

Backward Bill¹

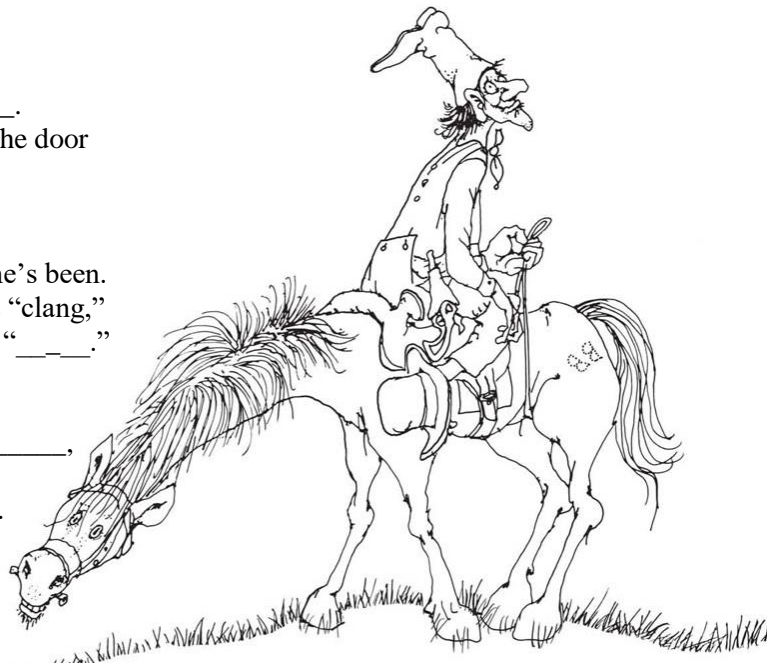
Backward Bill, Backward Bill,
He lives way up on Backward Hill,
Which is really a hole in the sandy ground
(But that's a hill turned upside down).

Backward Bill's got a backward shack
With a big front porch that's built out (1) _____.
You walk through the (2) _____ and look out the door
And the cellar is up on the very top floor.

Backward Bill he rides like the wind
Don't know where he's going but sees where he's been.
His spurs they go "neigh" and his horse it goes "clang,"
And his six-gun goes "gnab," it never goes (3) "_____."

Backward Bill's got a backward pup,
They eat their supper when the sun comes (4) _____,
And he's got a wife named Backward Lil,
"She's my own true hate," says Backward Bill.

Backward Bill wears his hat on his toes
And puts on his underwear over his clothes.
And come every payday he pays his boss,
And rides off a-smilin' a-carryin' his hoss.



1. (1) Fill in the blanks with the appropriate words.

1) **back** 2) **window** 3) **bang** 4) **up**

2. (1) What would a normal Bill say of his wife in line 16? **"She's my own true love"**

3. (1) Scan this line: **Ĥē livēs | wāy up | ǝn Bäck|wārd Hīll. iambic tetrameter**

4. (1) What is the rhyme scheme of the poem? **aabb cddd eeff ggaa hhi**

5. (1) Paraphrase the last quatrain. **Backward Bill puts his hat on his feet and wears his underwear outside of his clothes. On every day that he should get paid, he gives money to his boss and goes away smiling while carrying his horse.**

6. (5) Compare this poem's backward play with that of "Ballad of the Landlord." In discussing the poems' mix-up of right and wrong and other opposites, you might consider: pattern, humor, diction, rhyme, rhythm, imagery, and irony. Continue on the back for more space.

¹ Shel Silverstein, "Backward Bill," *A Light in the Attic*, HarperCollins, 1981, pp. 40–41.