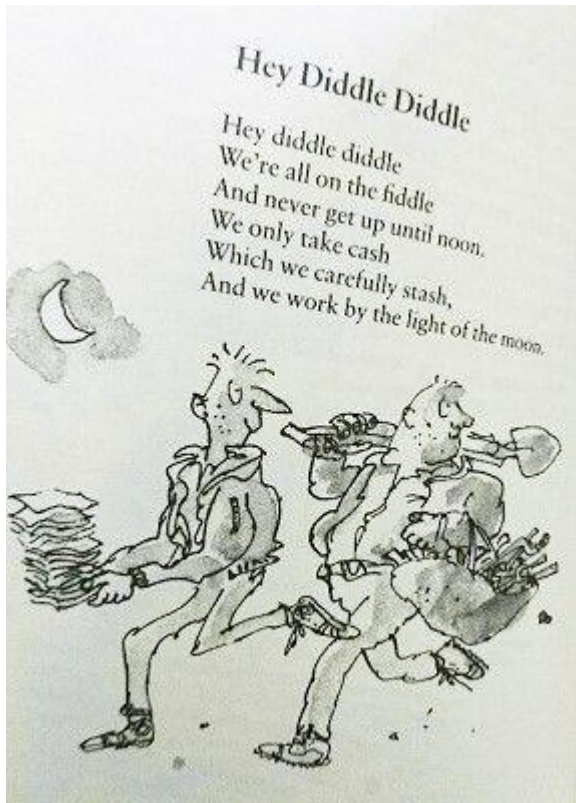


A SELECTION OF NONSENSE POETRY

17th century

Nursery rhymes

Hey, diddle, diddle,
The cat and the fiddle,
The cow jumped over the moon;
The little dog laughed
To see such sport,
And the dish ran away with the spoon



Anonymous (before 1665) (--can be understood in two ways)

I Saw a Peacock, with a fiery tail,
I saw a Blazing Comet, drop down hail,
I saw a Cloud, with Ivy circled round,
I saw a sturdy Oak, creep on the ground,
I saw a Pismire, swallow up a Whale,
I saw a raging Sea, brim full of Ale,
I saw a Venice Glass, Sixteen foot deep,
I saw a well, full of mens tears that weep,
I saw their eyes, all in a flame of fire,
I saw a House, as big as the Moon and higher,
I saw the Sun, even in the midst of night,
I saw the man, that saw this wondrous sight.

18th century

Samuel Foote. The Great Panjandrum (to test memory of actor friend)

So she went into the garden to cut a cabbage leaf, to make an apple pie; and at the same time a great she-bear coming up the street, pops its head into the shop. 'What! no soap?' So he died, and she very imprudently married the barber; and there were present the Picninnies, and the Joblillies, and the Garyulies, and the grand Panjandrum himself, with the little round button at top; and they all fell to playing the game of catch as catch can, till the gunpowder ran out at the heels of their boots.

19th century

Lewis Carroll,, The Mad Gardener's Song

HE thought he saw an Elephant,
That practised on a fife:
He looked again, and found it was
A letter from his wife.
'At length I realise,' he said,
'The bitterness of Life!'

He thought he saw a Buffalo
Upon the chimney-piece:
He looked again, and found it was
His Sister's Husband's Niece.
'Unless you leave this house,' he said,
'I'll send for the Police!'

He thought he saw a Rattlesnake
That questioned him in Greek:
He looked again, and found it was
The Middle of Next Week.
'The one thing I regret,' he said,
'Is that it cannot speak!'

He thought he saw a Banker's Clerk
Descending from the bus:
He looked again, and found it was
A Hippopotamus.
'If this should stay to dine,' he said,
'There won't be much for us!'

He thought he saw a Kangaroo
That worked a coffee-mill:
He looked again, and found it was
A Vegetable-Pill.
'Were I to swallow this,' he said,
'I should be very ill!'

He thought he saw a Coach-and-Four
That stood beside his bed:
He looked again, and found it was
A Bear without a Head.

'Poor thing,' he said, 'poor silly thing!
It's waiting to be fed!'

He thought he saw an Albatross
That fluttered round the lamp:
He looked again, and found it was
A Penny-Postage Stamp.
'You'd best be getting home,' he said:
'The nights are very damp!'

He thought he saw a Garden-Door
That opened with a key:
He looked again, and found it was
A Double Rule of Three:
'And all its mystery,' he said,
'Is clear as day to me!'

He thought he saw a Argument
That proved he was the Pope:
He looked again, and found it was
A Bar of Mottled Soap.
'A fact so dread,' he faintly said,
'Extinguishes all hope!'

"Jabberwocky"

'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe;
All mimsy were the borogoves,
And the mome raths outgrabe.

"Beware the Jabberwock, my son!
The jaws that bite, the claws that catch!
Beware the Jubjub bird, and shun
The frumious Bandersnatch!"

He took his vorpal sword in hand:
Long time the manxome foe he sought—
So rested he by the Tumtum tree,
And stood awhile in thought.

And as in uffish thought he stood,
The Jabberwock, with eyes of flame,
Came whiffling through the tulgey wood,
And burbled as it came!

One, two! One, two! and through and through
The vorpal blade went snicker-snack!

He left it dead, and with its head
He went galumphing back.

"And hast thou slain the Jabberwock?
Come to my arms, my beamish boy!
O frabjous day! Callooh! Callay!"
He chortled in his joy.

'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe;
All mimsy were the borogoves,
And the mome raths outgrabe.

20th century

E. E. Cummings. anyone lived in a pretty how town

anyone lived in a pretty how town
(with up so floating many bells down)
spring summer autumn winter
he sang his didn't he danced his did.
Women and men(both little and small)
cared for anyone not at all
they sowed their isn't they reaped their same
sun moon stars rain
children guessed(but only a few
and down they forgot as up they grew
autumn winter spring summer)
that noone loved him more by more
when by now and tree by leaf
she laughed his joy she cried his grief
bird by snow and stir by still
anyone's any was all to her
someones married their everyones
laughed their cryings and did their dance
(sleep wake hope and then)they
said their nevers they slept their dream
stars rain sun moon
(and only the snow can begin to explain
how children are apt to forget to remember
with up so floating many bells down)
one day anyone died i guess
(and noone stooped to kiss his face)
busy folk buried them side by side
little by little and was by was
all by all and deep by deep
and more by more they dream their sleep

noone and anyone earth by april
wish by spirit and if by yes.
Women and men(both dong and ding)
summer autumn winter spring
reaped their sowing and went their came
sun moon stars rain

From *Complete Poems: 1904-1962* by E. E. Cummings, edited by George J. Firmage.

Jack Prelutsky. Miss Misinformation

in *A pizza the size of the sun*. New York: Scholastic, 1996.

I'm Miss Misinformation,
it's my gratifying task
to tell you all you need to know,
you only need to ask.
The seas are thick with elephants,
the skies are purple straw,
you measure with an octopus,
you hammer with a saw.

I'm filled with facts and figures
I gratuitously share.
The stars are silver footballs,
tangerines have curly hair.
Gorillas fly at midnight,
and a month has seven years,
tomatoes play the clarinet,
bananas have long ears.

I'm Miss Misinformation,
and there's nothing I don't know
The moon is chocolate pudding,
macaroni grows in snow.
A buffalo is smaller
than the average bumblebee--
if you think of any questions,
simply bring them here to me.

Shel Silverstein. Recipe for a Hippopotamus Sandwich

in *Where the sidewalk ends*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1974.

A hippo sandwich is easy to make.
All you do is simply take
One slice of bread,
One slice of cake,
Some mayonnaise,
One onion ring,
One hippopotamus,
One piece of string,

A dash of pepper--
That ought to do it.
And now comes the problem...
Biting into it!

Laura Elizabeth Richards. Eletelephony

Once there was an elephant,
Who tried to use the telephant—
No! No! I mean an elephone
Who tried to use the telephone—
(Dear me! I am not certain quite
That even now I've got it right.)
Howe'er it was, he got his trunk
Entangled in the telephunk;
The more he tried to get it free,
The louder buzzed the telephee—
(I fear I'd better drop the song
Of elephop and telephong!)

Spike Milligan, 'On the Ning Nang Nong

On the Ning Nang Nong
Where the Cows go Bong!
and the monkeys all say BOO!
There's a Nong Nang Ning
Where the trees go Ping!
And the tea pots jibber jabber joo.
On the Nong Ning Nang
All the mice go Clang
And you just can't catch 'em when they do!
So its Ning Nang Nong
Cows go Bong!
Nong Nang Ning
Trees go ping
Nong Ning Nang
The mice go Clang
What a noisy place to belong
is the Ning Nang Ning Nang Nong!!