

FIVE POEMS FOR CHILDREN

PET FISH

We pet our pets,
Unless they're fish.

We don't pet fish,
We fish for fish.

But not *our* fish—
Our fish are pets.

You don't pet fish
Or fish for pets!

How strange it is
(At least strange-*ish*),

We pet our pets,
We fish for fish,

But we don't pet
Or fish pet fish!

CATS CAN'T KID

Can a kid kidnap a cat?

Can a cat catnap a kid?

A cat cannot. A cat can only
Catnap on a kid instead.

When the dog takes its catnap

Could a kid kidnap a cat?

A kid should not!

And if a kid would

Then a kid should

Give it back.

For that cat, that ball of fur

That stretches on your lap and purrs,
Is not yours.

That cat belongs to him or her—

Give it back!

And if a kid with catlike reflexes

Can kidnap a cat,

Could a cat with kidlike reflexes

Then kidnap a kid?

A cat cannot for cats have only

Catlike reflexes instead.

And meow, as I said.

Anyhow, cats can't kid!

And if the dog woke from its catnap,

Would the dog nip at the cat?

Or would the cat nip that the cat nipped at

Now make the cat nip back?

And would the kid who came
To nab that cat
For an afternoon catnap
Begin to laugh and go back home?
For it's better to nap alone
Than face the grief—
The great, great grief—
Of being a kid-turned-kitty-cat-thief!

Whether a cat, a rat, or a graceful bat
A hat, backpack, or a baseball bat,
A giraffe that laughs off its polka dots
When telling the same jokes a lot,
Even if it yawns and purrs,
If you know it isn't yours,
Don't keep it, give it back instead.
Any cow or thing I said...
Anyhow now, cats can't kid!

UTTER LIES ABOUT BUTTERFLIES

Do butterflies
Like butter? Lies!
Flies like butter
Far, far better
Than butterflies
Like butter.
For when flies see
Butter, they eat
Butter, but when
Butterflies see
Butter, they just
Flutter by.

So do not mutter lies
About the likes
And the dislikes
Of butterflies.
They're utter lies!

But don't butterflies
Like fries? More lies!
For flies, like fireflies—
In fact, like everything
Alive, except for
Butterflies—like fries.
For just like butter,
When a butterfly
Eyes fries (battered,
Even buttered fries,
Garnished with garlic

Or chives), still it
Only flutters by.

So better not
To bet on hives
Of gutter lies
About the lives
Of butterflies.
Such utter lies!
And when such lies
Are uttered they
Begin to spread
Like butter, fly!

Which raises quite
A good question:
Do butterflies
Like margarine?
Butterflies do not
Like margarine.
For butterflies
May not like butter
But they do know
It's still better
By a wide margin
Than margarine.

Odd, since every
Butterfly was once
Some caterpillar
Crawling on some
Cat or pillar,
With no threat of

Butterfly net
In sight or gift
Of flight to boast.
And if a caterpillar
Chanced upon a
Stick of butter,
Would it hesitate
To try it out,
Even without
A piece of toast?

Then, when that future
Butterfly happens
To go flutter by
Some butter, it
Might wonder why
It remembers
Loving it. Might even
Try it out again.
But until then,
It's just another
Utter butter lie...
Like margarine!

MARY, VERY NON-CONTRARY

Mary, very non-contrary,
Just agreed with everybody.
Merry, wary not to vary
Or veer from the ordinary,
And quite quiet so she rarely
Voiced a choice, a view—So scary
Were these things one time to Mary.

But once upon a poem you're reading,
Mary went to dreaming, dreaming...
Knowing how she loved to write—
It seemed as though by happenstance,
She'd make words music, letters dance,
Syllables chords, of course, a chorus
Could form for us—"Is it not right
To play with words all day and night?"
Mary queried, quite contrite.

Although nothing could be righter
Than for her to be a writer,
In her heart hung half a notion
That her words could turn outspoken,
Taking chances, stances, stands
That others might not understand
But left their ink stains on her hands.

Though tough, through thorough thought
throughout,
The toughest, thoroughest of thought
One ought have sought or thereabout

Mary found out just where about
Her bigger voice had been hiding.
Now, in the classroom, when reciting
Anything fun or exciting–

Puns, opinions, maybe poems,
Jokes of her own she wrote at home,
Or in the school library's airy
February sanctuary–
When Gwen grins, Kirk smirks, Reed
kneads
His knees listening to her read,
They all appreciate indeed
Mary can be quite contrary.

A POEM FOR SHELLY MOORE
(Who Once Sold Seashells But Now
Seesaws By The Seashore)

How come Joan composed some poem
For Shelly Moore? Because Shelly, more
Known for her seaside seashell sales,
She swore for sure she saw seesaw
By the seashore never before
Selling her seashell stash to Joan
To shell out enough cash to own
Her own seesaw. Joan then realized
Seashells are easy to come by
Compared to seesaws—She saw none!

So while Joan bemoaned and sulked and
skulked,
Shelly Moore sold more, so much, as such,
She bought a boat she sails by the
seashore...

So now, you see, you'll see Shelly
Seesaw by the seashore, surely,
Set sail abroad aboard a boat
She brought about by seashell sales,
But seashells she shall sell no more.
Still, seasaws do not work alone,
So Shelly should really learn to loan
Or share seaside seesaws with Joan,
As Joan conclusively has shown.
At least according to Joan's poem.

— Joan