9. **Arbitrary Letter Limitations or Requirements**

Invent an arbitrary requirement or limitation for the letters in the words available for use in your poem today. Who was it wrote a whole long novel never using the letter E?

An arbitrary form (?) I made up (and haven’t seen elsewhere) I call Ogg poems.

The idea came for the game called “In the Land of Ogg,” which can only be played with the uninitiated. It is fun to play with a group, perhaps on a car trip. You introduce it: “Welcome to the Land of Ogg. Now that you are here, you must discover for yourself the central logic of this place. When you discover this law, do not give it away to others but chime in helping to define what is in and out of the Land of Ogg.” You might say:

In the land of Ogg
there are kittens, but no cats.
There are puppies, but no dogs.

Someone would guess:
Ah yes, there are goslings, but no geese.
And you have to say, “Wrong, wrong.
There are geese but no goslings,
Sheep but no lambs.”

You say, In the land of Ogg
there are puddles and umbrellas
but no rain.
There are deer but no hunters,
triggers but no guns,
wallets but no money.

There is fall and there is summer,
but no winter or spring
There is glass but no windows,
mIRRors but no reflections.

There are feelings but no thoughts
schools but no learning,
sleep but no rest,
and yet happiness, indeed, happiness.

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The obvious rule of the land of Ogg is that everything that exists there is spelled with double letters somewhere in the word. This fact is less obvious in spoken language than in printed text. **The rule of Ogg poems is that any word used in the poem, if it contains more than three letters, must contain at least one set of double letters.**

Let me warn you that the collecting of “Ogg” words can become obsessive. While I was into writing Ogg poems, I could get distracted while reading most anything and start jotting down lists of Ogg words I hadn’t previously collected in “the Ogg corral.”

A simple Ogg poem example:

**Off to Sleep in Ogg**

Shutting the door to the hall,
she dropped her yellow dress
to the wooden floor of the still room.

Loosening her henna tresses,
she fell between chill sheets.
Fluffing her pillow, she flipped
on her narrow mattress.

A current of sleep approached,
and slipping in, sleek as an otter,
she rippled off across deep,
cool pools of moonlight,
smooth as glass.

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another:

**Thrill of the Willow Queen**

Breezes toss the willow queen
who rearranges her yellow-green tresses
in the looking-glass pool
to meet her groom, the moon.

Will he see her as acceptable,
she who dwells rooted at one address,  
he so free to sweep  
across hills and valleys?

He stoops to kiss her as he passes.  
In sudden glimmers and shimmers,  
as inner bells toll,  
she accepts the proof.

Bliss flutters deep  
to her immersed roots.

Breeze and moon disappear.  
The shaggy willow  
droops in brooding darkness.

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Bonus Ogg Example:

The Ogg Saloon

The thrill of hammering hooves,  
and a cow-cutting appaloosa  
gallops out of the darkness  
to pull up suddenly.

A reckless, grizzled ruffian,  
trigger happy,  
strolls to the flapping barroom door  
and booms a bitter challenge.  
Tripping on a rotten groove  
as he pulls his six-shooter,  
the fool shoots his own boot.

Unbidden,  
a mirror falls and shatters.  
Glass skitters across the floor.

Fleeing pell-mell,  
a trapper and assorted yahoos  
topple the spittoon.
On tenterhooks, Miss Emma
still attempts cribbage in room fourteen—
knotting needles on her sill,
a yucca in a terra cotta pot.

Befuddled, the buckaroo
staggers the hall passage,
dragging his bleeding foot.

In an office opposite the Ogg Saloon,
the grinning sheriff swills his coffee,
and gallantly muddles out
to press arrest.

Shuffling her broom,
the waitress, Molly,
smelling of camellia,
sweeps up glass.
As she collects beer bottles,
she sweetly croons
an alluring, different lullaby
of childless tenderness.

Out on the barren foothills
distressed by arroyos,
tumbleweeds roll in the moonlight.

Up in the billion
glimmering moon eggs,
the big dipper, artfully scooping,
pulls up and dissolves,
all passion, all loss.

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