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 \textit{jkqxz} has no effect as they’re absent in the original. Excluding five more letters \textit{bfpyv} had a minimal effect, as seen here (substitute words underlined).

16 LETTER LIPOGRAM:

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

But excluding four more letters \textbf{cgmw} leaving \textbf{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:

\textbf{Sal} has a li’l ass, its outside is as lass’s ass. \quad [If \textbf{Sal} is white, both her ass and her ass are white.]
\quad And as she hies, her ass \textbf{tails} her.
\quad It \textbf{tails} her to lessons one \textbf{noon}, — It’s not in the \textbf{rules}!
\quad The \textbf{ladies} and \textbf{lassies} do \textbf{haha} and \textbf{act un-restrained} to see an \textbf{ass} at \textbf{lessons}.

Further excluding \textbf{dhru}, leaving \textbf{AEILNOS}, was more awkward but still passable in a stretch.

7 LETTER LIPOGRAM:

\textbf{Sal}’s li’l ass is as lass’s ass.
\quad \textbf{Ass} \textbf{sails}, so \textbf{ass} \textbf{sails}.
\quad \textbf{As lass sails} on lessons, so \textbf{ass sails}—a no-no!
\quad Li’l ones do \textbf{loosen} as see an \textbf{ass} on \textbf{lessons}.

It got increasingly awkward from here, so I go straight to my most extreme audacity, excluding \textbf{eiino} 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:

\textbf{Sass}’s ass’s as \textbf{Sass}’s ass.
\quad \textbf{Sass}’s “as”’s ass’s “as”. \quad [“As” means one’s situation in spacetime.]
\quad \textbf{Sass}’s SS’ass’s SS. — “À-à-à-à!”
\quad Ass+ass+ass sass \textbf{Sass}’s SS ass: “Sssss!”

And well you might join in on that last remark.