

A BACKDOOR APPROACH TO LIPOGRAMS

ANIL

Perth, Australia

How many letters can be excluded and still produce a recognisable lipogram of Mary's Lamb? For starters, excluding five letters **jkqzx** has no effect as they're absent in the original. Excluding five more letters **bfpsy** had a minimal effect, as seen here (substitute words underlined).

16 LETTER LIPOGRAM:

Marie had a little ewe (or ram), its wool was white as snow,
And wherever Marie went the ewe was sure to go.
It tailed her to school one day, which is against the rule.
It made the children laugh and dance to see a ewe at school.

But excluding four more letters **cgmw** leaving ETAOIN SHRDLU necessitated a major revision—of her name, her pet, etc. Yet, with a pun, it remained faithful to the underlying plot.

12 LETTER LIPOGRAM:

Sal has a li'l ass, its outside is as lass's ass. [If Sal is white, both her ass and her ass are white.]
And as she hies, her ass tails her.
It tails her to lessons one noon. — It's not in the rules!
The laddies and lassies do haha and act unrestrained to see an ass at lessons.

Further excluding **dhrtu**, leaving AEILNOS, was more awkward but still passable in a stretch.

7 LETTER LIPOGRAM:

Sal's li'l ass is as lass's ass.
As lass sails, so ass sails.
As lass sails on lessons, so ass sails—a no-no!
Li'l ones do loosen as see an ass on lessons.

It got increasingly awkward from here, so I go straight to my most extreme audacity, excluding **eilno** for a purely AS lipogram, by changing her name to Sass(y), her school to S(unday) S(chool) and the kids to impish li'l asses. And here ends my unfulfilled uniliteral lipogram dream.

2 LETTER LIPOGRAM:

Sass's ass's as Sass's ass.
Sass's "as"s ass's "as". [“As” means one's situation in spacetime.]
Sass's SS's ass's SS. — “À-à-à-à!”
Ass+ass+ass sass Sass's SS ass: “Sssss!”

And well you might join in on that last remark.