

Mother Goose Songs



Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL)
using
Nursery Rhymes

Mother Goose Songs in English and Norwegian¹

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***Second part of this booklet: Some ideas for using nursery rhymes
when teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL)***

¹ The referencing of this booklet is incomplete as this is a 'work in progress'.

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Bæ, Bæ, Lille Lam

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One, Two, Buckle My Shoe

One, two,
Buckle my shoe;

Three, four,
Knock on the door;

Five, six,
Pick up sticks;

Seven eight,
Lay them straight;

Nine, ten,
A big fat hen;

Eleven, twelve,
Dig and delve.

Thirteen, fourteen,
Maids a-courting;

Fifteen, sixteen,
Maids in the kitchen;

Seventeen, eighteen,
Maids a-waiting;

Nineteen, twenty,
My plate's empty.

1. 2.

3. 4.

5. 6.

7. 8.

9. 10.

11. 12.

13. 14.

En, to, snør min sko

En, to,
Snør min sko;

Tre, fire,
Kom Elvire;

Fem, seks,
Tegn en heks;

Syv, åtte,
Ris til en rotte;

Ni, ti,
Høna er blid;

Elleve, tolv,
Spa i mold;

Tretten, fjorten,
Piker i porten;

Femten, seksten,
Piker ved peisen;

Sytten, atten,
Piker om natten;

Nitten, tjue,



15.16.

17.18.

19.20.



mat til en due.

Little Jack Horner

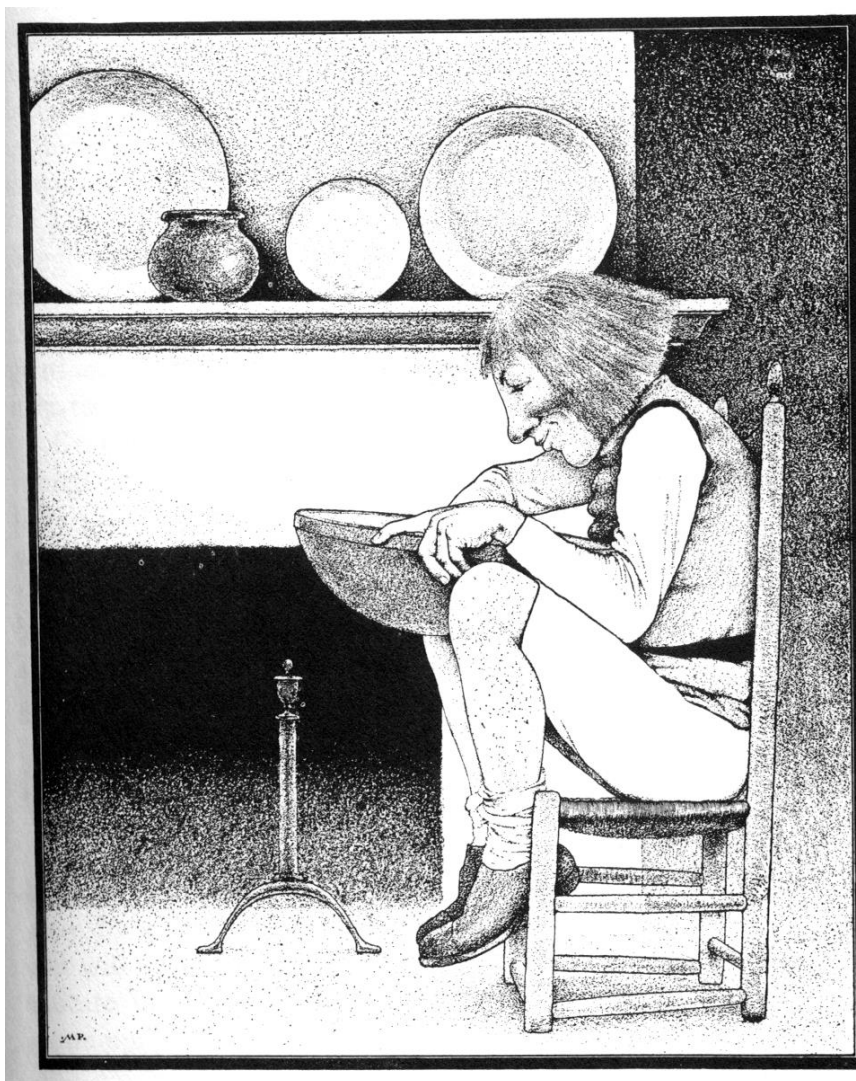
G C
Little Jack Horner sat in a corner
D7 G
Eating a Christmas pie.
G
He put in his thumb
C
and pulled out a plumb,
D7 G
and cried, "What a good boy, am I!"

Historical origin:

The Bishop of Glastonbury sent his steward, Jack Horner, to King Henry VIII with a Christmas gift - a pie in which were hidden the title deeds to twelve manorial estates. On his way to the king, Jack popped open the pie and stole the deed to the Manor of Mells, a real plum of an estate. To this day the Horner family resides there.

Han Martin i Bratta

Han Martin i Bratta
lokker på katta
og sier: "Kom hit skal du
få".
Så spiser'n det hele
foruten å dele:
"Du verden, så snill jeg
var nå".



Georgy Porgy

Georgy Porgy, pudding and pie,
Kissed the girls and made them cry.
When the boys came out to play,
Georgy Porgy ran away.

Burre Bråkerud

Burre Bråkerud med hatt i nakken
treffer jentene i blomsterbakken.
Burre bråkerud med hatt på snei
erter jentene og går sin vei.

Historical origin:

One version is that the rhyme refers to George Villiers, 2nd Duke of Buckingham (1628 - 1687). A man of scandalous reputation, he was involved in many intrigues. At the request of Parliament he was removed from Charles II 's favour. He wrote several comedies including *The Rehearsal*.

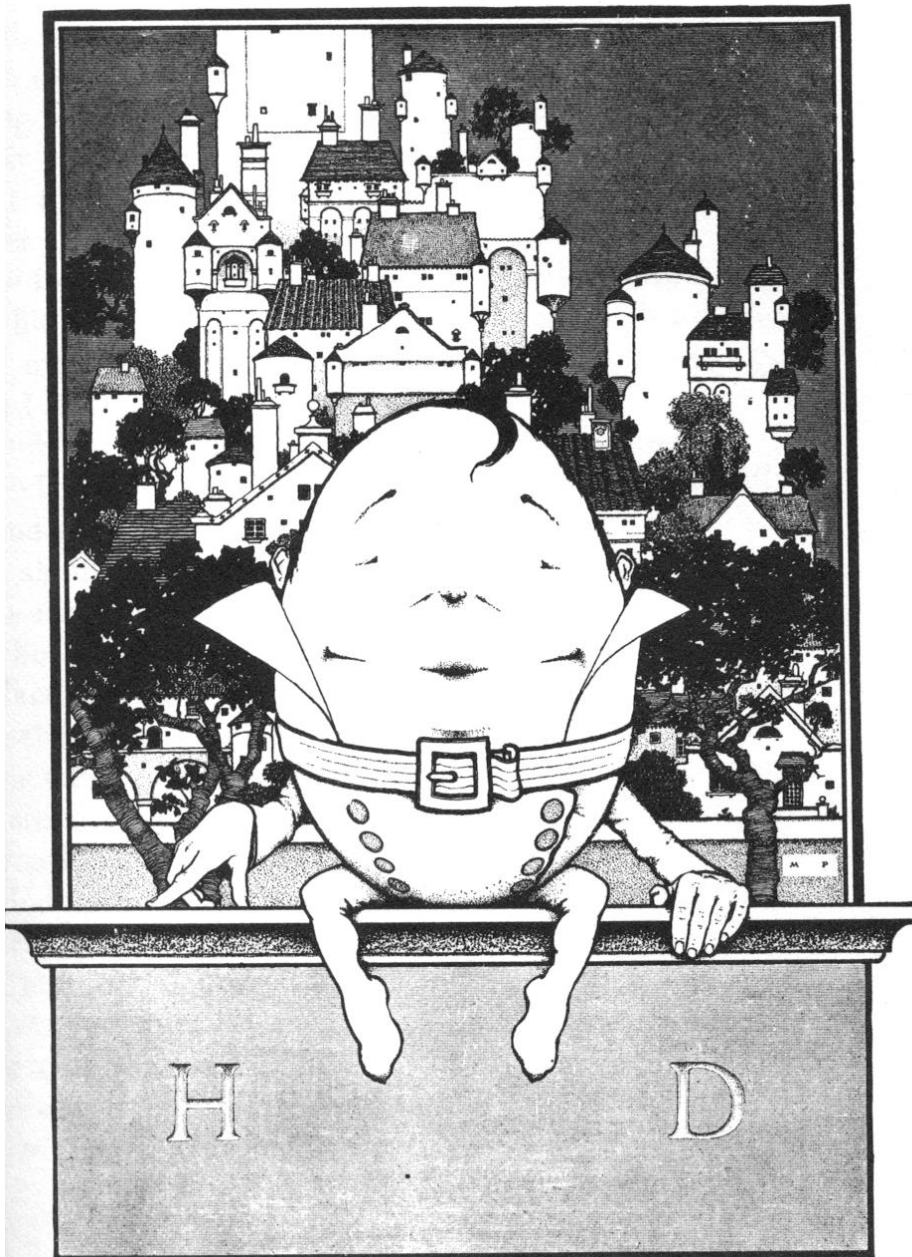
Anders Panders sukker and salt
kysset jentene så det smalt.
Jentene skrek og ojet seg,
og Anders Panders sprang sin vei.



Humpty-Dumpty Sat on a Wall

G D7 G
Humpty Dumpty sat on the wall,
G D7 G
Humpty Dumpty had a great fall.
C G D7 G
All the king's horses and all the king's men,
C G D7 G
Couldn't put Humpty together again.

Historical origin: One version is that during the English Civil War (1642-49) 'Humpty Dumpty' was the name for a powerful cannon. It was mounted atop the St. Marys Wall Church in Colchester to defend the city against siege in the summer of 1648. (Colchester was a Parliamentary stronghold but had been captured by Royalists and they held it for 11 weeks.) The enemy hit the church tower and the top was blown off. "Humpty Dumpty" fell off and tumbled to the ground. The King's men tried to fix him but to no avail.



Pille Trille

Pille-trille satt på
taket.
Pille-trille falt ned.
Ingen mann i dette
land
Pille-trille bøte kan.

Hey, diddle, diddle

G D7
Hey, diddle, diddle, that cat and the fiddle
G D7
The cow jumped over the moon.
C G
The little dog laughed to see such sport,
D7 G
and the dish ran away with the spoon.



Hei Dideli

Hei dideli,
sa katta mi,
den satt og filte på fela si.
Så kua skvatt,
og månen datt,
og bikkja gjødde
til langt på natt.

Hickory, Dickory, Dock

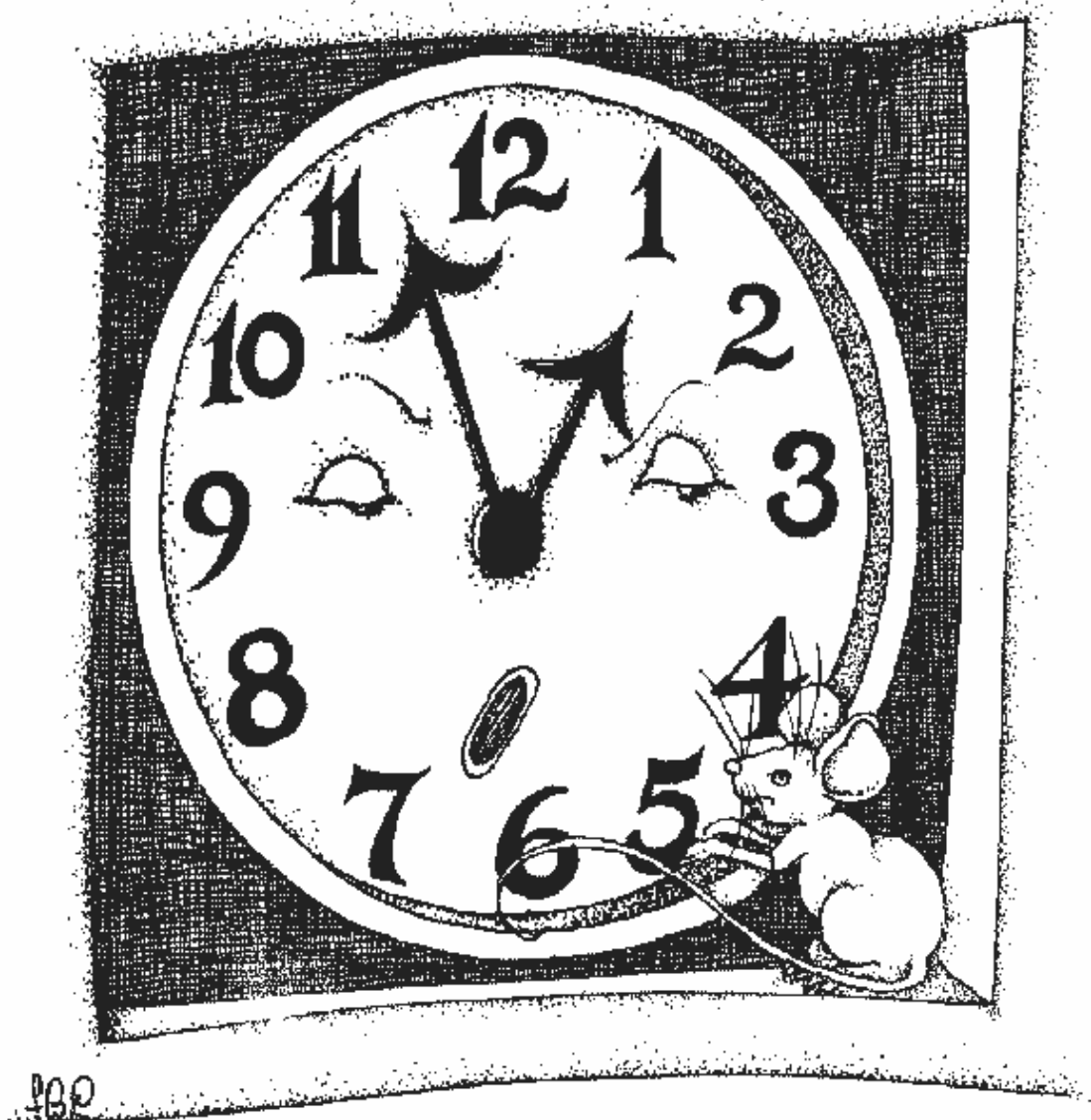
F C7 F
Hickory dickory dock
Bb F C7
The mouse ran up the clock,
Bb
The clock struck one,
F
The mouse ran down
C7 F
Hickory dickory dock.

According to one website this nursery rhyme keeps the Celtic language alive Some shepherds still count sheep *hovera, covera, dik* versus eight, nine, ten.

<http://www.lovetolearnplace.com/History/NurseryRhymes.html>

Ding og Dang

Ding og dang og en, to, tre,
når klokka slår i by,
da skal musa hoppe ned
i prestens paraply.



Jack and Jill

C F C F
Jack and Jill went up the hill
C F C
to fetch a pail of water
F G7 C
Jack fell down and broke his crown
F G7 C
And Jill came tumbling after.

Then up Jack got,
And home did trot,
And fast as he could caper;
He went to bed
To mend his head
With vinegar and brown paper.

When Jill came in
How she did grin
To see his paper plaster.
Her mother vexed,
Did whip her next,
For laughing at Jack's disaster.

Now Jack did laugh
And Jill did cry,
But her tears did soon abey;
Then Jill did say
That they should play
At see-saw across the gate.

Ut og Bære Vann

Hit kan du komme med bøtta di
når du skal bære vann.

Her er en tue å snuble i
og skrubbe seg lite grann.

Her har du snarveien hjem igjen,
la meg nå se du kan gå.

Her har du senga,
hopp opp i den,
så tar vi et plaster på.



Historical origin:

This verse, which to us seems at first sight nonsense, ... refers to the Eddaic Hjuki and Bil. The names indicate as much. Hjuki, in Norse, would be pronounced Juki, which would readily become Jack; and Bil, for the sake of euphony and in order to give a female name to one of the children, would become Jill. The fall of Jack, and the subsequent fall of Jill, simply represent the vanishing of one moon spot after another, as the moon wanes. ... 'Hjuki' is derived from the verb jakka, to heap or pile together, to assemble and increase; and 'Bil', from bila, to break up or dissolve. Hjuki and Bil, therefore, signify nothing more than the waxing and waning of the moon, and the water they are represented as bearing signifies the fact that the rainfall depends on the phases of the moon.

Little Boy Blue

Little Boy Blue come blow your horn.
The sheep's in the meadow, the cow's in the corn.
But where is the boy that looks after the sheep?
"He's under a haystack, fast asleep."

Little Boy Blue, come blow your horn.
The sheep's in the meadow, the cow's in the corn.
But where is the boy that looks after the sheep?
"He's under a haystack, fast asleep."

Kom Vesle Blå Gutten

Kom vesle blå gutten
og blås i ditt horn.
Se sauene og kua
i kløver og korn.
Nå trækker de ned
både åker og eng,
mens du sover søtt
i din høysåteseng.

Historical origin:

The words and story of Little Boy Blue may refer to Cardinal Thomas Wolsey (1474-1530) dating back to English Tudor history and the reign of King Henry VIII. The cardinal's robes were scarlet but Wolsey's Blazon of Arms included the blue faces of four leopards - perhaps this was why the title of the rhyme is Little Boy Blue? Wolsey incurred royal displeasure through his failure to secure the papal dispensation necessary for Henry's VIII's divorce from Catherine of Aragon; he was arrested on a charge of treason and died on his way to trial in London.



Little Miss Muffet

Little Miss Muffet
Sat on a tuffet
Eating her curds and whey;
There came a spider,
And sat down beside her,
And frightened Miss Muffet away.

Edderkopp, Edderkopp

Edderkopp, edderkopp,
skynd deg å se,
Mathilde på kraken
med suppe og skje.
Hun søler så fælt
at jeg tror du skal be
om du kan få lov til
å søle litt med.



One, Two, Three, Four, Five

One, two, three, four, five,
Once I caught a fish alive.
Six, seven, eight, nine, ten,
Then I let it go again.

Why did you let it go?
Because it bit my finger so.
Which finger did it bite?
This little finger upon the right.

En, to, tre, fire, fem, ...

En, to, tre, fire, fem,
Kom og bli med meg hjem.
Seks, syv, åtte, ni, ti,
Jeg vil helst være fri.



Pat-a-cake, Pat-a-cake

Pat-a-cake, pat-a-cake,
Baker's man.
Bake me a cake
As fast as you can;
Pat it and prick it,
And mark it with B,
And put it in the oven
For Baby and me,
For Baby and me,
For Baby and me,
And there will be plenty
For Baby and me.

Klappe, Klappe Kake

Klappe, klappe kake, du bakermann,
bak en liten kringle så fort du kan,
stek den i ovnen og kjøøl den på taket,
når den blir kald, skal jeg komme og smake.

Activity:

This is a very old rhyme dating back to the 1690's that is simply used as a hand clapping or hand warming game for very young children.



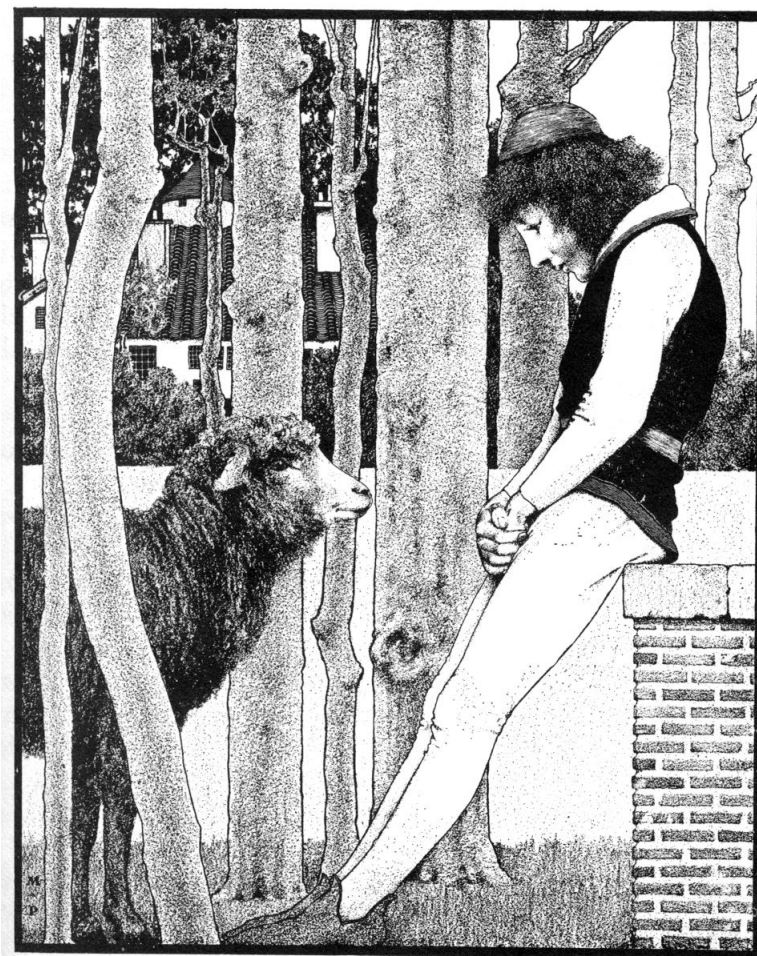
Baa, Baa, Black Sheep

Baa, baa, black sheep,
Have you any wool?
Yes sir, yes sir,
Three bags full;
One for my master,
One for my dame,
And one for the little boy
That lives down the lane.

Baa, baa, black sheep,
Have you any wool?
Yes sir, yes sir,
Three bags full.

Baa, baa, white sheep,
Have you any wool?
Yes sir, yes sir,
Three bags full;
One for my master,
One for my dame,
And one for the little girl
That lives down the lane.

Baa, baa, white sheep,
Have you any wool?
Yes sir, yes sir,
Three bags full.



Bæ, Bæ, Lille Lam

Bæ, bæ, lille lam
har du noe ull?
Ja, ja, lille barn,
jeg har kroppen full.
Søndagsklær til far
og søndagsklær til mor
og to par strømper til bitte lille bror.

Ring-a-ring o' roses

C

Ring - a - ring o' roses, a pocket full of posies,

G7 C

Ashes, ashes, we all fall down!

The cows are in the meadow

Eating buttercups.

Ashes! Ashes!

We all stand up!



Så plukker vi roser

Så plukker vi roser,
så binder vi kranser,
så falle vi alle
og står opp igjen.

Historical origin and game:

Whenever children join hands in a circle, they sing this song of posies. The origin of this rose-colored ditty is something far more sinister — the Great Plague that swept through Europe in the 1600s. A rosy rash is the first symptom of the plague. The posies are herbs and spices carried to sweeten the air. The 'a-tishoo' sneezing is another fatal symptom. (Later versions replace the sneezing with 'ashes' from the cleansing bonfires.) When children fall down on the last line of this rhyme, they are unknowingly acting out their ancestors' disease.

Children's game:

A ring, a ring o' roses,
A pocket full of posies;
(Children hold hands and dance around in a circle)

Tishoo, tishoo,
All stand still.
(Children hold still)

The King has sent his daughter,
To fetch a pail of water;
(Children hold hands and dance around in a circle)

Tishoo, tishoo,
All fall down.
(Children fall to the floor)

The bird upon the steeple,
Sits high above the people;
(Children hold hands and dance around in a circle)

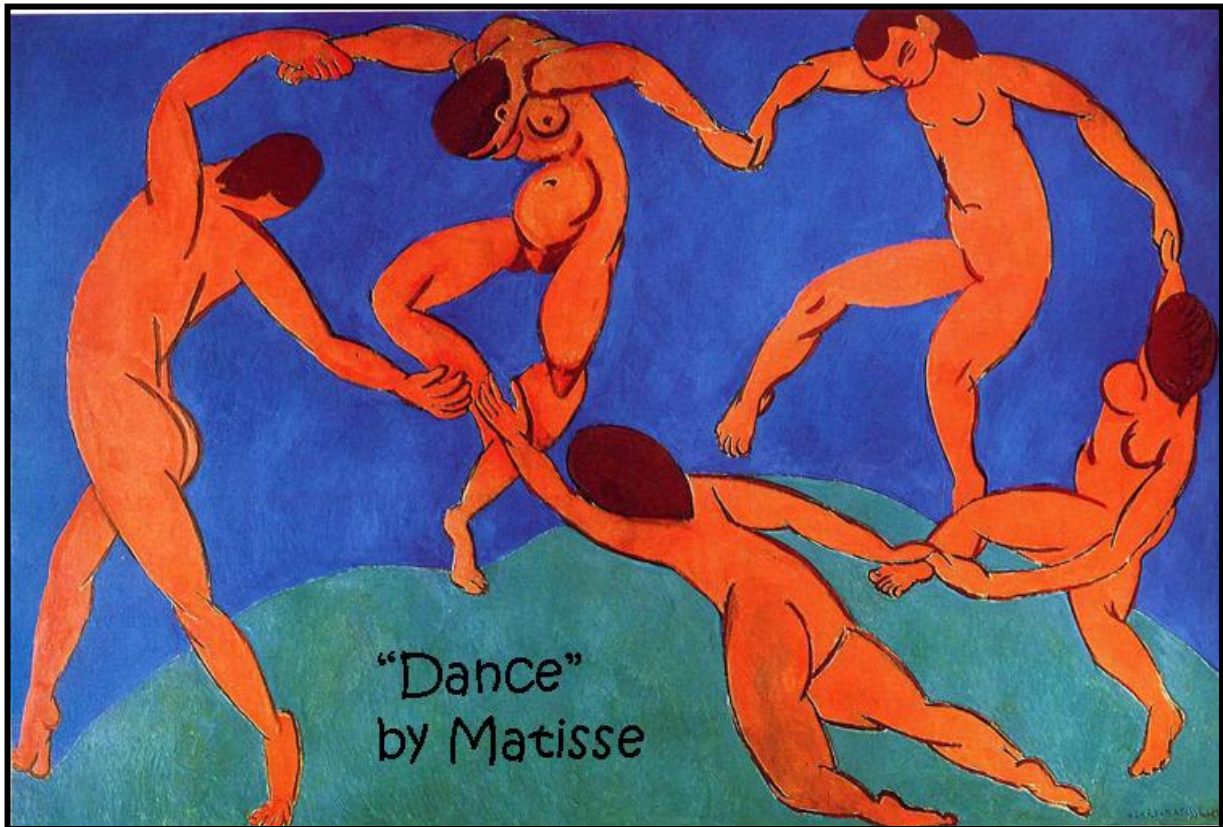
Tishoo, tishoo,
All kneel down.
(Children kneel)

The wedding bells are ringing,
The boys and girls are singing;
(Children hold hands and dance around in a circle)

Tishoo, tishoo,
All fall down.
(Children fall to the floor)



“The Snow Maiden” painting by Ksenia Mokyeyeva and Matisse’s “Dance”



Of course, when children sing “A ring, a ring o’ roses”, and play the dancing game, dancing in a ring, and then all ‘fall down’ – this is no more than a fun game. Children are of course not aware of the fact that when they say, “Tishoo, tishoo” that this represents an enactment of dying from the bubonic plague some centuries before. The ‘a-tishoo’ sneezing is a fatal symptom. When children fall down on the last line of this rhyme, they are unknowingly acting out their ancestors’ deaths. This is perhaps a reminder in these Covid times (2020-2022) of just how fragile the human race is. It is estimated that the ‘Black Death’ killed one-third or more of the populations in Europe and the Middle East.²

I have ‘cheated’ in this section by inserting a painting of Ksenia Mokyeyeva, 11 yrs, of the Murmansk Art College for Children (c. 2000). This is of course not a painting of children playing the game of “Ring-a-ring o’ roses.” However, I included the painting here because it resembles the children dancing in the game associated with the “Ring-a-ring o’ roses” nursery rhyme. This painting has featured in various contexts, not least as an illustration of the Snow Maiden (Snegurochka) tale in my book of *Russian Folktales illustrated by children* (see the following website:

²

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black_Death#:~:text=The%20Black%20Death%20was%20the%20second%20great%20natural%20disaster%20to%20population%20of%20the%20Middle%20East.

<http://artstraveling.com/> . I included the painting here because it resembles the children in the nursery rhyme dancing in a ring in the children's game associated with the "Ring-a-ring o' roses" nursery rhyme. The tale of the "Snow Maiden" is also one of death. Of course, Russian children don't associate the tale with death as such. In fact, in the Russian tradition the Snow Maiden is the granddaughter of 'Father Frost', and is associated with happiness during the Christmas period. However, the death of the Snow Maiden symbolises the transition from winter to spring.³

I have always liked this painting by Ksenia. However, I suspect the teachers at the Murmansk Art College for Children did not leave everything up to their students, perhaps feeding them with ideas. In other words, the death of the snow maiden in this painting is certainly not something that seems 'sad'. To stretch a point, it might even be said that it resembles one of the joyful paintings by Matisse, the French artist, "Dance". Another topic we can't delve into here is 'primitivism'. But instead of saying that Ksenia copied the art of the 'primitivist' Matisse, we can rather say that Ksenia had a natural talent, whereas, Matisse had to 'learn' how to paint like a child.

³ <http://www.indobase.com/holidays/christmas/characters/snegurochka.html>

Sing a Song of Sixpence

Sing a song of sixpence,
A pocket full of rye;
Four and twenty blackbirds
Baked in a pie;
When the pie was opened,
The birds began to sing;
Wasn't that a dainty dish
To set before the king?



En Sang for Åtte Øre

En sang for åtte øre,
en lomme full av rusk
og tjuefire troster
i kongensrosenbusk.

Så lager vi en kake
til kongens eget bord
og fyller den med troster
og blåbær fra i fjor.

Og kongen ba sin dronning
å komme inn og se,
hun satt og spiste honning
og ville helst ha fred.

En sang for åtte øre,
men du er raka fant
så la den siste trosten
få nesa i pant.

Children's game:

FORMATION:

Divide children into two sets of equal numbers.
Have one set join hands and form a circle, the others in the center of the ring, in crouching position.

Sing a song of sixpence,
A pocket full of rye;
(Children in circle skip to the left while singing)

Four and twenty blackbirds
Baked in a pie!
(Children in circle skip to the right, then stretch arms up toward center to form the pie.)

When the pie was opened,
The birds began to sing;
(Children in circle bring arms back down to waist level, then children in center of ring begin to 'chirp' and 'tweet')

Wasn't that a dainty dish
To set before the king?
(Children in circle skip to the left; children in center flutter about like birds.)

The king was in his counting house,
Counting all the money;
(Children in circle walk backward four steps then pretend to count money; children in center keep fluttering like birds)

The queen was in the parlor,
Eating bread with honey
(Children in circle walk forward four steps, kneel and pretend to eat; children in center keep fluttering like birds)

The maid was in the garden,
Hanging out the clothes;
(Children in circle pretend to pick up clothes, then turn outward and hang them up.)

When down came a blackbird
Who snapped off her nose!
(Children in center flutter to, and run around, those in the circle, one bird to one child, each snapping off a nose. Those in the circle kneel and the birds each hold up one finger to represent the nose.)

Repeat, with the children changing positions.

This Little Piggy

This little piggy went to market,
This little piggy stayed home,
This little piggy had roast beef,
This little piggy had none,
This little piggy cried "wee, wee, wee"
All the way home.



Children's game:

The words for "This little piggy" nursery rhyme are used to point out each one of the child's toes! The last line in "This little piggy" is used to accompany the child being tickled by the narrator of the poem!

De Fem Grisene

Den første lille grisen
fikk lov å gå på isen,

den andre lille grisen
fikk lese i avisen,

den tredje lille grisen
fikk jakka til politen,

den femte lille grisen
fikk bare slutte visen,
og visen slutter her,
og derfor kan han aldri bli
no' større enn han er.

Three Blind Mice

Three blind mice! Three blind mice!
 See, how they run! See, how they run!
 They all ran after the farmer's wife,
 Who cut off their tails with the carving knife!
 Did you ever see such a thing in your life?
 As three blind mice!



E -----
 B -----1-1-0-0-1-----1-1-0--0-1-----1-1-0--0-1-----
 G -----0-----0-----0-----2---0-0-0-----2---0-0-0-----2---0-0-----
 D 2-0--2-0--3-3-2-3-3-2-----2-0--
 A ---3---3-----3-
 E -----

Tre Brillemus

Tre brillemus, tre brillemus,
 de renner av sted,
 de renner av sted,
 så kona som bor i sitt lille hus
 blir redd for hun tror det er ville mus,
 men slike uskyldige snille mus
 gjør aldri en katt fortredd.

Historical origin:

In this case, the 'farmer's wife' was Queen Mary I of England, so called because her estates included a lot of farmland. She was displeased with three noblemen, but she didn't dismember them as the rhyme suggests. She simply had them burned at the stake

Wee Willie Winkie

Wee Willie Winkie runs through the town,
Upstairs and downstairs in his nightgown,
Rapping at the window, crying through the lock,
“Are the children in their beds, for now it’s eight o’clock?”

Lille Jon Blund

Lille John Blund
flyr i byen omkring,
opp trapp og ned trapp
i krok og sving,
kikker på ruten
og sier som så:
”Er barna i seng?
Kan jeg komme inn nå?”



London Bridge is falling down

F C7 F
 London bridge is falling down, falling down, falling down,
 F C7 F
 London bridge is falling down, my fair lady.

```

E-----|-----|
B-----|-----|
G-0--2--0-----0-----0-----|0--2--0-----0-----0-----|
D-----3--2--3-----0--2--3--2--3-----|-----3--2--3-----0-----2-----|
A-----|-----|-----3-----|
E-----|-----|
London bridge is falling down falling down London bridge is falling down My
Fair lady
    
```

Build it up with iron bars,
 Iron bars, iron bars.
 Build it up with iron bars,
 My fair lady!

Iron bars will bend and break,
 Bend and break, bend and break.
 Iron bars will bend and break,
 My fair lady!

Build it up with pins and needles,
 Pins and needles, pins and
 needles.
 Build it up with needles and pins,
 My fair lady!

Pins and needles rust and bend,
 Rust and bend, rust and bend.
 Pins and needles rust and bend,
 My fair lady!

Build it up with gold and silver,
 gold and silver, gold and silver,
 Build it up with gold and silver,
 My fair lady!

Gold and silver I've not got,
 I've not got, I've not got.
 Gold and silver I've not got,
 My fair lady!

London Bridge is falling down,
 Falling down, falling down.
 London Bridge is falling down,
 My fair lady!



Historical origin:

This nursery rhyme is about the actual destruction of London Bridge by the Norwegian viking King Olav, called Olav Stout (Olav Digre), and known as St. Olav after his death (see Snorre's *Heimskringla*).

The singing game:

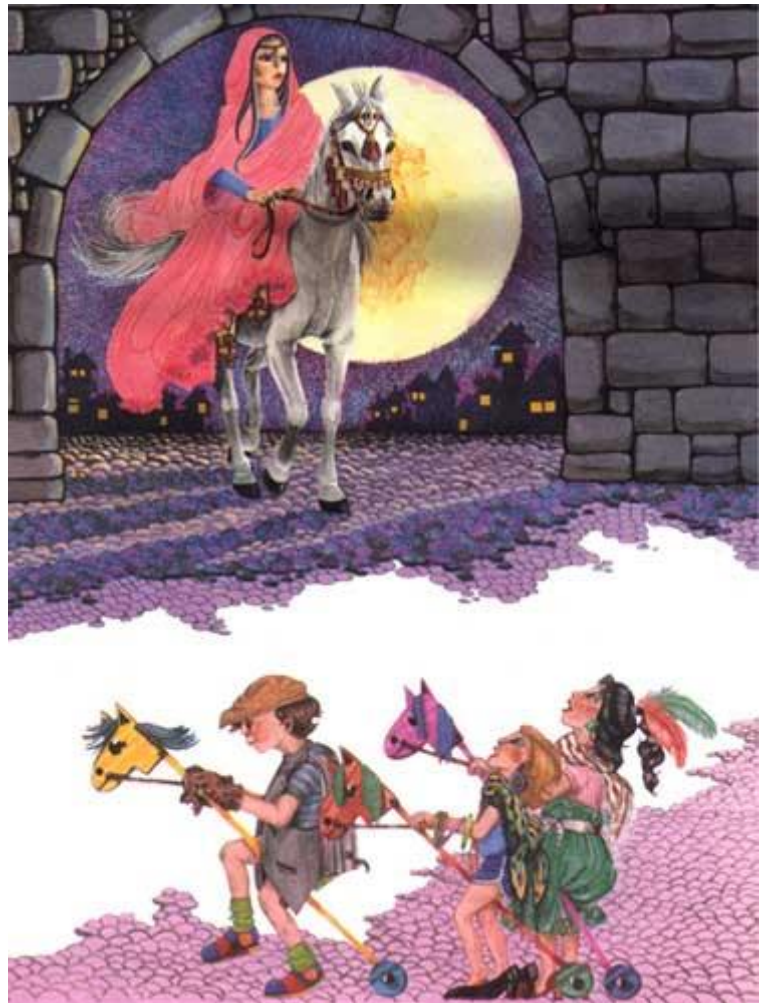
The rhyme is often used in a children's singing game, which exists in a wide variety of forms. The most common is that two players make an arch while the others pass through in single file. The arch is then lowered at a certain point to 'catch' a player.

Ride a cock-horse

Ride a cock-horse
to Banbury Cross
to see a fine lady
ride on a white horse;
with rings on her fingers
and bells on her toes,
she shall have music
wherever she goes.

Så rir vi på en trehest

Så rir vi på en trehest til Bergen's
store by.
Der møter vi en dame med nesa
høyt i sky.
Og hun har slør på hatten sin og
bjeller på hver tå,
så alle folk kan høre det er hun
som traver nå.



Origin:

One version attributes the origin of the rhyme to Lady Godiva, who accepted her husband's [Earl Leofric of Mercia's] wager, that she would ride through the streets of Coventry without any clothes, if he would remove a punitive tax he had imposed. She rode a white horse, decked in only in trinkets on her fingers and toes. The people put up their shutters while she rode through the streets to fight their cause. A fine story of a noble lady who resisted the unfair imposition of taxes by her very own nobility. Ride the cockhorse to Banbury Cross, probably symbolized their refusal to humiliate her by viewing this spectacle. They could not get to Banbury Cross on a cockhorse to witness her humiliation. And she will have music wherever she goes reflected the people singing their praises for ever thereafter to honor her unselfish act in such a noble cause How could the censor suspect their true intent.

Oranges and Lemons

Oranges and lemons
Say the bells of St. Clements
I owe you five farthings
Say the bells of St. Martins
When will you pay me?
Say the bells at Old Bailey
When I grow rich
Say the bells at Shoreditch
When will that be?
Say the bells of Stepney
I'm sure I don't know
Says the great bell of Bow.



Here comes a candle to light you to bed
Here comes a chopper to chop off your
head.

Spoken:

Chip chop chip chop the last man's
HEAD!

Epler og bananer

Epler og bananer,
sier klokkene på Hamar.

Du skylder meg ti øre,
sier klokkene på Møre.

Du skal få dem i høst,
sier klokkene på Røst.

Vi vil ha dem i morgen den dag,
sier klokkene i London, Paris og Prag.

To play as a game:

Two children form an arch. One side of the arch is 'Oranges'; the other 'Lemons'. The other children skip around, then under the arch. At the last line of the song, the two children who've formed the arch pretend to 'chip' and 'chop' the children as they pass through and capture one at 'head'. The captive then chooses Oranges or Lemons, and stands behind whichever side he has chosen. The game is repeated until everyone has been captured. Then the two teams, Oranges and Lemons, have a tug of war.

Historical origin:

One version is about King Henry VIII and the speed with which some of his brides were executed. Another version refers The 'Great Bells of Bow' were used to time the executions at Newgate prison, which for many years were done by means of beheading. The unfortunate victim would await execution on 'Death Row' and was informed by the warder, the night before the execution 'here comes the candle to light you to bed' of their imminent fate and to make their peace with God! The executions commenced when the bells started chiming at nine o'clock in the morning. When the bells stopped chiming then the executions would be finished until the following day!

Guitar Chords

<p>A</p>	<p>E</p>	<p>F</p>	<p>G7</p>	<p>G7</p>	<p>G</p>	<p>A</p>	<p>Bb</p>	<p>B</p>
<p>C</p>	<p>D7</p>	<p>Dmaj</p>						

Examples of other songs sung by English-speaking and Norwegian children:

- Frère Jacques - Brother John - Fader Jakob
- Wheels on the Bus – Hjulene på bussen
- Tommy Thumb – Tommelfinger hvor er du?
- The Incy Wincy Spider – Lille Petter Edderkopp
- Row, Row, Row your Boat – Ro, ro, ro din båt
- Sleeping Beauty - Tornerose

Brother John

Are you sleeping? Are you sleeping,
Brother John, brother John?
Morning bells are ringing.
Morning bells are ringing.
Ding, dong, ding. Ding, dong, ding.

The Wheels on the Bus

The wheels on the bus go round and round,
round and round, round and round.
The wheels on the bus go round and round,
all round the town.

The wipers on the bus go swish, swish, swish;
swish, swish, swish; swish, swish, swish.
The wipers on the bus go swish, swish, swish,
all round the town.

The driver on the bus goes "Move on back,
move on back, move on back;"
The driver on the bus goes "Move on back",
all round the town.

The people on the bus go up and down, up and down,
up and down;
The people on the bus go up and down all round the
town.

The horn on the bus goes beep, beep, beep;
beep, beep, beep; beep, beep, beep.
The horn on the bus goes beep, beep, beep,
all round the town..

The baby on the bus goes "Wah, wah, wah;
wah, wah, wah; wah, wah, wah".
The baby on the bus goes "Wah, wah, wah",
all round the town.

The parents on the bus goes "Shush, shush, shush;
shush, shush, shush; shush, shush, shush."
The parents on the bus says "Shush, shush, shush,"
all round the town.

Fader Jakob

Fader Jakob, fader Jakob,
sover du?, sover du?
Hører du ei klokken?, hører du ei klokken?
Ding dang dong, ding dang dong

Frère Jacques

Frère Jacques,
Dormez vous?
Dormez vous?
Sonnez les matines,
Sonnez les matines,
Din, din, don!
Din, din, don!

Hjulene på bussen

Hjulene på bussen de går rundt, rundt, rundt; rundt,
rundt og rundt; rundt, rundt, rundt;
Hjulene på bussen går rundt, rundt, rundt gjennom hele
byen.

Dørene på bussen de går opp og igjen, opp og igjen;
opp og igjen;
Dørene på bussen de går opp og igjen gjennom hele
byen.

Pengene på bussen sier klirr, klirr, klirr; klirr, klirr,
klirr; klirr, klirr, klirr;
Pengene på bussen sier klirr, klirr, klirr gjennom hele
byen.

Viskerne på bussen sier svisj, svisj, svisj; svisj, svisj,
svisj; svisj, svisj, svisj;
Viskerne på bussen sier svisj, svisj, svisj gjennom hele
byen.

Beibi'ne på bussen sier æ, æ, æ; æ, æ, æ; æ, æ, æ;
Beibi'ne på bussen sier æ, æ, æ gjennom hele byen.

Pappa'ne på bussen sier bla, bla, bla; bla, bla, bla; bla,
bla, bla;
Pappa'ne på bussen sier bla, bla, bla gjennom hele
byen.

Mamma'ne på bussen sier hysj, hysj, hysj; hysj, hysj,
hysj; hysj, hysj, hysj;
Mamma'ne på bussen sier hysj, hysj, hysj gjennom
hele byen.

Tommy Thumb

Tommy Thumb, Tommy Thumb
Where are you?
Here I am, here I am
How do you do?
Peter Pointer, Peter Pointer
Where are you?
Here I am, here I am
How do you do?
Toby Tall, Toby Tall
Where are you?
Here I am, here I am
How do you do?
Ruby Ring, Ruby Ring
Where are you?
Here I am, here I am
How do you do?
Baby Small, Baby Small
Where are you?
Here I am, here I am
How do you do?
Fingers all, Fingers all
Where are you?
Here we are, here we are
How do you do?

The Incy Wincy Spider

Incy Wincy Spider
Went up the water spout;
Down came the rain
And washed the spider out;
Out came the sun
And dried up all the rain;
And the Incy Wincy spider
Went up the spout again.

The itsy bitsy spider
went up the water spout,
Down came the rain
and washed the spider out.
Out came the sun
that dried up all the rain,
And the itsy bitsy spider
went up the spout again.

Row, Row, Row Your Boat

Row, row, row your boat,
Gently down the stream.
Merrily, merrily, merrily, merrily,
Life is but a dream.

Tommelfinger, tommelfinger, hvor er du?

Tommelfinger, tommelfinger, hvor er du?
Her er jeg, her er jeg. God dag, god dag, god dag.
Pekefinger, pekefinger, hvor er du?
Her er jeg, her er jeg. God dag, god dag, god dag.
Langefinger, langefinger, hvor er du?
Her er jeg, her er jeg, God dag, god dag, god dag.
Ringefinger, ringefinger, hvor er du?
Her er jeg, her er jeg. God dag, god dag, god dag.
Lillefinger, lillefinger, hvor er du?
Her er jeg, her er jeg. God dag, god dag, god dag.
Hele handa, hele handa, hvor er du?
Her er jeg, her er jeg. God dag, god dag, god dag.

Lille Petter Edderkopp

Lille Petter Edderkopp
Han klatret på min hatt
Så begynte det og regne
Og Petter ned han datt
Så kom sola og skinte på min hatt
Da ble det liv i edderkopp
Som klatret på min hatt.

Ro, ro, ro din båt

Ro, ro, ro din båt ta din åre fatt.
Vuggende, vuggende, vuggende over Kattegatt.

Sleeping Beauty (Briar Rose)

The fairest maiden ever seen,
Fairest maid, ever seen,
Was Briar Rose, the darling of
King and Queen.

The fairies brought her ev'ry gift,
Fairies gave ev'ry gift,
'Cept one who told a tragic doom
None could lift.

When fifteen summers she had passed,
Fifteen years
Sweetly passed,
This wicked witch a deep, deep sleep
O'er her cast.

A hundred years she slumbered there,
Hundred years
Slumbered there,
Protected by a briar hedge,
Passing fair.

The finest prince in all the land,
Finest prince
In the land,
Awoke her with a tender kiss,
Claimed her hand.

In love and beauty each one grows,
Day by day
Each one grows
None happier than Prince Charming and
Briar Rose.

Tornerose

Tornerose var et vakkert barn,
vakkert barn, vakkert barn;
Tornerose var et vakkert barn,
vakkert barn.

Hun bodde i det høye slott,
høye slott, høye slott;
Hun bodde i det høye slott,
høye slott.

Så kom den onde fe der inn,
fe der inn, fe der inn;
Så kom den onde fe der inn,
fe der inn.

Tornerose sov i hundre år
hundre år, hundre år;
Tornerose sov i hundre år,
hundre år.

Og hekken vokste kjempehøy,
kjempehøy, kjempehøy;
Og hekken vokste kjempehøy,
kjempehøy.

Så kom den vakre prins der inn,
prins der inn, prins der inn;
Så kom den vakre prins der inn,
prins der inn.

Tornerose må ei sove mer,
ei sove mer, sove mer;
Tornerose må ei sove mer,
sove mer.

Og prinsen danser med sin brud,
med sin brud, med sin brud;
Og prinsen danser med sin brud,
med sin brud.

Og all hjerter gleder seg,
gleder seg, gleder seg;
Og alle hjerter gleder seg,
gleder seg.

*Tongue twisters*⁴

She sells sea shells by the sea shore; the sea-shells that she sells are sea-shells I'm sure.

Peter Piper

Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers;
A peck of pickled peppers Peter Piper picked;
If Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers,
Where's the peck of pickled peppers Peter Piper picked?

How much wood would a woodchuck chuck
if a woodchuck could chuck wood?
He would chuck, he would, as much as he could,
and chuck as much wood as a woodchuck would
if a woodchuck could chuck wood.

⁴ A word or group of words difficult to articulate rapidly, usually because of a succession of similar consonantal sounds, as in *Shall she sell seashells?* Something difficult to pronounce. Norwegian: *tungebrekker, tunge-gymnastikk*.

Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) using Nursery Rhymes⁵ – With a focus on Internet resources

In recent years there has been increasing emphasis on foreign-language instruction in European countries. The 1995 European Commission White Paper on education contains a commitment to promoting “*the learning of at least two Community foreign languages by all young people*”.



English is the most common first foreign language in European schools. In Norway, compulsory education for six-year-olds was introduced in 1997-98 (Reform 97). In conjunction with this reform, instruction in the English language was made compulsory from the first grade (comprised of six-year-olds). Student teachers in Norway are not, however, required to study English during their pedagogic training, since the subject is elective. Teachers who have completed their teachers' education without studying English will, nevertheless, often be expected to teach English to their students. In the lower grades of Norwegian primary schools, relatively few teaching-hours are devoted exclusively to English instruction. Finding flexible methods and approaches for teaching English in real classroom situations has therefore become even more important, especially in grades 1-4. Teachers often need material which can be readily adapted to other subjects and varying age groups. The use of nursery rhymes in the teaching of English as a foreign language in Norway will be considered in this context.

⁵ The painting (c. 2000) on this page was executed by Yulya Nikonchuk, 7yrs, of Murmansk Art College for Children, and was used to illustrate my book, “Russian Folktales Illustrated by Children.”
<http://artstraveling.com/>

Teachers in Norwegian primary schools often teach the same school-class in all subjects (i.e. serve as classroom teachers). Nursery rhymes may be employed in the teaching of several subjectsⁱ:

- English
- Norwegian
- Music
- Mathematics
- Physical education
- Arts and crafts, and project work
- Social studies

Teaching English and Norwegian: using Mother Goose Songs in English and Norwegian – a Compendium

Nursery rhymes are read and sung in nurseries, kindergartens and primary schools as well as at home. This is obviously a practice with long traditions that reaches far back, but even today, there are good pedagogic reasons for using nursery rhymes to teach a mother tongue. It is generally accepted that the repetition of nursery rhymes helps children to remember numbers when learning how to count, to learn the letters of the alphabet and to improve reading skills. The ‘fun’ element of nursery rhymes motivates children to learn mathematical and language skills, while fine-tuning their musical skills. Children can use the knowledge they have of the nursery rhymes in their own language and ‘transfer’ this to foreign-language acquisition. To do this they need materials and guidance from teachers and parents. This Compendium may be used to help achieve this goal.



A selection of English ‘Mother Goose’ nursery rhymes have been translated into Norwegian by the well-known Norwegian children’s author, Alf Prøysen, and the Norwegian poet, Inger Hagerupⁱⁱ. These Norwegian translations and the original English rhymes have now been collected in a compendium, *Mother Goose Songs in English and Norwegian*ⁱⁱⁱ.

Music

Guitar chords and some tablature are included so that the teacher may play the songs for the children, but also so that the children may learn to play simple songs on guitars or other instruments. Nursery rhymes are well-suited to teaching music to both children and student-teachers. The chord progressions are often simple, so that teachers and students with basic guitar skills are able to master them. An excellent website for this purpose has been created by Morten Hunstad of Volda University College. On the website, basic guitar skills are taught and such nursery rhymes as *London Bridge is Falling Down* and *Ro, ro, ro din båt* are presented (<http://fuv.hivolda.no/prosjekt/hunstm/>). Other websites for learning music are listed in the references.

Numerous musical productions of nursery rhymes are easily accessible from a number of sources, and in particular the Internet. There are several websites where these resources can be downloaded free of charge, such as <http://www.imesh.com/>. In Norwegian, reasonably-priced editions of nursery rhymes and folk tales are readily available from a number of sources. These include *De 168 Mest kjente barne klassikere*, which contains amongst other songs the classic *Tornerose* (Sleeping Beauty), sung by Sidsel Ryen. Classical composers have often taken their themes from folklore; consider, for instance, Tchaikovsky's *Sleeping Beauty* and Grieg's *Peer Gynt*. Film studios throughout the world have borrowed heavily from folklore. A striking example is the film 'Sleeping Beauty' by Walt Disney, the soundtrack for which is based on Tchaikovsky's work. A starting point for an exploration of these rich traditions could be the folk tale and nursery rhyme *Tornerose* (Sleeping Beauty) in its various forms.

English/maths

Many nursery rhymes involve counting: rhymes such as *One-Two, Buckle My Shoe* and *One-Two-Three-Four-Five, Once I caught a fish alive* teach children to count to ten, and may also be used for TEFL teaching.

Physical education

The playful nature of nursery rhymes, such as in singing games and nonsense rhymes, provides motivation for using language. This is particularly important for young children. Games activities such as *Oranges and Lemons* and *Ring-a-ring o' Rosie* provide opportunities for combining English instruction with physical education, i.e. playground games. 'Activities and Games' are also included in the Compendium, and the teacher may use these in physical education classes. Some games intended for children in the first and second grades may also be played in the classroom.



Art and crafts and project work

Illustrations are included in the Compendium to stimulate the imagination of both teachers and children. In this connection, the nursery rhymes may form a basis for the teaching of arts and crafts as well as project work in which children draw or paint illustrations of nursery rhymes. One such illustration, painted by Yulya Nikonchuk (aged 7 yrs) has been included here. This painting was part of a larger project and book, *Den Døde Prinsessen og de Syv Ridderne*,^{iv} a narrative poem written by the Russian national poet Aleksandr Pushkin based on a folk tale translated into Norwegian (and which is similar to the 'Snow White' folk tale).



The illustration of tales, songs and myths from folk culture has strong traditions. In Norway, Theodor Kittelsen's illustration of Norwegian folk tales visually created the idea of 'trolls' in the popular Norwegian imagination. This rich tradition also exists in Britain, as well as in other countries. One example is Arthur Rackham's illustrated edition of *Mother Goose*^v (for instance, the drawing of 'Little Miss Moffat').

The universal ('international') aspect of folk culture

Nursery rhymes form part of a wide universal folklore rather than a narrow national tradition. Some nursery rhymes are common to several countries. Often so-called 'national' nursery rhymes strongly resemble nursery rhymes from other countries. From this standpoint, in relation to the curriculum, the teaching of nursery rhymes can promote the concept of a universal cultural heritage.

Many of the rhymes sung by English-speaking children are also sung by Norwegian children (albeit in Norwegian of course). These include *Tommy Thumb/ Tommelfinger hvor er du*; *Row, row, row, your boat/ Ro, ro, ro din båt*; *Incy-Wincy Spider/ Lille Petter Edderkopp*; *Wheels on the Bus/ Hjulene på bussen*; *Brother John (Frère Jacques)/ Fader Jakob*; *Wee, Willie Winkie/ Jon Blund*; *Santa Lucia/ Sankta Lucia* and *Baa, Baa, Black Sheep/ Bæ, bæ, lille lam*, etc. These songs are included in the Compendium. A number of these songs derive from non-English-speaking countries or regions. Other songs and rhymes are common to several countries, such as *London Bridge is Falling Down*, of which there are "versions ... in Germany, Denmark, France, Italy, Hungary, and Scandinavia."^{vi} *Frère Jacques (Brother John/Fader Jakob)* is a traditional French song, and *Santa Lucia* is Italian. There is of course, an obvious advantage if the children are familiar with the melody of a song in their own language before they come to learn it in English. Many websites provide gateways to other countries, cultures and not least languages. One such is 'Mama Lisa's World', which provides children's songs and nursery rhymes from around the globe (see <http://www.mamalisa.com/world/>). This website primarily provides translations of nursery rhymes from countries all over the world into English. There are also international websites on this topic, such as: <http://www.laukart.de/multisite/index.php>.

Aspects of language learning

Vocabulary

'Alphabet' nursery rhymes provide children with basic vocabulary skills. There are also websites (e.g. <http://www.enchantedlearning.com/Rhymes.html>) which provide detailed pictorial presentations of nursery rhymes which help build vocabulary.

Pronunciation and grammar

It is widely recognised that nursery rhymes, along with other kinds of poems, songs and tongue twisters, may help students of foreign languages to improve their pronunciation. There are numerous websites and books on this subject. One example is *Basic English Phonetics for Teachers*, Nilsen, Thor Sigurd and Rugesæter, Kåre, N., Fagbokforlaget, 1999. *Songs and Rhymes for the Teaching of English* by Julian Dakin (1968/1975/1982) is an excellent book aimed at teaching English as a first language; it uses songs and rhymes to encourage and develop pupils' pronunciation and their control over an increasing range of vocabulary and structure, and it includes a teacher's book and a cassette with the nursery rhymes. This book and cassette could easily be adapted for TEFL purposes. The following website, (http://www.englisch-hilfen.de/en/vocabulary/nursery_rhymes.htm) lists, amongst others, tongue-twisters such as, *Peter Piper Picked a Peck of Pickled Pepper*. Of course 'tongue twisters' are not limited to the English language. Danes love to 'test' foreigners with 'Rødgrød med fløde' (red jelly with cream). Nursery rhymes offer students the opportunity to practice the rhythm, stress, and intonation patterns of English. Since they are relatively easy to learn verbatim, they provide the opportunity to drill the correct pronunciation.

Teaching ‘social studies’ (history and culture)

Some *historical information* is also included so that the songs may be combined with the teaching of social studies (history). *London Bridge is Falling Down* may be used in connection with the teaching of the Viking Age (6 – 16 yrs.).

Social studies and cultural competence

Cultural competence is an important aspect of language acquisition. The advantages for young children of singing and reading nursery rhymes in the original language in relation to pronunciation practice and vocabulary-building are clear; but there are also less obvious benefits related to cultural competence. Most nursery rhymes are part of a wider European and universal folk tradition, and have specific historical roots which have often been blurred by time, resulting in mythological histories. The history and tradition of nursery rhymes such as ‘Humpty Dumpty’ and ‘Three Blind Mice’ are also part of the living language and culture, because they form part of everyday language use. Any search on the Internet will confirm this, as these two particular song titles are often used in political and cultural commentary in the media.

Cultural vocabulary

“There is something quite fascinating about nursery rhymes. On the surface, they’re simple little songs with simple little words sung by children still basking in the light of their simple little lives. Yet scratch the surface of any nursery rhyme and you’ll reveal a much more complex ‘adult’ history. These rhymes were often born out of a desire to instruct or teach, or to pass on a moral lesson. They were also a way in which major historical events could be remembered and passed on, like the Great Fire of London in *London’s Burning* or the devastation of the Plague immortalised in the rather creepy *Ring-a-Ring-a-Roses*.”^{vii}

The historical aspect of nursery rhymes (or more specifically their historical origins), then, may provide students, especially more mature students, with a cultural vocabulary. Especially interesting for teachers and students in Scandinavia are the nursery rhymes with Norse roots or associations. For instance, consider the Norse origins of both *London Bridge is Falling Down* and *Jack and Jill*, both of which provide good stories as well as a key to the wider world of a common European/Asian/African heritage, history and mythology. Snorre Sturlason’s *Heimskringla – The Lives of the Norse Kings, Edda* and *London Bridge is Falling Down* provide starting points for pupils and students of any age who are interested in the history of the Vikings.

The historic origins of nursery rhymes

London Bridge is falling down

London Bridge is falling down
Falling down, falling down,
London Bridge is falling down,
My fair lady.

Build it up with iron bars,
Iron bars, iron bars.
Build it up with iron bars,
My fair lady!

Iron bars will bend and break,
Bend and break, bend and break.
Iron bars will bend and break,
My fair lady!

Build it up with pins and needles,
Pins and needles, pins and needles.
Build it up with needles and pins,
My fair lady!

Pins and needles rust and bend,
Rust and bend, rust and bend.
Pins and needles rust and bend,
My fair lady!

Build it up with gold and silver,
gold and silver, gold and silver,
Build it up with gold and silver,
My fair lady!

Gold and silver I've not got,
I've not got, I've not got.
Gold and silver I've not got,
My fair lady!

London Bridge is falling down,
Falling down, falling down.
London Bridge is falling down,
My fair lady!



King Olaf of Norway

The destruction of London Bridge by Olav 2 Haraldsson (995-1030) is described in the *Heimskringla – The Lives of the Norse Kings* written by the Icelandic scald Snorre Sturlason (1179-1241); Olav was king from 1015-1028, called Olav the Stout (*Olav Digre*), and known as Saint Olav after his death. The battle and destruction is described in a song by the scald Sigvat:



*Sant er at sjette striden
bød den snare konge
angler; han Odin egget.
Olav brøt Londonbrua.
Velske sverd fikk bite,
vikinger verget diket.
Somme hadde buer
på flate Sudervirke.^{viii}*

*It is true that the sixth fight
Was, where the speedy prince
Offered the Angles battle and Olav
Went against London Bridge.^{ix}*

The destruction of the bridge is also described by Ottar the Black:

*Yet didst thou break, warrior chief,
The bridge in London, with boldness
(Thou hadst luck with thee
To win gold in the battle);*

*The hard-pounded shield
Rang out, when the battle waned,
And the iron rings sprang asunder
In the old brynies.*

King Olaf of Norway attacked England but he was unable to sail up the Thames past London Bridge. So he ordered his men to erect wood and wicker canopies over their boats. They then approached London Bridge. Londoners on the bridge bombarded the boat with sticks and stones but were unable to stop the Vikings. At that time London Bridge was made of wood. Olaf and his men tied ropes to the wooden struts supporting it. They then rowed away and London Bridge collapsed. The following website is of interest concerning the ‘origin’ of the rhyme in the Icelandic *Heimskringla*:

<http://www.worldwideschool.org/library/books/hst/european/heimskringla/HeimskringlaVolume4/chap12.html>

It has been suggested that the ‘fair lady’ who is ‘locked up’ is a reference to an old practice of burying a dead virgin in the foundations of the bridge to ensure its strength through magical means. However, according to the ‘London Bridge Museum’ website:

The present version of the song ‘London Bridge is Falling Down - My Fair Lady’ though based on the old Norse saga, was composed in the 13th century when the unpopular Queen Eleanor was given the tolls from the bridge as a present from her husband, Henry III, in 1269. She was a prolific spender and put all the toll money to her own personal use instead of spending it on the bridge.



Needless to say, the bridge fell into serious disrepair. The old song then became reborn as one of angry sarcastic criticism against the Queen, ‘London Bridge is Falling down, my Fair Lady’. The bridge finally returned to the control of the City of London in 1281, but that winter with heavy ice pushing against the bridge, the ill-maintained structure suffered severe

damage with five arches collapsing into the water, and a temporary timber bridge had to be built for that part.

Intriguingly, the rhyme is not confined to England and variants exist in many other western and central European countries. London Bridge has been rebuilt many times in its long history, and the rhyme might be said to describe this history, spanning from wood and clay and bricks and mortar to iron and steel in one version of the rhyme (see BBC website for detailed explanation: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/dna/h2g2/A2966844>).

Ring Around the Rosy

The words to the 'Ring around the rosy' nursery rhyme and ring game have their origin in English history. The historical period dates back to the Great Plague of London in 1665 (bubonic plague) or even before when the first outbreak of the Plague hit England in the 1300's. The symptoms of the plague included a rosy red rash in the shape of a ring on the skin (Ring around the rosy). Pockets and pouches were filled with sweet smelling herbs (or posies), which were carried due to the belief that the disease was transmitted by bad smells. The term 'Ashes Ashes' refers to the cremation of the dead bodies! The death rate was over sixty per cent and the plague was only halted by the Great Fire of London in 1666, which killed the rats which were thought to have carried the disease. The British English version of 'Ring around the rosy' replaces the American English 'Ashes' with (A-tishoo, A-tishoo) as violent sneezing was another symptom of the disease.

Baa, Baa Black Sheep

The wool industry was important to the country's economy from the Middle Ages until the nineteenth century so it is therefore not surprising that it is celebrated in the Baa Baa Black Sheep nursery rhyme. An historical connection for this rhyme has been suggested - a political satire said to refer to the Plantagenet King Richard III (the Master) and the export tax imposed in Britain in 1275 in which the English Customs Statute authorised the king to collect a tax on all exports of wool in every port in the country.

Georgie Porgie

The origins of the lyrics to 'Georgie Porgie' are English and may refer to the courtier George Villiers, 1st duke of Duke of Buckingham (1592–1628). King James I took Villiers as his lover and nicknamed him 'Steenie' (a reference to St. Stephen whom in the Bible describes as having the 'face of an angel'). Villier's good looks also appealed to the ladies and his highly suspect morals were much in question! Villiers most notorious affair was with his liaison with Anne of Austria, (1601–1666) who was the Queen of France and married to the French King Louis XIII and the affair badly injured both of their reputations. This, however, was overlooked due to his great friendship with the English King, James I (1586 - 1625). He was disliked by both courtiers and commoners, not least for helping to arrange the marriage of King James' son to the French Catholic princess Henrietta Maria (1609-1669) - he later became King Charles I (1600-1649). George Villiers (Georgie Porgie) exercised great influence over the King who allowed him many liberties.



Villiers private liaisons and political scheming were questioned and Parliament who finally lost patience and stopped the King intervening on behalf of ‘Georgie Porgie’. The romantic elements of George Villiers and Anne of Austria are featured in the novel *The Three Musketeers* by Alexander Dumas.

Jack and Jill

This verse, which to us seems at first sight nonsense, ... refers to the Eddaic Hjuki and Bil. The names indicate as much. Hjuki, in Norse, would be pronounced Juki, which would readily become Jack; and Bil, for the sake of euphony and in order to give a female name to one of the children, would become Jill. The fall of Jack, and the subsequent fall of Jill, simply represent the vanishing of one moon spot after another, as the moon wanes. ... ‘Hjuki’ is derived from the verb ‘jakka’, to heap or pile together, to assemble and increase; and ‘Bil’, from ‘bila’, to break up or dissolve. Hjuki and Bil, therefore, signify nothing more than the waxing and waning of the moon, and the water they are represented as bearing signifies the fact that the rainfall depends on the phases of the moon.

Little Jack Horner

According to legend, Little Jack Horner was actually Thomas Horner, steward to the Abbot of Glastonbury during the reign of King Henry VIII. Rumour had it that the inquisitive king would soon be reaching for some Glastonbury holdings. The nervous Abbot, hoping to appease the royal appetite, sent the king a special gift: a pie containing twelve deeds to manor houses. On his way to London, the not-so-loyal courier Horner stuck his thumb into the pie and extracted the deed for Mells Manor, a plum piece of real estate, where his descendants live to this day.

Humpty Dumpty

Humpty Dumpty was a powerful cannon during the English Civil War (1642-49). It was mounted on top of the St. Mary’s at the Wall Church in Colchester defending the city against siege in the summer of 1648. (Although Colchester was a Parliamentary stronghold, it was captured by the Royalists who held it for 11 weeks.) The church tower was hit by the enemy and the top of the tower was blown off, sending ‘Humpty’ tumbling to the ground. Naturally the King’s men tried to mend him but in vain. The ‘men’ would have been infantry, and ‘horses’ the cavalry troops.

Jack and Jill went up the hill
to fetch a pail of water
Jack fell down and broke his crown
And Jill came tumbling after.

Then up Jack got,
And home did trot,
And fast as he could caper;
He went to bed
To mend his head
With vinegar and brown paper.

When Jill came in
How she did grin
To see his paper plaster.
Her mother vexed,
Did whip her next,
For laughing at Jack’s disaster.

Now Jack did laugh
And Jill did cry,
But her tears did soon abey;
Then Jill did say
That they should play
At see-saw across the gate.

Little Boy Blue

There is a theory that ‘Little Boy Blue’ refers to Cardinal Thomas Wolsey (1475-1530) dating back to English Tudor history and the reign of King Henry VIII. Wolsey was an extremely rich and arrogant self-made man with many enemies at court and was unpopular with the people of England. He was called the ‘Boy Bachelor’ after obtaining his degree from Oxford at the unusually early age of fifteen. The expression ‘Blowing one’s own horn’ meaning to brag was certainly practised by Cardinal Wolsey. Between 1514 and 1525 he transformed a medieval manor into the magnificent Hampton Court Palace. It was an ostentatious display of his wealth and his power giving rise to the rhyme uttered by his enemies:

*“Come ye to court? Which Court?
The King’s Court or Hampton Court?”*

The anti-Wolsey propaganda worked and in 1529 Henry declared all of Wolsey’s lands and possessions forfeit and they became the property of the Crown. At this time England was a prosperous nation largely through the wool trade and the export taxes on wool had augmented both Henry’s treasury and Wolsey’s assets. The words ‘where’s the boy who looks after the sheep?’ could refer to Wolsey’s concern with lining his own coffers as opposed to that of the country. The cardinal’s robes were scarlet but Wolsey’s Blazon of Arms included the blue faces of four leopards - perhaps this was why the title of the rhyme is ‘Little Boy Blue’? ‘The Little Boy Blue’ rhyme may have been a secret message of dissent concerning the greed of the statesman prior to his downfall. Open criticism of the Cardinal would have led to imprisonment, confiscation of property or even death. Wolsey incurred royal displeasure through his failure to secure the papal dispensation necessary for Henry’s VIII’s divorce from Catherine of Aragon; he was arrested on a charge of treason and died on his way to trial in London.



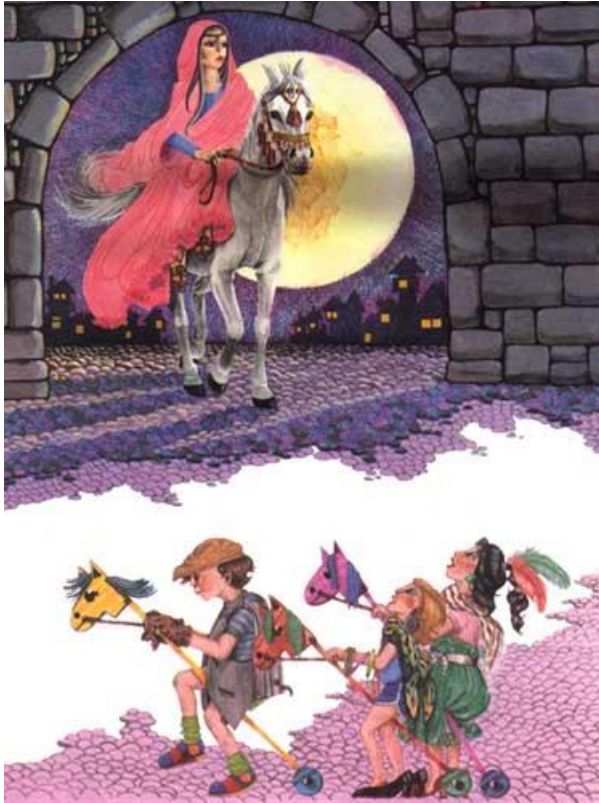
Mary had a Little Lamb

Mary Sawyer’s lamb followed her to the Redstone School House (Massachusetts) around 1820. Also, Mrs. Sarah J. Hale and John Roulstone both claim this nursery rhyme song.

An interesting historical note about this rhyme - the words of Mary had a Little Lamb were the first ever recorded by Thomas Edison, on tin foil, on his phonograph.

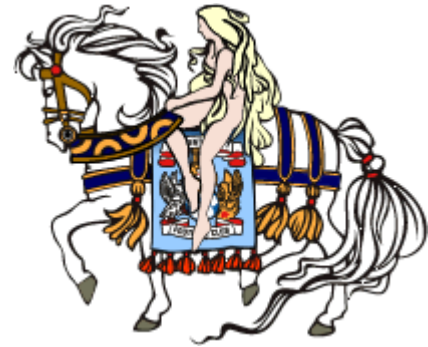
Three Blind Mice

Queen Mary or Bloody Mary is the farmer's wife in this song. Apparently, three men of the cloth went to see Lady Jane Grey believing she was the queen of England. Well, when Mary took the throne she was not pleased and caused to have their heads cut off.



Ride a cock-horse

Like many of the other nursery rhymes there seems to be disagreement concerning its origins, although the various versions are all colourful. The version relating to Lady Godiva is perhaps the one which remains in the popular imagination, and which has 'inspired' a number of artists, and



filmmakers, among them, the Pre-raphaelite, John Collier. Lady Godiva's husband Leofric, Earl of Mercia, imposed a heavy tax on his subjects. Distressed by their hardship, Godiva pleaded their case. Her husband

listened politely for a few days, then with mounting annoyance, and finally offered a dare, "Ride naked through Coventry, and I'll do as you ask." Confident that his wife would never commit such an act, Leofric returned to his ledgers. Undaunted, Godiva galloped through town on a handsome white horse, clad only in her coppery tresses, while all the folk in Coventry stayed indoors with the shutters locked, to spare her blushes. The earl conceded, and lifted the tax. And if she hears music wherever she goes, it's probably the townspeople singing her praises.

Oranges and Lemons

The place names relate to some of the many churches of London and the tune that accompanies the lyrics emulates the sound of the ringing of the specific church bells. The words of the nursery rhyme are chanted by children as they play the game of 'Oranges and lemons' the end of which culminates in a child being caught between the joined arms of two others, emulating the act of chopping off their head! The reason for the last three lines of lyrics are easily explained. The 'Great Bells of Bow' were used to time the executions at Newgate prison, which for many years were done by means of beheading. The

*Oranges and lemons
Say the bells of St Clements
You owe me five farthings
Say the bells of St Martins
When will you pay me?
Say the bells of Old Bailey
When I grow rich
Say the bells of Shoreditch
When will that be?
Say the bells of Stepney
I'm sure I don't know
Says the great bell at Bow
Here comes a candle to light you to bed
Here comes a chopper to chop off your head
Chop chop chop chop the last man's head!*

unfortunate victim would await execution on 'Death Row' and was informed by the warder, the night before the execution 'here comes the candle to light you to bed' of their imminent fate and to make their peace with God! The executions commenced when the bells started chiming at nine o'clock in the morning. When the bells stopped chiming then the executions would be finished until the following day!

Where Are These Famous Bells?

Bells of St Clements



St Clements, Eastcheap, is a small church, only 64 feet long and 40 feet wide, and stands huddled between two office blocks. There has been a church on the site since the 11th Century; the present one is the third to be standing on the site. The original church was demolished in the 15th Century, and the second was destroyed during the Great Fire of London in 1666. It was rebuilt by Sir Christopher Wren in 1687. The church stands in St Clements Lane, in fact, the name of the street comes from the church. It was previously known as Eastcheap. The rhyme begins with this church because when the Thames was wider than it is today, the wharf where the citrus fruit cargoes from the Mediterranean were delivered lay just across the street. It is said the church bells pealed when a cargo arrived.



For historical details concerning the meaning of the song and the other churches see the website:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/dna/h2g2/A696125>

References

*“Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) using Nursery Rhymes
- with a focus on Internet resources”*

The Internet is the main source for the material in this booklet. The material is interspersed with some of my own comments. I have compiled and edited the various sources, but do not take any credit for the authorship. ‘Authorship’ of the various parts may be easily accessed by using word-strings and a search engine (in other words, references are pending). Some of the websites used are:

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v Mother Goose, illustrated by Arthur Rackham, London: William Heinemann, 1969.

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viii The scald, Sigvat, recounts the battles of Olav:

http://home.online.no/~olhov/st_olav1.html (Heimskringla [the Lives of the Norse Kings])

ix Heimskringla or The Lives of the Norse Kings by Snorre Sturlason, translated by A.H.Smith, Dover, 1990.