Tongue-Twisters!

Oh What a To-Do

Oh what to-do to die today at a minute or two 'til two
A thing distinctly hard to say yet harder still to do
For they'll beat a tattoo at twenty to two
With a rattatta tattatta tattatta too
And the dragon will come when he hears the drum
At a minute or two 'til two today
At a minute or two 'til two.

Betty Botter’s Butter

Betty Botter bought some butter,
"But," she said, "this butter's bitter.
If I bake this bitter butter,
It will make my batter bitter.
But a bit of better butter -
That would make my batter better."
So she bought a bit of butter,
Better than her bitter butter,
And she baked it in her batter,
And the batter was not bitter.
So 'twas better Betty Botter
Bought a bit of better butter.

A Tree Toad

A tree toad loved a she-toad
Who lived up in a tree.
He was a two-toed tree toad
But a three-toed toad was she.
The two-toed tree toad tried to win
The three-toed she-toad's heart,
For the two-toed tree toad loved the ground
That the three-toed tree toad trod.
But the two-toed tree toad tried in vain.
He couldn't please her whim.
From her tree toad bower
With her three-toed power
The she-toad vetoed him.

Definitions:
A to-do: a big deal, a problem
Distinctly: clearly
Tattoo: in this case, it means a kind of drum beat

Definitions:
Toad: frog
She-toad: girl frog
Trod: walked on
In vain: hopelessly, without any luck
Whim: sudden little desire or want
Bower: group of trees
Vetoed: rejected, turned down

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What Makes a Good Tongue-Twister?

What makes a good tongue-twister (or, really, a good poem!) is that it sounds cool. Good poems are meant to be read aloud, just like tongue-twisters, and reading them aloud is more fun if the poet uses sound in a fun and exciting way. Here are some things you can do to make your poems and tongue-twisters sound cool:

Rhythm

A really good tongue-twister has a beat that you can clap along to. The rhythm is really great in “Oh What a To Do” because it sounds like a drum beat – the words in the poem are “beating a tattoo” just like the drummers that the poem talks about. Try clapping along to this:

Oh what a to do to die today at a minute or two till two?
A thing distinctly hard to say yet harder still to do.

Alliteration

Alliteration just means repeating the same letter at the beginning of a lot of words. For example, “Betty Botter’s Butter” uses alliteration with the letter “B”. The sentence “Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers” uses alliteration with the letter “P.”

Rhyme

You know what rhyme is! But remember, you can use it either at the ends of lines or within a line. For example:

A tree toad loved a she-toad
  Who lived up in a tree.
  He was a two-toed tree toad
  But a three-toed toad was she.

“Tree” and “she” are end-rhymes (words at the ends of lines that rhyme with each other), but the line “two-toed tree toad” has internal rhyme (the words “toed” and “toad” rhyme with each other within one line).

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