to a ship on the Amazon  
(A Clipper sheep ship that her lamb is on),  
"Remember, dear Willy  
The nights will be chilly,  
So keep your white woolly pajamas on!"  
*J. Patrick Lewis*

There was a young lady of Spain  
Who was dreadfully sick on a train,  
Not once, but again  
And again and again,  
And again and again and again.

There was a young girl named O'Neill,  
Who went up in the great Ferris wheel;  
But when halfway around  
She looked at the ground,  
And it cost her an eighty-cent meal.

There was once a young man of Oporta  
Who daily got shorter and shorter,  
    The reason he said  
    Was the hod on his head  
Which was filled with the heaviest mortar.

*Lewis Carroll*

A small boy, while learning to swim,  
Jumped into the water with vim.  
    He lit on his sister,  
    But wished he had missed her,  
For it knocked all the breath out of him.

*Elizabeth Gordon*

There was a young man from the city,  
Who met what he thought was a kitty;  
    He gave it a pat,  
    And said, "Nice little cat!"  
And they buried his clothes out of pity.

#### A DRIVER FROM DEERING

A school bus driver from Deering  
disconcertingly kept disappearing:  
he would head for Cape May,  
but end up in Bombay  
—because something was wrong with the steering.  
*N. M. Bodecker*

There was an old lady of Rye,  
Who was baked by mistake in a pie;  
    To the household's disgust  
    She emerged through the crust,  
And exclaimed, with a yawn, "Where am I?"

An obnoxious Old Person named Hackett  
Bought a huge trunk and started to pack it.  
    When he tripped and fell in it  
    And it shut the next minute,  
He proceeded to make quite a racket.

*William Jay Smith*

A mouse in her room woke Miss Dowd;  
She was frightened and screamed very loud,  
Then a happy thought hit her—  
To scare off the critter,  
She sat up in bed and meowed.

### A PERSON IN SPAIN

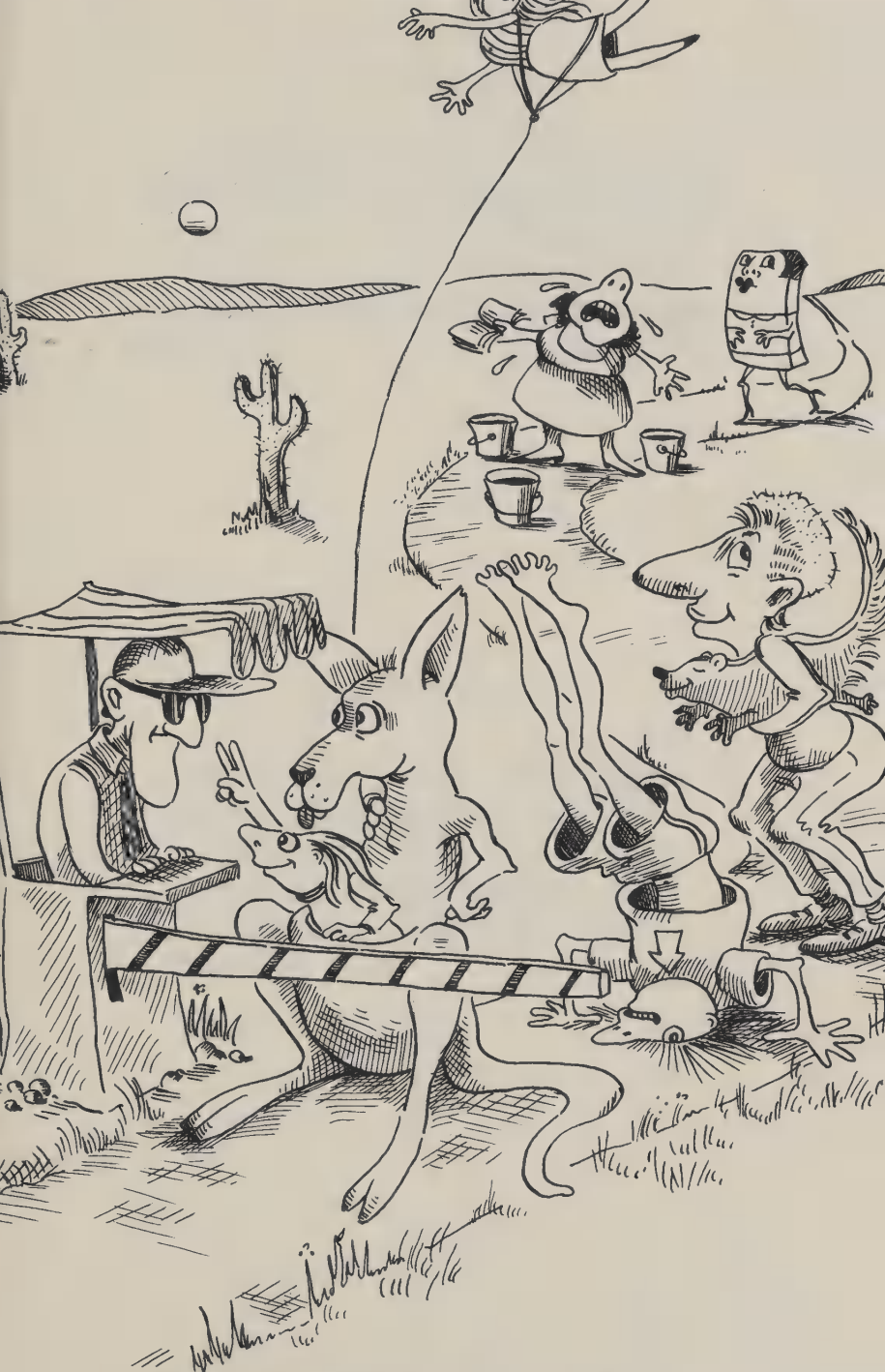
An indignant young person in Spain  
looked out at a gray, grimy rain  
and cried: "Will you clear!  
Who told you to come here?  
You horrible Old English Rain."

*N. M. Bodecker*

### BE KIND TO DUMB ANIMALS

There once was an ape in a zoo  
Who looked out through the bars and saw—YOU!  
Do you think it's fair  
To give poor apes a scare?  
I think it's a mean thing to do!

*John Ciardi*



Peculiar People

## A BRIGHT IDEA

A pretentious old man of the Bosphorus  
Used to cover his goat cart with phosphorus  
So that, driving by night  
He would get the green light  
And his goats would consider him prosperous.  
*X. J. Kennedy*

## A MAN IN A TREE

A furious man in a tree  
Said: "What's all this nature to me?  
I have looked at the view.  
Now what do I do?  
I ought to have brung my TV."  
*N. M. Bodecker*

## A CRUSTY MECHANIC

There was an old crusty mechanic  
Whose manners were fierce and tyrannic:  
dull headlights would glare  
At his furious stare,  
—and dead engines turn over in panic!

*N. M. Bodecker*

There was a young lady of Crete,  
Who was so exceedingly neat,  
When she got out of bed  
She stood on her head,  
To make sure of not soiling her feet.

A certain young fellow, named Bobbie  
Rode his steed back and forth in the lobby:  
    When the clerk said: "Indoors  
    Is no place for a horse"  
He replied: "But, you see, it's my hobby."

There was a young lady named Ruth,  
Who had a great passion for truth.  
    She said she would die  
    Before she would lie,  
And she died in the prime of her youth.

## MY SISTER

My sister's remarkably light,  
She can float to a fabulous height.  
It's a troublesome thing,  
But we tie her with string,  
And we use her instead of a kite.

*Margaret Mahy*

There was a young girl of Asturias,  
Whose temper was frantic and furious.  
She used to throw eggs  
At her grandmother's legs—  
A habit unpleasant, but curious.

A matron well known in Montclair  
Was never quite sure what to wear.  
Once when very uncertain  
She put on a lace curtain  
And ran a bell cord through her hair.  
*William Jay Smith*

#### TENNIS CLINIC

There was a young man from Port Jervis  
Who developed a marvelous service  
But was sorry he learned it  
For if someone returned it  
It made him impossibly nervous.  
*Lillian Morrison*

An impressionable lady in Wales  
Had a passion for tragical tales;  
    The torrents of tears  
    That she wept through the years  
They came and collected in pails.

*Edward Gorey*

There once was a person of Benin,  
Who wore clothes not fit to be seen in;  
    When told that he shouldn't  
    He replied, "Gumscrumrudent!" —  
A word of inscrutable meanin'!

*Cosmo Monkhouse*

A man who was fond of his skunk  
Thought he smelled pure and pungent as punk.  
But his friends cried No, no,  
No, no, no, no, no, *no*!  
He just stinks, or he stank, or he stunk.  
*David McCord*

Said a restless young person of Yew,  
"I will purchase a nice kangaroo;  
I can sit in her pouch  
And pretend it's a couch  
And wherever she hops, I will too!"  
*Myra Cohn Livingston*

An Old Man from Okefenokee  
Liked to sing in a most dismal low key;  
    He would perch on a log  
    And boom like a frog  
Through the dark swamp of Okefenokee.  
                                *William Jay Smith*

There was a faith-healer of Deal  
Who said, "Although pain isn't real,  
    If I sit on a pin  
    And I puncture my skin  
I dislike what I *fancy* I feel!"

Said an Ogre from old Saratoga  
I've tried to de-Ogre by Yoga  
    I've stood on my head  
    all day in my bed  
but the mirror still says I'm an Ogre.

*Conrad Aiken*

Said old Peeping Tom of Fort Lee:  
"Peeping ain't what it's cracked up to be;  
    I lose all my sleep,  
    And I peep and I peep,  
And I find 'em all peeping at me."

*Morris Bishop*

There was an Old Man who said, "Well!  
Will *nobody* answer this bell?

I have pulled day and night,  
Till my hair has grown white.  
But nobody answers this bell!"

*Edward Lear*

There was a young lady of Ealing,  
Who had a peculiar feeling  
That she was a fly,  
And wanted to try  
To walk upside down on the ceiling.

There was a Young Lady of Norway,  
Who casually sat in a doorway;  
    When the door squeezed her flat,  
    She exclaimed, "What of that?"  
This courageous Young Lady of Norway.  
*Edward Lear*

There once was a girl of New York  
Whose body was lighter than cork;  
    She had to be fed  
    For six weeks upon lead  
Before she went out for a walk.  
*Cosmo Monkhouse*

There was, in the village of Patton,  
A chap who at church kept his hat on.

    "If I wake up," he said,  
    "With my hat on my head,  
I'll know that it hasn't been sat on."

#### SOMETIMES EVEN PARENTS WIN

There was a young lady from Gloucester  
Who complained that her parents both bossed her,  
    So she ran off to Maine.

    Did her parents complain?  
Not at all—they were glad to have lost her.

*John Ciardi*





Strange Shapes

There was an Old Lady named Hart,  
Whose appearance gave people a start:  
Her shape was a candle's  
Her ears like door handles,  
And her front teeth three inches apart.  
*William Jay Smith*

There was a young lady of Lynn  
Who was so excessively thin  
That when she essayed  
To drink lemonade  
She slipped through the straw and fell in.

There was an old maid of Berlin,  
Who was most distressingly thin,  
    She was locked out one day,  
    But the neighbors all say,  
She pushed out the key and crawled in.  
                                    Elizabeth Gordon

There was an old fellow named Green,  
Who grew so abnormally lean,  
    And flat, and compressed,  
    That his back touched his chest,  
And sideways he couldn't be seen.

A small mouse in Middleton Stoney  
Grew pitifully skinny and bony;  
    "It's apparent," he said,  
    "I'm improperly fed  
On a diet of raw macaroni."

*Myra Cohn Livingston*

There was a young lady named Flo,  
Who was fat as a capital O;  
    When the people said, "Why  
    Is this thus?" she'd reply,  
"I suppose it's the way that I grow."

K is for plump little Kate,  
Who's handicapped sadly by weight.  
When we send her away  
For a visit we say,  
“ 'Twill be cheaper to send her by freight.”

Wailed a ghost in a graveyard at Kew,  
“Oh my friends are so fleeting and few,  
For it's gravely apparent  
That if you're transparent  
There is no one who knows if it's you!”  
*Myra Cohn Livingston*

There was a young damsel of Lynn  
Whose waist was so charmingly thin,  
The dressmaker needed  
A microscope—she did—  
To fit this slim person of Lynn.

There was an old man of the Cape  
Who made himself garments of crepe.  
When asked, "Do they tear?"  
He replied, "Here and there;  
But they're perfectly splendid for shape."

*Robert Louis Stevenson*

## A PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

A puppy whose hair was so flowing  
There really was no means of knowing  
Which end was his head  
Once stopped me and said,  
"Please, sir, am I coming or going?"

*Oliver Herford*

There was a small maiden named Maggie,  
Whose dog was enormous and shaggy,  
The front end of him  
Looked vicious and grim—  
But the tail end was friendly and waggy.

There was a young angler of Worthing,  
Who dug up ten worms and a fur thing.  
He said, "How I wish  
Eleven fine fish  
Would snap up these things I'm unearthing."

There was once a young fellow of Wall  
Who grew up so gigantically tall  
That his friends dug a pit  
Where he'd comfortably sit  
When he wished to converse with them all.

*Myra Cohn Livingston*

There once was a centipede neat,  
Who bought shoes for all of his feet;  
    "For," he said, "I might chance  
    To go to a dance,  
And I must have my outfit complete."

There once was an old kangaroo,  
Who painted his children sky-blue;  
    When his wife said, "My dear,  
    Don't you think they look queer?"  
He replied, "I don't know but they do."

An Elephant sat on some kegs  
And juggled glass bottles and eggs,  
And he said, "I surmise  
This occasions surprise,—  
But, oh dear, how it tires one's legs!"  
*J. G. Francis*

There was a young man of St. Kitts,  
Who was very much troubled with fits;  
The eclipse of the moon  
Threw him into a swoon;  
When he tumbled and broke into bits.

There was an old man of the Nore,  
The same shape behind as before.  
They did not know where  
To offer a chair,  
So he had to sit down on the floor.



All in the Head

As a beauty I'm not a great star,  
There are others more handsome by far,  
    But my face, I don't mind it,  
    Because I'm behind it—  
'Tis the folks in the front that I jar.

*Anthony Euwer*

There was an old man of Blackheath,  
Who sat on his set of false teeth.  
    Said he, with a start,  
    "O Lord, bless my heart!  
I've bitten myself underneath!"

There was an old man of Tarentum,  
Who gnashed his false teeth till he bent 'em.  
When they asked him the cost  
Of what he had lost,  
He replied, "I can't say, for I rent 'em."

There was an Old Man from Luray  
Who always had something to say;  
But each time he tried  
With his mouth opened wide  
His big tongue would get in the way.  
*William Jay Smith*

No matter how grouchy you're feeling,  
You'll find the smile more or less healing.  
    It grows in a wreath  
    All around the front teeth—  
Thus preserving the face from congealing.  
                                  *Anthony Euwer*

There was a Young Lady named Rose  
Who was constantly blowing her nose;  
    Because of this failing  
    They sent her off whaling  
So the whalers could say: "Thar she blows!"  
                                  *William Jay Smith*

There was a young lady of Kent,  
Whose nose was most awfully bent.  
    One day, I suppose,  
    She followed her nose,  
For no one knew which way she went.

There was a Young Lady whose nose  
Was so long that it reached to her toes;  
    So she hired an Old Lady,  
    Whose conduct was steady,  
To carry that wonderful nose.

*Edward Lear*

There was a young lady of Firle,  
Whose hair was addicted to curl;  
It curled up a tree,  
And all over the sea,  
That expansive young lady of Firle.  
*Edward Lear*

I'd rather have fingers than toes;  
I'd rather have ears than a nose;  
And as for my hair,  
I'm glad that it's there.  
I'll be awfully sad when it goes.  
*Gelett Burgess*

## A PERSON IN STIRLING

A silly young person in Stirling  
desired her hair to be curling.  
Despite curlers and creams  
it got straighter, it seems  
—but her nose started twisting and twirling.

*N. M. Bodecker*

There was an Old Person of Dutton,  
Whose head was as small as a button;  
    So to make it look big  
    He purchased a wig,  
And rapidly rushed about Dutton.

*Edward Lear*

From Number Nine, Penwiper Mews,  
There is really abominable news:

They've discovered a head  
In the box for the bread  
But nobody seems to know whose.

*Edward Gorey*

There was an Old Man with a beard,  
Who said, "It is just as I feared!—  
Two Owls and a Hen,  
Four Larks and a Wren,  
Have all built their nests in my beard."

*Edward Lear*

There was a young man of Devizes,  
Whose ears were of different sizes;  
The one that was small  
Was of no use at all,  
But the other won several prizes.

There was a young maid who said, "Why  
Can't I look in my ear with my eye?  
If I give my mind to it,  
I'm sure I can do it.  
You never can tell till you try."

There was a young fellow named Shear  
Who stuck a ball-point in his ear.

As he punctured the drum

He said, "That hurts some,  
But the rest of the way through is clear."

*John Ciardi*

There once was a dancing black bear  
Who, instead of a hat, wore a pair  
Of shoes on his head.

"It's a two-step," he said,  
"And it feels like I'm walking on air."

*J. Patrick Lewis*



Fabulous Foods

## A LADY IN MADRID

A lady who lived in Madrid  
made soup a way no one else did:  
she swallowed some broth  
with some herbs wrapped in a cloth,  
and covered her head with a lid.

*N. M. Bodecker*

An epicure, dining at Crewe,  
Found quite a large mouse in his stew.  
Said the waiter, "Don't shout  
And wave it about  
Or the rest will be wanting one too."

## ARTHUR

There was an old man of Calcutta,  
Who coated his tonsils with butta,  
Thus converting his snore  
From a thunderous roar  
To a soft, oleaginous mutta.

*Ogden Nash*

There was a young prince in Bombay,  
Who always would have his own way;  
He pampered his horses  
On five or six courses,  
Himself eating nothing but hay.

*Walter Parke*

A discerning young lamb of Long Sutton  
Begged his grandfather, "Don't be a glutton;  
For you eat up the grass  
In a manner so crass  
That they'll soon have you carved up as mutton."  
*Myra Cohn Livingston*

There was a young man of Bengal  
Who went to a fancy-dress ball,  
He went, just for fun,  
Dressed up as a bun,  
And a dog ate him up in the hall.

They tell of a hunter named Shephard  
Who was eaten for lunch by a lephard.

Said the lephard, "Egad!

You'd be tastier, lad,

If you had been salted and pephard."

Said Gus Goop, "That spaghetti was great!  
Only—where in the world is my plate?

Something hard as a bullet

Feels stuck in my gullet—

Could it be that canned tuna I ate?"

*X. J. Kennedy*

## THE PROVIDENT PUFFIN

There once was a provident puffin  
Who ate all the fish he could stuff in.  
Said he, " 'Tis my plan  
To eat when I can:  
When there's nuffin' to eat I eat nuffin'."  
*Oliver Herford*

## A PROFESSOR CALLED CHESTERTON

There was a professor called Chesterton,  
Who went for a walk with his best shirt on.  
Being hungry he ate it,  
But lived to regret it,  
As it ruined for life his digesterton.  
*W. S. Gilbert*

There was a young pig who, in bed,  
Nightly slumbered with eggs on his head.  
When the sun at its rise  
Made him open his eyes,  
He enjoyed a quick breakfast in bed.

*Arnold Lobel*

There was an old man from the Rhine  
Who was asked at what hour he would dine.  
He replied, "At eleven,  
At three, six, and seven,  
At eight and a quarter of nine."

There was a young lady named Perkins,  
Who had a great fondness for gherkins;  
    She went to a tea  
    And ate twenty-three,  
Which pickled her internal workin's.

There was a young man so benighted,  
He never knew when he was slighted.  
    He went to a party,  
    And ate just as hearty  
As if he'd been really invited.

There was a sad pig with a tail  
Not curly, but straight as a nail.  
So he ate simply oodles  
Of pretzels and noodles  
Which put a fine twist to his tail.

*Arnold Lobel*

There was a fat lady from Eye  
Who felt she was likely to die;  
But for fear that once dead  
She would not be well-fed,  
She gulped down a pig, a cow, a sheep, twelve  
buns, a seven-layer cake, four cups of coffee,  
and a green apple pie.

There was an old person of Dean  
Who dined on one pea, and one bean;  
For he said, "More than that  
Would make me too fat."  
That cautious old person of Dean.

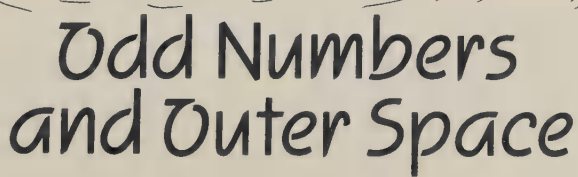
*Edward Lear*

There was an old person of Leeds,  
And simple indeed were his needs.  
Said he: "To save toil  
Growing things in the soil,  
I'll just eat the packets of seeds!"

### THE UNFORTUNATE GIRAFFE

There was once a giraffe who said, "What  
Do I want with my tea strong or hot?  
For my throat's such a length  
The tea loses its strength,  
And is cold ere it reaches the spot."

*Oliver Herford*



## IT CAME FROM OUTER SPACE

There once was a Martian named Zed  
With antennae all over his head.

He sent out a lot  
Of di-di-dash-dot  
But nobody knows what he said.

*John Ciardi*

Doctor Who, I am forced to admit,  
Is a booby, a crackpot, a twit.

Other Time Lords all laugh  
When he trips on his scarf  
That took  $X$  plus  $Y$  light years to knit.

*Charles Connell*

A scientist living at Staines  
Is searching with infinite pains  
For a new type of sound  
Which he hopes, when it's found,  
Will travel much faster than planes.  
*R. J. P. Hewison*

A Martian named Harrison Harris  
Decided he'd like to see Paris;  
In space (so we learn)  
He forgot where to turn—  
And that's why he's now on Polaris.  
*Al Graham*

A luckless time-traveler from Lynn  
Leaned too close for a look and fell in  
    To a puddle of slime  
    On the first day of time  
And so, naturally, couldn't have been.

*X. J. Kennedy*

There was a young lady named Bright,  
Who traveled much faster than light.  
    She started one day  
    In a relative way,  
And returned on the previous night.

Said the condor, in tones of despair:

"Not even the atmosphere's rare.

Since man took to flying,

It's really too trying,

The people one meets in the air."

*Oliver Herford*

Young Frankenstein's robot invention  
Caused trouble too awful to mention.

Its actions were ghoulish,

Which proves it is foolish

To monkey with Nature's intention.

*Berton Braley*

There was an Old Man of the Hague,  
Whose ideas were excessively vague;  
He built a balloon,  
To examine the moon,  
That deluded Old Man of the Hague.

*Edward Lear*

There was an old man who said, "Do  
Tell me *how* I should add two and two?  
I think more and more  
That it makes about four—  
But I fear that is almost too few."

There was an old man who said, "Gee!  
I can't multiply seven by three!  
    Though fourteen seems plenty,  
    It might come to twenty—  
I haven't the slightest idee!"

'Tis a favorite project of mine  
A new value of *pi* to assign.  
    I would fix it at 3  
    For it's simpler, you see,  
Than 3 point 1 4 1 5 9.  
                    Harvey L. Carter

Cried a man on the Salisbury Plain  
"Don't disturb me—I'm counting the rain;  
Should you cause me to stop  
I might miss half-a-drop  
And would have to start over again."

*Myra Cohn Livingston*

## PHILANDER

A Man named Philander S. Goo  
Said, "I know my Legs Add up to Two!  
But I count up to One,  
And I think I am Done!—  
Oh What! Oh what what can I DO?"

*Theodore Roethke*

There was an old fellow of Trinity  
Who solved the square root of Infinity,  
    But it gave him such fidgets  
    To count up the digits,  
He chucked Math and took up Divinity.

#### LET X EQUAL HALF

A mathematician named Bath  
Let  $x$  equal half that he hath.  
    He gave away  $y$   
    Then sat down to  $\pi$   
And choked. What a sad aftermath.  
                                *J. F. Wilson*

A mathematician named Lynch  
To a centipede said, "It's a cinch;  
With your legs I've reckoned,  
That I'll know in a second,  
Just how many feet in an inch."

A bridge engineer, Mister Crumpett,  
Built a bridge for the good River Bumpett.  
A mistake in the plan  
Left a gap in the span,  
But he said, "Well, they'll just have to jump it."

Said Mrs. Isosceles Tri,  
"That I'm sharp I've no wish to deny;  
But I do not dare  
To be perfectly square—  
I'm sure if I did I should die!"

*Clinton Brooks Burgess*

Said Rev. Rectangular Square,  
"To say that I'm *lost* is not fair;  
For, though you have found  
That I never am round,  
You knew all the time I was there."

*Clinton Brooks Burgess*





Flutes and Fiddles

An extinct old ichthyosaurus  
Once offered to sing in a chorus;  
    But the rest of the choir  
    Were obliged to retire,  
His voice was so worn and sonorous.

There was an old person of Tring  
Who, when somebody asked her to sing,  
    Replied, "Isn't it odd?  
    I can never tell 'God  
Save the Weasel' from 'Pop Goes the  
    King'!"

There were three little birds in a wood,  
Who always sang hymns when they could.

What the words were about  
They could never make out,  
But they felt it was doing them good!

An opera star named Maria  
Always tried to sing higher and higher,  
Till she hit a high note  
Which got stuck in her throat—  
Then she entered the Heavenly Choir.

There was an Old Man of the Isles,  
Whose face was pervaded with smiles;  
    He sang "Hum dum diddle,"  
    And played on the fiddle,  
That amiable Man of the Isles.

*Edward Lear*

"Now just who," muses Uncle Bill Biddle,  
"Drilled a dreadful big hole through my fiddle?  
    When I play a folk air  
    Air is all there is there  
And my tune comes out minus its middle."

*X. J. Kennedy*

There was an Old Man with a gong,  
Who bumped at it all the day long;  
But they called out, "Oh law!  
You're a horrid old bore!"  
So they smashed that Old Man with a gong.  
*Edward Lear*

There was a Young Lady of Tyre,  
Who swept the loud chords of a lyre;  
At the sound of each sweep  
She enraptured the deep,  
And enchanted the city of Tyre.  
*Edward Lear*

There was a Young Lady whose chin  
Resembled the point of a pin;  
    So she had it made sharp,  
    And purchased a harp,  
And played several tunes with her chin.

*Edward Lear*

A boy who played tunes on a comb,  
Had become such a nuisance at home,  
    That ma sparked him, and then—  
    “Will you do it again?”  
And he cheerfully answered her, “Nomb.”

A bugler named Dougal MacDougal  
Found ingenious ways to be frugal.

He learned how to sneeze

In various keys,

Thus saving the price of a bugle.

*Ogden Nash*

A tutor who tooted the flute  
Tried to tutor two tooters to toot,  
Said the two to the tutor,  
"Is it harder to toot or  
To tutor two tooters to toot?"

There was a Young Lady of Bute,  
Who played on a silver-gilt flute;  
She played several jigs  
To her Uncle's white Pigs:  
That amusing Young Lady of Bute.  
*Edward Lear*

There was a young pig from Chanute  
Who could pipe little songs on a flute.  
When she practiced her scales,  
A large crowd of snails  
Came to listen, enrapt in Chanute.  
*Arnold Lobel*

A farmer in Knox, Ind.,  
Had a daughter he called Mar.  
But the neighbors said "O,  
We really must go,"  
Whenever she played the p.

There was a young lady of Rio,  
Who essayed to take part in a trio;  
But her skill was so scanty  
She played it andante  
Instead of allegro con brio!





Wordplay and Puns

## PITCHER McDOWELL

A farm team pitcher, McDowell,  
pitched an egg at a batter named Owl.  
They cried: "Get a hit!"  
But it hatched in the mitt  
—and the umpire called it a "fowl!"

*N. M. Bodecker*

Once a grasshopper (food being scant)  
Begged an ant some assistance to grant;  
But the ant shook his head,  
"I can't help you," he said,  
"It's an uncle you need, not an ant."

*Oliver Herford*

A handsome young noble of Spain  
Met a lion one day in the rain.

He ran in a fright  
With all of his might,  
But the lion, he ran with his mane!

A father once said to his son,  
"The next time you make up a pun,  
Go out in the yard  
And kick yourself hard,  
And I will begin when you've done."

A maiden caught stealing a dahlia,  
Said, "Oh, you shan't tell on me, shahlia?"  
But the florist was hot,  
And he said, "Like as not  
They'll send you to jail, you bad gahlia."

A barber who lived in Batavia  
Was known for his fearless behavia.  
An enormous baboon  
Broke in his saloon,  
But he murmured, "I'm blamed if I'll shavia."

A beautiful lady named Psyche  
Is loved by a fellow named Yche.  
    One thing about Ych  
    The lady can't lych  
Is his beard, which is dreadfully spyche.

A Boston boy went out to Yuma  
And there he encountered a puma—  
    And later they found  
    Just a spot on the ground,  
And a puma in very good huma.  
    *D. D. (in Boston Transcript)*

There's a girl out in Ann Arbor, Mich.,  
To meet whom I never would wich.,  
    She'd eat up ice cream  
    Till with colic she'd scream,  
Then order another big dich.

There was a young maiden called Eighmy,  
Who was a good girl all the seighmy.  
    At nine every night  
    She'd kneel and recight  
A little verse called "Now I leighmy."

An unpopular youth of Cologne,  
With a pain in his stomach did mogne.  
    He heaved a great sigh  
    And said, "I would digh,  
But the loss would be only my ogne."

An old couple living in Gloucester  
Had a beautiful girl, but they loucester;  
    She fell from a yacht,  
    And never the spacht  
Could be found where the cold waves had  
    toucester.

A rather polite man of Hawarden,  
When taking a walk in his gawarden,  
    If he trod on a slug,  
    A worm or a bug,  
Would say, "My dear friend, I beg pawarden!"

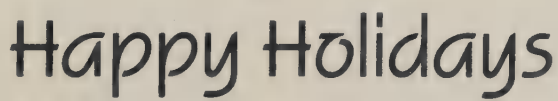
A painter who came from Great Britain  
Hailed a lady who sat with her knitain.  
    He remarked with a sigh,  
    "That park bench—well, I  
Just painted it, right where you're sitain."

A girl, who weighed many an oz.  
Used language I dared not pronoz.  
For a fellow unkind  
Pulled her chair out behind  
Just to see (so he said) if she'd boz.

A lady who lived in Mont.  
Had a beautiful daughter named H.,  
Who once took a seat  
On Twentieth Street,  
Having slipped on a piece of ban.

A flea and a fly in a flue  
Were imprisoned, so what could they do?  
Said the fly, "Let us flee."  
Said the flea, "Let us fly."  
So they flew through a flaw in the flue.





A fellow named Percival Stein  
Sent Zelda a large valentine.

Cried Zelda, "It's clever  
But never—oh never  
Could someone named Percy be mine!"

*R. H. Marks*

A silly young fellow named Ben  
Swallowed his wrist watch, and then  
He coughed up the date  
And the time on his plate—  
April first, twenty seconds past ten.

*Jack Prelutsky*

I've drowned seventy ants in a pool,  
I've burned down five rooms of the school,  
I've stolen six pies  
And told terrible lies  
But they'll never catch this April Fool!

*Ann Story*

It's neither amusing nor funny  
To feel any love for a bunny  
Who hops all around  
Hiding eggs on the ground  
When he skips me and never leaves unny.

*R. H. Marks*

## FOURTH OF JULY

Hurrah for the Fourth of July  
When fireworks burst in the sky!

    All you need is a match  
    And a quick little scratch  
And a rocket and fuse and \_\_\_\_\_G

GOOD-BYE

*Myra Cohn Livingston*

## THE HALLOWEEN HOUSE

I'm told there's a Green Thing in there.  
And the sign on the gate says BEWARE!

    But of course it's not true.

    That's why I'm sending you  
To sneak in and find out—*but take care!*

*John Ciardi*

## SAID THE MONSTER

Said the Monster, "You all think that I  
Love to lunch on the folks who go by.

If only you knew

I'd much rather chew

On a peppery cheese pizza pie!"

*Lilian Moore*

The Pilgrims ate quahaugs and corn yet,  
Which gourmets would scorn through a lorgnette.

For this kind of living

They proclaimed a Thanksgiving.

I'm thankful I hadn't been born yet.

*Ogden Nash*

## AN ODD ONE

There once was a finicky ocelot  
Who all the year round was cross a lot  
Except at Thanksgiving  
When he enjoyed living  
For he liked to eat cranberry sauce a lot.

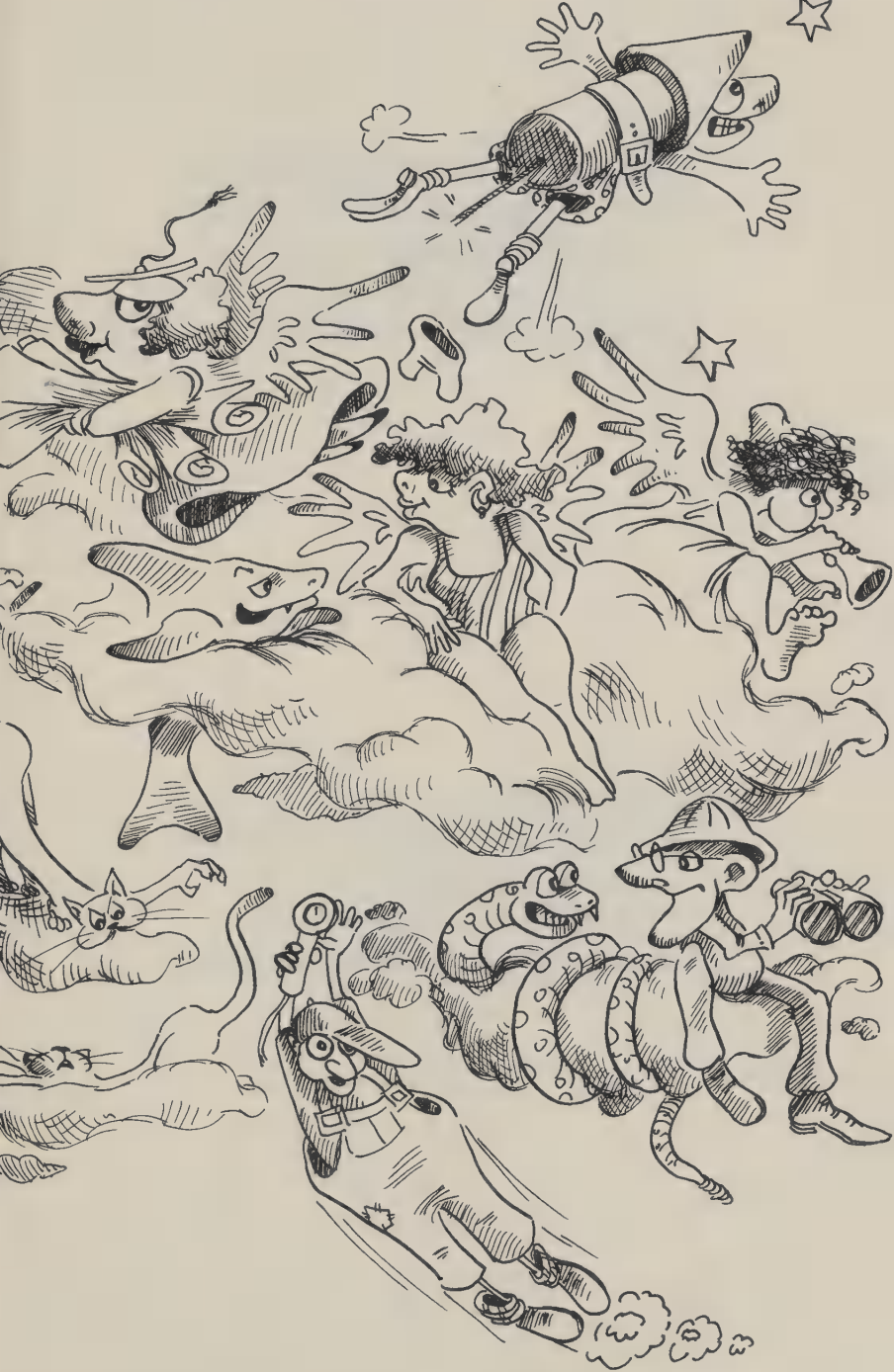
*Eve Merriam*

There is a young reindeer named Donder,  
Of whom Santa couldn't be fonder;  
But he falls off the roofs  
When his four little hoofs  
Impatiently cause him to wander.

*J. Patrick Lewis*

A woman named Mrs. S. Claus  
Deserves to be heard from because  
She sits in her den  
Baking gingerbread men  
While her husband gets all the applause.

*J. Patrick Lewis*



The Very End

A careless zookeeper named Blake  
Fell into a tropical lake.

Said a fat alligator  
A few minutes later,  
"Very nice, but I still prefer steak."

A certain young man of great gumption,  
Among cannibals had the presumption  
To go—but, alack!  
He never came back.  
They say 'twas a case of consumption.

A collegiate damsel named Breeze,  
Weighed down by B.A.'s and Litt. D.'s,  
Collapsed from the strain.

Alas, it was plain  
She was killing herself—by degrees.

A daring young lady of Guam  
Observed, "The Pacific's so calm  
I'll swim out for a lark."  
She met a large shark . . .  
Let us now sing the Ninetieth Psalm.

A decrepit old gasman, named Peter,  
While hunting around for the meter,  
    Touched a leak with his light;  
    He rose out of sight—  
And, as anyone who knows anything  
    about poetry can tell you, he also  
ruined the meter.

A sea-serpent saw a big tanker,  
Bit a hole in her side and then sank her.  
    It swallowed the crew  
    In a minute or two,  
And then picked its teeth with the anchor.

## AN EXPLORER NAMED BLISS

An intrepid explorer named Bliss  
fell into a gorge or abyss,  
But remarked as he fell:  
"Oh I might just as well  
get to the bottom of this . . ."

*N. M. Bodecker*

On a day when the ocean was sharky  
Archaeologist Arthur McLarky  
For a quick dip dived in,  
But along came a fin—  
All they found was his shovel and car key.

*X. J. Kennedy*

Said a foolish young lady of Wales,  
"A smell of escaped gas prevails."

Then she searched with a light,  
And later that night  
Was collected—in seventeen pails!  
*Langford Reed*

There once was a man in the Moon,  
But he got there a little too soon.

Some others came later  
And fell down a crater—  
When was it? Next August? Last June?  
*David McCord*

There once was a man who said, "Why  
Can't I look that big snake in the eye?"

The snake said, "You can,"

And he looked at the man.

(Most any last line will apply.)

There once was a plesiosaurus  
Which lived when the earth was all porous.

But it fainted with shame

When it first heard its name,  
And departed long ages before us.

There once was a scarecrow named Joel  
Who couldn't scare crows, save his soel.  
But the crows put the scare  
Into Joel. He's not there  
Any more. That's his hat on the poel.

*David McCord*

There once were two cats of Kilkenny,  
Each thought there was one cat too many;  
So they fought and they fit,  
And they scratched and they bit,  
Till instead of two cats there weren't any.

There was a young fellow named Hall  
Who fell in the spring in the fall.

    'Twould have been a sad thing  
    Had he died in the spring.  
But he didn't—he died in the fall.

There was a Young Person named Crockett  
Who attached himself to a rocket;

    He flew out through space  
    At such a great pace  
That his pants flew out of his pocket.

*William Jay Smith*

There was a young woman from Niger  
Who rode on the back of a tiger.

They returned from the ride  
With the lady inside  
And a smile on the face of the tiger.

There was a young fellow named Weir,  
Who hadn't an atom of fear;

He indulged a desire  
To touch a live wire;  
( 'Most any old line will do here!)

There was a Young Lady of Ryde  
Who ate a green apple and died;  
    The apple fermented  
    Inside the lamented,  
And made cider inside her inside.

There was an Old Lady named Crockett  
Who went to put a plug in a socket;  
    But her hands were so wet  
    She flew up like a jet  
And came roaring back down like a rocket!  
                    *William Jay Smith*

When a jolly young fisher named Fisher  
Went fishing for fish in a fissure,  
    A fish, with a grin,  
    Pulled the fisherman in.  
Now they're fishing the fissure for Fisher.

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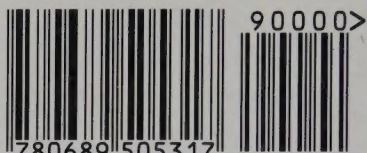
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Margaret K. McElderry Books  
Simon & Schuster  
New York



9 780689 505317

ISBN 0-689-50531-0



\*W6-BYQ-262\*