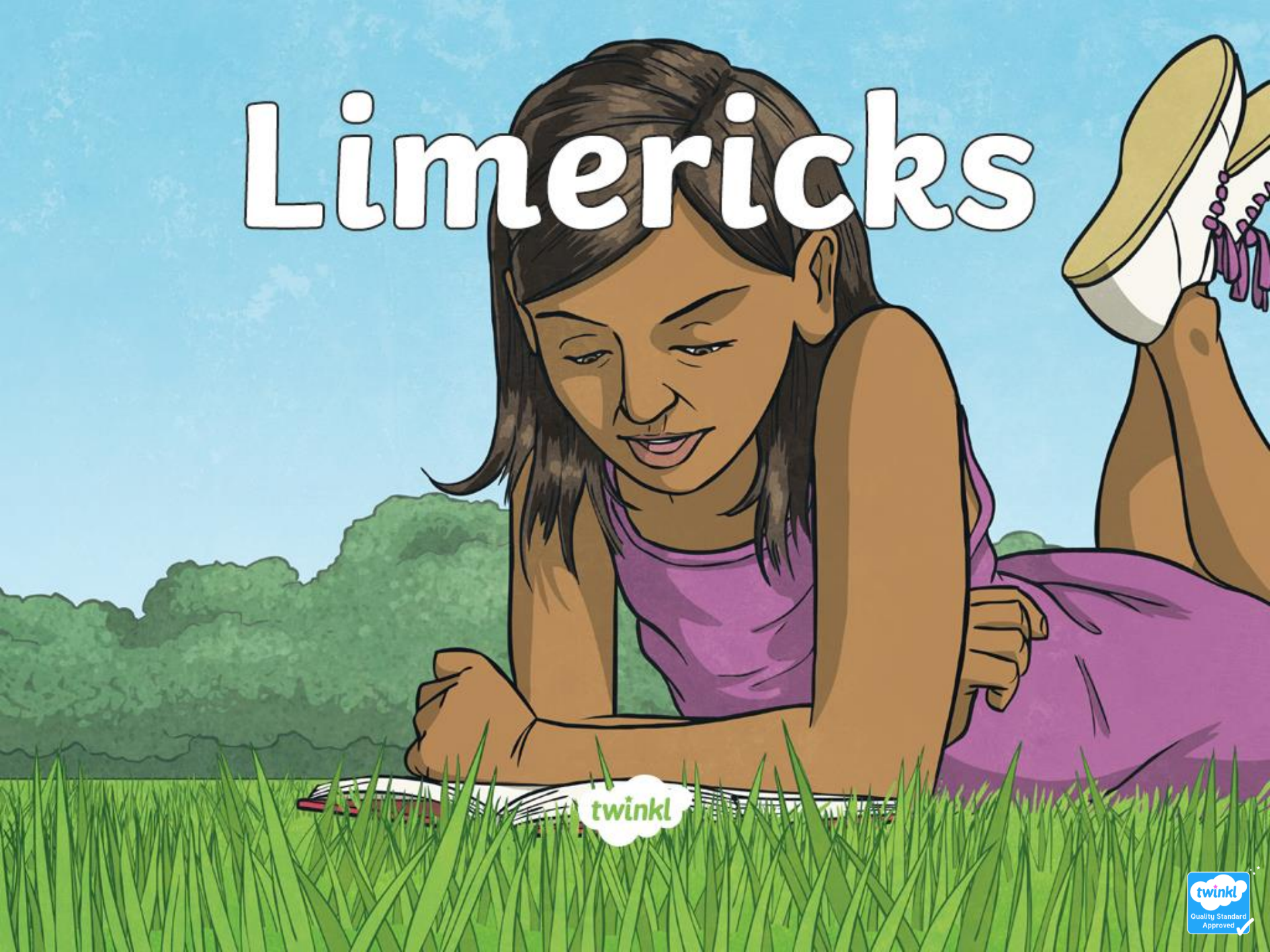
Limericks



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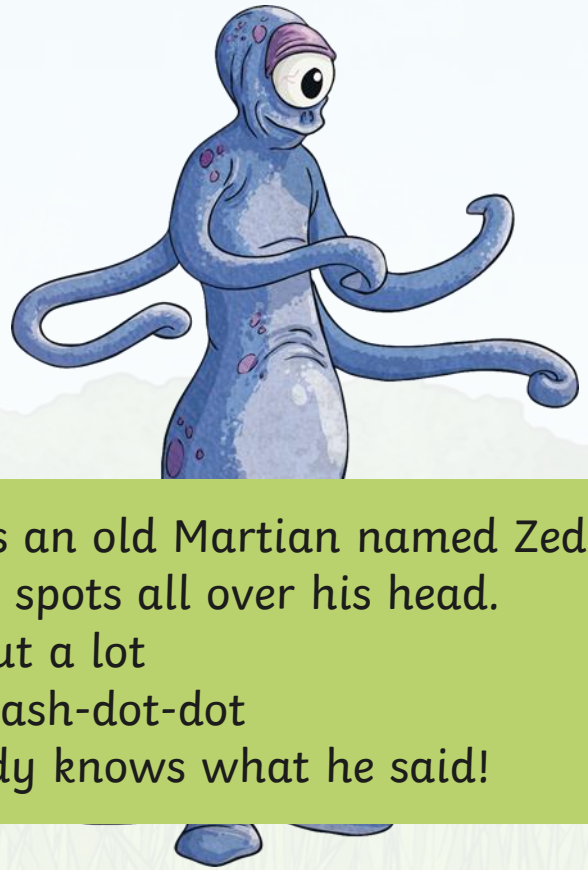
Limerick Examples

Limericks are light-hearted, funny poems with several common features. Compare these two limericks.

There once was a young man from Ealing,
Who always would hang from the ceiling.
He couldn't wear a hat,
But could hang like a bat,
And said, "What a wonderful feeling!"



There was an old Martian named Zed
With blue spots all over his head.
He sent out a lot
Of di-di-dash-dot-dot
But nobody knows what he said!

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Limerick Features

What did you notice?

Lines 3 and 4 rhyme.

Lines 1, 2 and 5 rhyme.

There once was a young man from Ealing,
Who always would hang from the ceiling.
He couldn't wear a hat,
But could hang like a bat,
And said, "What a wonderful feeling!"

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Limerick Features

What did you notice?

Lines 3 and 4 are shorter, with the same number of syllables (5-6).

There once was a young man from Ealing,
Who always would hang from the ceiling.
He couldn't wear a hat,
But could hang like a bat,
And said, "What a wonderful feeling!"

Lines 1, 2 and 5 are longer and have approximately the same number of syllables (usually 8-10) in each.

Limericks follow a typical rhythm:
di DUM di di DUM di di DUM dum (3 beats)
di DUM di di DUM di di DUM dum (3 beats)
di DUM di di DUM (2 beats)
di DUM di di DUM (2 beats)
di DUM di di DUM di di DUM dum (3 beats)

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Limerick Features

What did you notice?

The second line gives more details about the subject.

First lines begin with typical phrases, like this one.

There once was a young man from Ealing,

Who always would hang from the ceiling.

He couldn't wear a hat,

But could hang like a bat,

And said, "What a wonderful feeling!"

Lines 3 and 4 give us some action about the subject.

The last line is the punchline, usually the consequences of lines 3 and 4.

The first line sets up the subject, so it usually ends with the name of a person or place.

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Your Turn

Using English resource 4 you can now try to write your own limerick. There is a template like the one below or you can create your own.

1. There once was a _____ from _____,
2. Who _____.
3. He _____,
4. And/but/then _____.
5. _____.

If you are finding this type of poem tricky, you could find some examples on the internet and copy them into your book.

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