



A Visit to Mother Goose Land, Educator's Guide

The visit to Mother Goose Land will be led by Mother Goose herself, (storyteller Judith Wynhausen) accompanied by her puppet goose, "Gus," and her owl sentinel, "Henry." Several traditional nursery rhymes are incorporated into longer stories, and the children are encouraged to say the rhymes and sing the songs with Mother Goose. The program is 30 to 45 minutes long. Mother Goose can stay a bit longer to chat informally with the children as they pet her goose and owl.

It is helpful (but not necessary) to introduce some of the rhymes before Mother Goose's visit. Following are some activities that can help prepare the children, as well as some activities that can be used as a follow-up to her visit.

Before the program

Educational Standards supported:

1. ***Communication Arts:*** *Nursery Rhymes help young children develop language skills and vocabulary. The traditional rhymes are an important part of English literature.*
2. ***Fine Arts:*** *The rhythms of the rhymes introduce musical rhythmic sense and appreciation for poetry. Experimenting with different manners of speaking is an introduction to dramatic arts.*
3. ***Health/Physical Education:*** *Moving rhythmically helps develop physical coordination.*
4. ***Social Studies:*** *The Mother Goose rhymes are part of our cultural heritage.*

Say the rhymes with the children. Following are some of the rhymes Mother Goose will use in her stories. These rhymes can be found in almost any Mother Goose book:

Old Mother Goose (when she wanted to wander)
The Three Little Kittens
Old King Cole
Hey Diddle Diddle
Simple Simon
Hot Cross Buns
Peas Porridge Hot
Oh Where, Oh Where Has My Little Dog Gone?
Higglety Pigglety Pop
The Muffin Man
Betty Botter (tongue twister)
Wee Willy Winkie
The Little Girl with the Curl
Boys and Girls Come Out to Play
Little Miss Muffet
Jack Be Nimble

Little Jack Horner
Tom the Piper's Son ("Tom he was a piper's son. He learned to play when he
was young . . .)
Mary Had a Little Lamb
Little Bo Peep
Baa Baa Black Sheep
The Queen of Hearts
Sing a Song of Sixpence
Mistress Mary, Quite Contrary

Suggestions for introducing the rhymes:

1. Make a game of filling in the blanks. Example: "Mary had a little _____ . Its fleece was _____ as snow. And everywhere that _____ went, that lamb was sure to ____." Pause before the word, and let the children call out the correct word.
2. Say the rhymes with a pronounced rhythm, perhaps using rhythm instruments like sticks, jingle sticks, or just clapping with hands. Discover what kind of rhythm each rhyme has.

Example: Ma-ry had a lit-tle lamb,
Its fleece was white as snow. (*can be an even "trotting" rhythm, or a skipping rhythm*)

Compare with:

Old Mot-her Goose when she wan-ter to wan-der
Would ride through the air on a ver-y fine gan-der.
(*a "galloping" rhythm*)

Jack be nim-ble, Jack be quick
Jack jump over the cand-lestick. (*a skipping rhythm*)

3. Move to the rhythm of the rhymes. Do this in a space large enough to make a big circle, and have the children trot or gallop or walk around in the circle together.
4. Use a rhyme as a walking chant or song when the class is going outside to play, or to the cafeteria, etc.
5. Experiment with volume. Say the rhyme softly, loudly, just right.
6. Experiment with pitch. Say the rhyme in a teeny tiny voice—as if a mouse were saying it. Say it in a big, low voice, as if a giant were saying it.

7. Make up a guessing game. Example: “I’m thinking of a rhyme in which a little boy wants a pie.” (Simple Simon) or “I’m thinking of a rhyme about a black sheep.” (Baa Baa Black Sheep). When they guess the rhyme, everyone says it together.
8. Discuss any words in the rhymes that the children might not know.

After the program (extension activities)

Educational Standards:

Communication Arts:

1. *speaking and writing standard English*
2. *reading and evaluating fiction, poetry and drama*
3. *comprehending and evaluating the content and artistic aspects of oral presentations*

Fine Arts:

1. *process and techniques for the production or performance of one or more of the visual or performed arts*
2. *interrelationship of visual and performing arts*

1. Create stories based on nursery rhymes.

Pick a nursery rhyme or poem that has clear characters and action. Ask “who, where, when, what, why, how” questions about the characters and what is happening. The children can collectively make up a story based on the rhyme, and the teacher can write it down. For older children, ask them to pick a nursery rhyme and make up their own story about it.

Example:

“Diddle diddle dumpling, my son John
Went to bed with his breeches on,
One stocking off, and one stocking on;
Diddle diddle dumpling, my son John.

Who is the rhyme about? (my son John) Who else? (his mother or father)

Where does the rhyme take place? (in John’s bedroom)

When does it happen? (Morning? Afternoon? Evening? After a baseball game? After dinner?)

What happens? (He goes to bed without getting undressed all the way.)

Why? (Ah—here is where your story can happen! All sorts of reasons can be given for why John goes to bed with his clothes on—maybe he is sick—maybe he stayed up too late—maybe he got really tired playing and fell asleep before he got off his clothes—maybe he is in trouble and had to go to bed in the middle of the day.

The children will probably think of many reasons.)

How? (Sometimes “how” isn’t necessary to ask, but sometimes the answer to “how” can help create the story).

After asking these questions, and deciding on the answers, you can begin the story. Create a **beginning, a middle, and an end**. The story can be very short and simple; the important thing is to get the children thinking about story structure and narrating it in a cohesive manner. The story could go: “One day, John wanted to play baseball, and he asked his father to play with him. But his father was too busy. So he asked his mother, but she had to fix dinner. So John went to his friend, Tom’s house and asked him if he could play ball. Tom and John rounded up some other friends, and soon they were playing baseball in the empty lot next to John’s house. They had a wonderful time, but John felt all tired out by the time his mother called him for dinner. After dinner, John helped his father wash the dishes and clean the kitchen, so he was even more tired when he finally went into his bedroom to get ready for bed. The bed looked so inviting; John jumped on, and thought he would just lie down for a minute before brushing his teeth and putting on his pajamas. He pulled off one stocking, but he thought he would just close his eyes for a moment. In an instant, John had fallen sound asleep. His mother came in to wish him good-night, but when she saw him lying there half-undressed, she thought it very funny. She brought in his father, and said, “Diddle diddle dumpling . . .”

Some good rhymes that might elicit a story:

Little Boy Blue

Tweedle-dum and Tweedle-dee

Old Chairs to Mend

Lucy Locket

Pussy-cat and the Queen

Ride Away, Ride Away

Ride a cock-horse to Banbury Cross

Georgy Porgy

Diddle Diddle Dumpling

Jack and Jill (this one almost tells itself)

A Strange Old Woman

Little Pussy (I love little pussy, her coat is so warm)

Tom, Tom the Piper’s son (the one who stole the pig)

Cock-a-doodle-do! (My dame has lost her shoe)

Mary, Mary, Quite Contrary

The Boy in the Barn

Peter, Peter, pumpkin-eater

The Crooked Man

“Little girl, little girl, where have you been? Gathering roses to give to the Queen.”

The Old Woman who Lived in a Shoe

Ding, Dong, Bell, Pussy’s in the well

See L. Frank Baum’s Mother Goose in Prose. This well-known author (The Wizard of Oz books) also created stories from nursery rhymes.

2. Creative Drama: Act out a story

Pick one of the stories Mother Goose told, a story the children created, or choose one nursery rhyme. Ask who the characters are in the story. What do they do? Where does the story take place? What happens in the story (the plot)?

Choose children to play the various characters, make a simple set (you can use chairs and desks to create the playing space), and narrate the story, allowing the characters to add dialogue as they act it out.

The story “Wee Willy Winkie” works well for creative drama. The whole class can take part in the party in the moonlight. This story is written on my web site www.mgoose.net.

Other rhymes that work well for creative drama are:

Jack and Jill

This is the House that Jack Built

Little Boy Blue

3. Create a Picture from the Program

Ask the children to draw, color, or paint a picture of their favorite part of the program, or of a nursery rhyme of their choosing. *I hope to create a page on my web site comprised of children’s artwork. If you want to send me their creations, I will put some of them on the web site.*

4. Discuss Mother Goose’s performance

Suggested discussion points:

1. Ventriloquism: How did Mother Goose make her goose and owl “talk?” Did you believe Gus and Henry were really speaking? Why, or why not? Invite the children to try making puppets or stuffed animals “talk” without moving their mouths.
2. What did you like the best? What didn’t you like? Why?
3. Mother Goose said we use our *imagination* to go to “Mother Goose Land.” Why is it important to learn to use your imagination? What else can you do with your imagination?

About the Storyteller

Judith Wynhausen enjoyed making up little stories and plays when she was a child, and still enjoys entertaining and teaching through dramatic arts. She studied music and drama in college, and also received training as a Waldorf kindergarten teacher. She has directed many plays, with both child and adult actors. Her Mother Goose programs are enjoyed by audiences of all ages, although young children are especially delighted to meet Mother Goose and her puppet friends. She has other programs available as well: Kathleen Snyder, Early Woman Doctor; and Enchanted Tales from Olden Times. For more information, see her web site: www.mgoose.net.