

An Educator's Guide To...



Mother Goose

A Pocketful of Rhymes

Images of innocence, youthful abandon and well worded nonsense emerge at the thought of nursery rhymes. Don't be deceived! Something timeless and special lives within this equivocal art form. An age-old spirit, not always benevolent, draws upon the unexpected to tantalize our fascination with riddles, tongue-twisters and mystery. Mother Goose of ambivalent ancestry is in a sense, mother to us all. Her ditties and jingles have woven an enchantment across the dimensions of time and distance. Through rhyme and verse she has unified the human tradition and provided every family with a legacy to shape and to pass on as a valued heirloom for generations to come.



Throughout the study guide, this symbol means that specific Florida Standards are being addressed that correlate activities directly to Florida Assessments. As new standards are created and approved by the Florida Department of Education, this may change. The Standards listed here are currently the most up to date. Please visit www.cpalms.org for more information and to customize this guide to your specific grade level.

THE THEATRE IS A SPECIAL TREAT

Let us concentrate for a moment on a vital part of youth theatre: the young people. Millions of youngsters attend plays every season, and for some the experience is not particularly memorable or entertaining. The fault may lie with the production – but often the fault lies in the fact that these youngsters have not been properly briefed on appropriate theatre manners. Going to the theatre is not a casual event such as flipping on the TV set, attending a movie or a sports event. Going to the theatre is a SPECIAL OCCASION, and should be attended as such. In presenting theatre manners to young people we take the liberty of putting the do's and don'ts in verse, and hope that concerned adults will find this a more palatable way of introducing these concepts to youngsters.

MATINEE MANNERS

By PEGGY SIMON TRAKTMAN

The theatre is no place for lunch,
Who can hear when you go "crunch?"
We may wear our nicest clothes
When we go to theatre shows.
Do not talk to one another
(That means friends or even mother)
When you go to see a show,
Otherwise you'll never know
What the play is all about
And you'll make the actors shout
Just to make themselves be heard.
So, be still - don't say a word
Unless an actor asks you to...
A thing they rarely ever do.
A program has a special use
So do not treat it with abuse!
Its purpose is to let us know
Exactly who is in the show
It also tells us other facts
Of coming shows and future acts.
Programs make great souvenirs
Of fun we've had in bygone years
Keep your hands upon your lap

But if you like something you clap
Actors like to hear applause.
If there is cause for this applause.
If a scene is bright and sunny,
And you think something is funny
Laugh- performers love this laughter
But be quiet from thereafter.
Don't kick chairs or pound your feet
And do not stand up in your seat,
Never wander to and fro -
Just sit back and watch the show.
And when the final curtain falls
The actors take their "curtain calls"
That means they curtsy or they bow
And you applaud, which tells them how
You liked their work and liked the show.
Then, when the lights come on, you go
Back up the aisle and walk - don't run
Out to the lobby, everyone.
The theatre is a special treat
And not a place to talk or eat.
If you behave the proper way
You really will enjoy the play.

THE STORYTELLER

The Legendary Mother Goose


Mother Goose stories are apparently as old as people learning to talk, many having been traced back over 2,000 years. Folk tales were a favorite form of entertainment for people for hundreds, perhaps thousands of years. It was only about 300 years ago, however, that this first collection of verses was published by Charles Perrault in France. A short time later they were translated into English, and, about the time of the American Revolution, were published in this country.

Searching back in any country's history usually reveals a woman who was also known as "Mother Goose." Some scholars have suggested that the first person so labeled was the Queen of Sheba. Bertha, the mother of King Charlemagne, was known by a name derived from the size of her foot. She was called "Goose-footed Bertha." She is represented in French accounts as incessantly spinning, with hordes of children clustered about her, listening to her stories. Many American scholars maintain that "Mother Goose" was Elizabeth Foster Goose of Charleston and Boston. A loving grandmother, it is said that she culled her memory for rhymes that would lull her little ones. Identity notwithstanding, the term "Mother Goose" as a teller rather than the supposed author of the well known rhymes, is French, and dates back to the year 1650. Mother Goose rhymes have long been recognized as a **literary art form**. This was apparent as early as 1833 when the following passage was included in the introduction to a volume of nursery rhymes. "All imitators of my refreshing songs might as well write a new Bill Shakespeare as another Mother Goose. We two great poets were born together and we shall go out of the world together. No, no my melodies will never die, while nurses sing, or babies cry."

THE SYNOPSIS

Mother Goose: A Pocketful of Rhymes


Mother Goose: A Pocketful of Rhymes is divided into three separate sections in which the nursery rhymes and songs are told in a variety of fashions. The playful opening medley features classic **games** and **dances** and includes: Rock-A-Bye-Baby, Now I Lay Me Down to Sleep, He Loves Me; He Loves Me Not, Ring Around The Rosie, London Bridge, One, Two Buckle My Shoe, and Here We Go Round The Mulberry Bush.

 **MU.3.S.3.** Through purposeful practice, artists learn to manage, master, and refine simple, then complex, skills and techniques.

The second section is devoted to **verses** that form their own complete songs. Four musical vignettes comprise the cluster:

- Little Boy Blue, a lullaby about a shepherd tending his flocks;
- Sing A Song of Sixpence, a political satire about King George III by children of American Revolutionaries;
- Yankee Doodle Dandy, an anti-American Revolution song used by the British to inspire their troops;
- Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star, perhaps America's first "Mother Goose" was Betsy Ross with her flag!

Each of these songs remains a part of our heritage even though the original intention of the song may have been long forgotten.

 **MU.2.H.2** – The arts reflect and document cultural trends and historical events, and help explain how new directions in the arts have emerged.

The third section **“Civilization and The Nursery Rhyme”**, takes a humorous look at the different ways Mother Goose stories have been passed down through oral traditions. Rhymes and songs come from many **cultural and historical** backgrounds. Our renditions have Mother Goose move through time from the ancient past to Modern day and around the world. Some of the well known nursery rhymes in the exciting final medley are: Old King Cole, Jack and Jill, Mary Had a Little Lamb, Old Woman in a Shoe, Jack Sprat, Little Jack Horner, The Cat and The Fiddle, Little Miss Muffet, Humpty Dumpty and many more. The production ends with a song entitled One Big Happy Family, which emphasizes tolerance, unity and love.

THE IMPORTANCE OF NURSERY RHYMES

Buried in the nonsensical couplets chanted by generations of children is the link to understanding syllables and phonemes, the building blocks to literacy. A slew of studies since the mid-1980’s has shown that rhymes directly contribute to a child’s vocabulary and understanding of language. To recognize that two words rhyme is to know something about the sounds that make up words. Rhymes involve “intra-syllabic” units, meaning their sounds fall somewhere between syllables and phonemes, the units of sound that distinguish one word from another. To recognize that “cat” and “mat” rhyme, a child must detect at some level that they share the common two-phoneme segment of “at”.

The better children are at detecting rhymes, the quicker and more successful is their reading progress – a relationship that holds true in dozens of studies despite children’s IQ’s or social backgrounds. Research on children with reading difficulties has found that many struggling readers are strikingly insensitive to rhyme.

 **LAFS.2.L.3** – Vocabulary Acquisition and Use

“When children rhyme, it really draws attention to the fact that words have parts,” said Sally Shaywitz, a professor of pediatrics and brain research at Yale University. “When most of us hear a word, we don’t pay attention to the fact that even a single word like ‘cat’ has three sounds:kkkk/aaaa/tttt.”

“When you rhyme the last part of a word, you are realizing a distinct part of the word and what the sound is. In order to read, you also have to appreciate that words are made up of different sounds. It’s really the same ability. It’s learning to break the code”.

This deeper understanding of the power of rhymes has prompted a revival among reading experts for Mother Goose, that collection of English childhood rhymes, jingles, songs and riddles that originated centuries ago.

It's why rhymes are dubbed "essential" for young children, ages 3 and 4, in a joint statement for parents issued last October by the National Association for the Education of Young Children and the International Reading Association.

In a series of four parenting books recently released by the Family Center of Nova Southeastern University, nursery rhymes are emphasized as a key component for children. "What you have to do with Mother Goose or with anything is lift them off the pages of the book," said Wendy Masi, the Family Center's director. "Just reading a rhyme in a book with a child is not nearly as much fun as when you know the rhymes and use them as part of your daily life. Then it's fun, it's alive. If you read in a dull, boring way, your child won't relate to it. **It's all in the presentation**".


A recent study by a Pennsylvania researcher suggests that nursery rhymes are part of a dying tradition, with few – if any – passed on to young children. "Kindergarten teachers often expect children to have that kind of background and too often the children don't," said Susan Neuman, a Temple University associate professor who has studied the affects of a literacy effort called Books Aloud that has brought nursery rhymes and stories to more than 330 child-care centers in the Philadelphia area.


"That needs to be revisited because Mother Goose is one of the foundations of our language," Neuman said. "She also plays a role in creating a community of knowledge. It's essential for children to hear those rhymes".

THE ACTIVITIES

BEFORE THE PLAY:

1. Read some Mother Goose nursery rhymes to your students. Explain to them that there are countless adaptations of these rhymes from various cultures all over the world and the versions they will hear may not be exactly like the one they have read.

 **TH.1.H.1** The student understands how we learn about ourselves, our relationships and our environment through forms of theater (e.g., film, television, plays, and electronic media)

 **TH.3.H.3** Connections among the arts and other disciplines strengthen learning and the ability to transfer knowledge and skills to and from other fields.

 **LAFS.3.L.2.AP.3b.** Compare and contrast differences between spoken and standard written English.

2. Ask your students to discuss the difference between television and live theatre. It is important that they know about "theatre etiquette," or manners. Refer to the poem "Matinee Manners" listed above.

TH.2.S.1.1 Exhibit the behavior necessary to establish audience etiquette, response, and constructive criticism.

3. Have the students learn the following vocabulary words and listen for them during the play. See how many words they can recall and how the characters used them in the context of the play.

| | | | |
|--------------|---------------|-----------|----------------|
| broth | looking glass | primitive | sixpence |
| bough | lullaby | rhyme | tarantella |
| civilization | nimble | riddle | tongue twister |
| contrary | parlor | ritual | tuft |
| curd | peck | saying | whew |

LAFS.K.RI.4 : Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity

LAFS.3.RF.3 : Phonics and Word Recognition

4. Have the students look and listen for patterns during the play. See how many patterns they can recall and how they were used in the context of the play. Encourage students to be aware of patterns that may occur in music, dance, scenery, costume fabric and dialogue. Students may also notice architectural patterns in the theatre.

MAFS.K.MD.2 Classify objects and count the number of objects in each category.

MAFS.3.OA.4 Solve problems involving the four operations, and identify and explain patterns in arithmetic.

AFTER THE PLAY:

Part I

1. Ask your students to write letters, or draw pictures, to send to the cast of *Mother Goose*. What did they like about the play? Who was their favorite character? What did they learn from the story?

LAFS.2.W.1.3 Write narratives in which they recount a well-elaborated event or short sequence of events, include details to describe actions, thoughts, and feelings, use temporal words to signal event order, and provide a sense of closure.

LAFS.4.2.2.5 With guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, and editing.

2. *Mother Goose* is a wonderful introduction to the world of poetry and rhyme. To further the students interest, read them some poems from other children’s authors such as Dr. Seuss or Shel Silverstein and discuss them with your class. What did they like or dislike about the poems?

✍ **LAFS.2.SL.1.1** Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about grade 2 topics and texts with peers and adults in small and larger groups.

✍ **WL.K12.NM.1.5** Demonstrate understanding of simple rhymes, songs, poems, and read aloud stories.

✍ **LAFS.2.L.1.1** Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

✍ **LAFS.3.W.3** : Research to Build and Present Knowledge

✍ **LAFS.3.SL.1.2** Determine the main ideas and supporting details of a text read aloud or information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

3. Have the students write a nursery rhyme or poem of their own.

✍ **LAFS.K.SL.2.4** Describe familiar people, places, things, and events and, with prompting and support, provide additional detail.

✍ **LAFS.2.W.1.2** Write informative/explanatory texts in which they introduce a topic, use facts and definitions to develop points, and provide a concluding statement or section.

✍ **LAFS.4.W.4.10** Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.

✍ **LAFS.3.W.4** Range of Writing

4. In the play many of the nursery rhymes were acted out. Have the students choose their favorite rhymes and act them out for one another. Be creative by assigning a director, actors, prompter and by making and using props and scenery.

✍ **TH.5.F.1** Creating, interpreting, and responding in the arts stimulate the imagination and encourage innovation and creative risk-taking.

The Art of Florida Assessments

Contributed by Patricia Linder

✍ **Visual and Performing Arts Field Trips** provide an excellent source of support for the development of skills necessary for success on the Florida Assessments. We invite you to use these instructional strategies to enhance assessments preparation through your theatre field trip.

Theatre Activities

Cognitive Level 1

Read the story (or play) your field trip performance is based on.

Name the main character.

List all the characters.

Identify the setting.

List the story events in the order they happened.

Describe a character (or setting).

Explain the problem (or conflict) in the story.

Explain how the actors used stage props to tell the story (or develop characterization).

Discuss how the blocking, or positioning of the actors on stage affected the performance.

Discuss how unusual technical elements (light, shadow, sound, etc.) were used in the performance.

Draw a picture of a character.

Illustrate or make a diorama of a scene from the performance.

Draw a poster to advertise the performance.

Work with other students to act out a scene.

Demonstrate how an actor used facial expression to show emotion.

Write a narrative story to summarize the plot of the performance story.

Use a map and/or timeline to locate the setting of the story.

Make a mobile showing events in the story

Cognitive Level II

Would the main character make a good friend? Write an expository essay explaining why or why not.

Create a graph that records performance data such as: female characters, male characters, animal characters or number of characters in each scene, etc.

Compare/Contrast a character to someone you know or compare/contrast the setting to a different location or time.

Solve a special effects mystery. Use words or pictures to explain how "special effects" (Lighting, smoke, sound effects) were created.

Image the story in a different time or place. Design sets or costumes for the new setting.

You're the director. Plan the performance of a scene in your classroom. Include the cast of characters, staging area, and ideas for costumes, scenery, and props in your plan.

Create a new ending to the story.

Did you enjoy the performance? Write a persuasive essay convincing a friend to go see this production.

Write a letter to the production company nominating a performer for a "Best Actor Award." Explain why your nominee should win the award.

Create a rubric to rate the performance. Decide on criteria for judging: Sets, Costumes, Acting, Lighting, Special Effects, Overall Performance, etc.

THE PRODUCER

STAGES PRODUCTIONS is a professional theatre ensemble that specializes in bringing classic fairy tales to over 150,000 young people each year throughout the Southeast.

STAGES' show credits include critically acclaimed performances of: *School House Rock*, *Let Freedom Sing*, *The Three Little Pigs*, *Snow White*, *The Velveteen Rabbit* as well as a series of Green shows that teach water conservation, recycling and natural disaster preparedness. Be sure to join us for our 28th season featuring *Main Street Kids Club*, *Santa's Holiday Revue*, *The Snow Queen*, *The Emperor's New Clothes* and *The Musical Adventures of Flat Stanley*.

STAGES PRODUCTIONS is dedicated to making drama an integral part of education, and lesson plans help incorporate these plays into the student's curriculum. Thank you for supporting this mission by choosing a STAGES PRODUCTIONS play!

THE REFERENCES

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