

# Rhymers Are Readers: The Importance of Nursery Rhymes

Nursery rhymes are not just for fun.  
They have enormous educational value.  
Learn how to use them to teach your child.



# Rhymers Are Readers: The Importance of Nursery Rhymes

Nursery rhymes are fun, children love them, and they provide a warm, nurturing experience between parent and child. Songs and rhymes for young children have been passed down for generations. This workshop creates an awareness of the enormous educational value of nursery rhymes and informs parents and caregivers how to use them as a teaching tool.

## **This workshop includes the following sections:**

Learning Triangle Activity Sheet  
What Can I Do for My Child?  
Activities

Why Is This Important to My Child?  
Book List  
Additional Resources



## **Special Thanks**

KBYU Eleven gratefully acknowledges the following individuals and organizations that contributed to the design and creation of this workshop and the thousands of workshop participants whose questions and suggestions inspired our work: Stephanie Anderson, Carrie Allen Baker, Barbara Leavitt, Aubrey McLaughlin, Theresa Robinson, Public Broadcasting Service, and United Way of Utah County.

# KBYU Eleven Ready To Learn® FAQs

## What Is KBYU Eleven Ready To Learn?

Children are born equipped for learning. Parents and caregivers can help children enter school with the essential skills and knowledge they need to be ready to learn. KBYU Eleven provides children and parents with three related services:

1. **Quality educational television programs.** Children who consistently watch these programs enter school better prepared to learn, and once in school they perform at a higher level.
2. **A safe and fun online environment** offering engaging activities, games, and videos that teach and reinforce key skills and concepts.
3. **Online video workshops** that provide insights into how children develop and demonstrate how to combine media with reading and hands-on activities to greatly enhance children's learning.



## What Is the Purpose of the KBYU Eleven Ready To Learn Workshops?

The 12 KBYU Eleven Ready To Learn workshops help parents become their child's first and best teacher. The workshops were created over several years by experts in early childhood education and offered in partnership with schools, libraries, and community organizations throughout Utah. In creating these workshops KBYU Eleven built on the national Ready To Learn initiative sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB), PBS, and the Ready To Learn Partnership (RTLTP). You can learn more about the national Ready To Learn effort at [pbskids.org/read/about](http://pbskids.org/read/about).

# What Are the 12 KBYU Eleven Ready To Learn Workshops?

1. Benefits of Media and the Learning Triangle
2. Rhymers Are Readers: The Importance of Nursery Rhymes
3. Music Is a Must!
4. Storytelling: You Can Do It!
5. The Brain: How Children Develop
6. The FUNdamental Powers of Play
7. What Do You Do with the Mad That You Feel?
8. Who Is My Child? Understanding Temperament
9. Math Is Everywhere!
10. Learning Through the Early Years: The Benefits of Repetition and Variation
11. Shared Reading: Tools to Bring Literacy to Life
12. Building Blocks: The Sequence of Emergent Literacy Skills

## How Can I Participate in a KBYU Eleven Ready To Learn Workshop?

Video versions of the workshops are available online at no charge. While they are sequentially based—with each workshop building on the previous one—they can also be viewed independently. To watch a workshop, visit [kbyueleven.org](http://kbyueleven.org) and click on Ready To Learn under the Kids & Family section.

## What Are the Four Areas of Child Development?

1. **Cognitive development** includes thinking, information processing, problem solving, remembering, decision making, understanding concepts, and overall intelligence.
2. **Physical development** is rapid following birth as children learn to control large and then small muscle groups. The sequence of stages is important, and providing an environment children can physically explore while they are growing is critical to all ages.
3. **Language development** is most intensive during the first three years while the brain is developing rapidly and is stimulated most by exposure to sights, sounds, and being talked to.
4. **Social/emotional development** is critical to all other areas of development, because how children perceive their world (their ability to give and accept love, be confident and secure, show empathy, be curious and persistent, and relate well to others) affects how the brain physically develops and how they learn and process information.

# What Is the PBS Learning Triangle®?

The Learning Triangle is a three-part learning pattern that helps reach all types of learners by teaching through a variety of activities. The three points of the Learning Triangle are **View**, **Read**, and **Do**.



**VIEW** with your child an educational program that teaches a concept or skill.

**READ** with your child age-appropriate books that reiterate the new concept or skill.

**DO** an activity that reinforces the concept or skill and allows your child to practice what she or he has learned.

As you use the Learning Triangle you will see how each point reinforces the others. The workshops provide suggested Learning Triangle activities, but more importantly they teach you how to build your own learning triangles to best meet the needs of your child.

## How Do Children Learn?

The Learning Triangle is built on how we learn. Using our senses we gather information and then process it into our memory. Some learners rely more on one sense than another.

- **Auditory learners** use their sense of hearing. They process information better when they can hear the information.
- **Visual learners** use sight as a key tool for processing information.
- **Kinesthetic (or hands-on) learners** process information best by physically performing a task that incorporates the new information.

While learners can have a strong affinity to one type of learning, it is more effective to teach using a combination of all three. As a parent or caregiver, it is important to understand what types of learning work best for your child so that you can guide them to become better learners. For young children, ages 0–3, learning is holistic, meaning that they use all three types of learning. PBS developed the Learning Triangle to help reach all types of learners and enhance their learning through repetition. According to Dr. Bruce Perry, repetition is key to the development of a child's brain. Repetition leads to skill mastery, which increases confidence and builds self-esteem.



# Rhymers Are Readers: The Importance of Nursery Rhymes

## Learning Triangle Activity Sheet



Make book illustrations into flannel board pieces for dramatic play, or dress up and act out some favorite nursery rhymes.

Songs and rhymes for young children have been passed down for generations. They are fun, children love them, and they provide a warm, nurturing experience between parent and child. What we may not be aware of as we recite simple nursery rhymes or sing songs with children is their enormous educational value.

“Experts in literacy and child development have discovered that if children know eight nursery rhymes by heart by the time they’re four years old, they’re usually among the best readers by the time they’re eight.” [Fox, M. (2001). *Reading Magic*. San Diego, CA: Harcourt.]

# Rhymers Are Readers: The Importance of Nursery Rhymes

## Why Is This Important to My Child?

### Language Development

When children hear nursery rhymes, they hear the sounds vowels and consonants make. They learn how to put these sounds together to make words.

They also practice pitch, volume, and voice inflection, as well as the rhythm of language. For example, listen to how you sound when you ask questions. Do you sound different when you tell a story?

In nursery rhymes, children hear new words that they would not hear in everyday language (like *fetch* and *pail* in “Jack and Jill went up the hill to fetch a pail of water”).

Nursery rhymes are short and easy to repeat, so they become some of a child’s first sentences.



### Cognitive Development

Since nursery rhymes are patterns, they help children learn easy recall and memorization.

Nursery rhymes usually tell a story with a beginning, a middle, and an end. This teaches children that events happen in sequence, and they begin to learn how to understand stories and follow along.

Nursery rhymes use patterns and sequence, so children begin to learn simple math skills as they recite them. Many rhymes also use numbers, counting, and other math words that children need to learn, such as size and weight.

Nursery rhymes also introduce alliteration (“Goosie Goosie Gander”), onomatopoeia (“Baa Baa Black Sheep”), and imaginative imagery. Children hear these rhymes and act out what they imagine the characters are doing.



### References

- Kenney, S. (2005). Nursery rhymes: Foundations for learning. *General Music Today*, 19 (1).  
Monro, F. (Senior Speech-Language Pathologist). Nursery rhymes, songs and early language development. Interior Health Authority.

# Rhymers Are Readers: The Importance of Nursery Rhymes

## Why Is This Important to My Child?

### Physical Development

Children develop their mouth and tongue muscles by using the different sounds in the rhyme.

Rhymes that involve movement help with coordination.

In dramatic play, children use their whole bodies to act out the nursery rhymes they hear.



### Social/Emotional Development

Sharing nursery rhymes provides a safe and secure bond between parents and children.

Positive physical touch between a parent and a child or between children, for example, during clapping rhymes, is important for social development.

Funny nursery rhymes allow children to develop a sense of humor.

Nursery rhyme characters experience many different emotions. This can help children identify their own emotions and understand the real emotions of others.

When children act out the nursery rhyme stories they hear, they learn to imagine, be creative, and express themselves.

Nursery rhymes teach history ("Ring Around the Rosie") and connect children to the past.



### References

Kenney, S. (2005). Nursery rhymes: Foundations for learning. *General Music Today*, 19 (1).

Monro, F. (Senior Speech-Language Pathologist). Nursery rhymes, songs and early language development. Interior Health Authority.



# Rhymers Are Readers: The Importance of Nursery Rhymes

## Why Is This Important to My Child?

Tony Stead, senior national literacy consultant for Mondo Publishing in New York, described research showing that in 1945, the average elementary school student had a vocabulary of 10,000 words. Today, children have a vocabulary of only 2,500 words.

“That is disastrous,” Mr. Stead said. “So many parents are not reading to their children anymore.” A lot of problems, he added, come from children not memorizing rhymes, the bread-and-butter of traditional early children’s literature.

“Listening comprehension precedes reading comprehension,” Mr. Stead said. “In order for a child to understand what they are reading, they have to be able to hear the language first. A lot of the traditional rhymes, such as ‘Jack and Jill’ and ‘Humpty Dumpty,’ were repetitious and allowed us to memorize basic structures and patterns in the English language, then put it together. It’s important that young children learn to memorize through verse.

“Research shows children learn more in their first eight years than they do in the rest of their lives. This is a powerful time to teach them to be readers and writers. Instead of enhancing children’s imaginations, today’s media have stunted it. Rhyme is important in developing phonemic [hearing] awareness in children. It’s harder in elementary school to teach kids to read when they do not have oral support. Kids are unable to paint pictures in their heads unless they read. Now they all have pictures painted for them through TV and video. When kids have to create their own stories, they rely on what they saw on television last night rather than form it in their minds. Traditional cultures handed stories down through talk. They didn’t have picture books back then. The power of a parent or teacher sitting down and telling a story, allowing kids to paint pictures in their heads, is a very powerful tool. Most of our problems could be solved if parents could be reading to and talking to children from birth, giving them a solid oral language basis. These days, the TV is on during dinner.” [Alderman, K., & Alderman, D. Why nursery rhymes? Retrieved from [www.dannyandkim.com/WhyNurseryRhymes.html](http://www.dannyandkim.com/WhyNurseryRhymes.html)]

Nursery rhymes and songs can be used anywhere at any time. As such, they are one of our most transportable forms of play. Here are some of the ways fingerplays, rhymes, chants, and songs teach children concepts and skills and even provide emotional support.

**1. Language Development.** As children recite rhymes and sing songs, they are learning new vocabulary and how to articulate words, modulate their voices, and enunciate clearly. They are simultaneously practicing pitch, volume, and voice inflection while experiencing the rhythm of language. They learn to pronounce words easily by saying them over and over again and by practicing them without effort or the pressures of criticism.

# Rhymers Are Readers: The Importance of Nursery Rhymes

## Why Is This Important to My Child?

**2. Reading Skills.** In almost all fingerplays, the hands move from left to right. This left-to-right directional motion is important for children to experience, since it prepares them for the order of the written word in English. (When you read to your children, let them follow your finger, tracing the words so they also absorb this concept from the written words in a book.) A second important reading concept that children must experience fully before they can become good readers is story sequence. They need to absorb how the sequence of what happened first, second, third, etc., and last affects the story so they can retell it in the order the events occurred.

**3. Math Concepts.** There is frequent use of counting in young children's songs and rhymes, in both a forward and backward direction. Children learn to add as they count forward and subtract as they count backward. Other stories and songs explore words that describe size ("Billy Goats Gruff") and weight ("The Three Bears") and use math-related words to define concepts such as many, few, plenty, and so on. This contributes to the child's basic math foundation, which will later help in math abstractions.

**4. Creative Dramatization.** Rhymes and songs provide great building blocks for creative dramatics. Children love to act out the rhymes as they say them, dramatizing the actions of the characters with their whole bodies or using their hands and fingers. When children are encouraged by an adult to display their creativity in an atmosphere that is free of criticism, their sense of self is strengthened and their confidence in expressing themselves is increased.

**5. Comfort and Support.** Nursery rhymes and songs are "places" young children can retreat to when they feel lonely, sad, or bewildered by their world. If a child is away from Mom or Dad and feeling alone, they can call upon a song they shared and be reminded of the times and the feelings they had when they sang it together.

### References

- Anderson, P. F. (2005). The mother goose pages. Retrieved from [www-personal.umich.edu/~pfa/dreamhouse/nursery/reading.html](http://www-personal.umich.edu/~pfa/dreamhouse/nursery/reading.html)
- Kenney, S. (2005). Nursery rhymes: Foundations for learning. *General Music Today*, 19 (1), 28–31.
- Monro, F. (Senior Speech-Language Pathologist). Nursery rhymes, songs and early language development. Interior Health Authority.
- Neuman, S. B. (2004). Learning from poems & rhymes. *Scholastic Parent & Child*, 12 (3), 32.

# Rhymers Are Readers: The Importance of Nursery Rhymes

## What Can I Do for My Child?

When using nursery songs and rhymes with your child, you are engaged in a social routine that encourages turn-taking skills, which are critical for the development of conversation. You foster responsiveness, and, through repetition, you help your child learn to anticipate what's coming next. Young children are able to respond to rhythm and tone before they understand language, but both have a common foundation of tone patterns, stress, and rhythm. The words used in nursery rhymes and songs help a child develop language comprehension as they learn to associate key words with people, objects, and events in their daily lives.

### For Babies to Toddlers (0–2 years)

- If a rhyme mentions a body part, such as the nose or feet, touch the child's nose or wiggle his or her foot.
- If you are reading from a book, point to the pictures as they are mentioned in the rhyme.
- Act out the actions as they are mentioned, and let your child imitate you.
- Sing songs or recite nursery rhymes in a singsong voice.

**Birth to three months:** During this development period children may enjoy movements to help them get to know their body, important people in their life, and their surrounding environment. Developing close bonds with caregivers is what is important. Try activities such as “This Little Piggy Went to Market,” “Hickory Dickory Dock,” or “Round and Round the Garden.” Sing lullabies like “Rock-a-Bye Baby,” “Bye Baby Bunting,” “Hush Little Baby,” or “All Through the Night” while rocking and cuddling your child. Use nursery rhymes such as “Georgie Porgie Pudding and Pie,” “Hey Diddle, Diddle,” and “Little Miss Muffet.” Often a baby can be calmed by a gentle, human voice.

**Three to six months:** Most babies at this stage are very social and eager to learn all there is about their world. A child can communicate with different cries to express boredom, frustration, hunger, impatience, or discomfort and will babble and experiment with different sounds for self-entertainment. Knee ride songs such as “To Market, To Market,” “Ride a Cock Horse,” and “Trot, Trot, Trot, Trot” are great at this stage. Try saying rhymes as your baby is bathed, such as “Rub-a-Dub-Dub.” “Eensy, Weensy Spider” is another well-known rhyme, song, and fingerplay. You might enjoy dancing with your baby to songs like “The Bear Went Over the Mountain,” “You Are My Sunshine,” and “Teddy Bears’ Picnic.” Try reciting nursery rhymes such as “Old King Cole,” “There Was a Crooked Man,” or “There Was an Old Woman.” “Pat-a-Cake” is another popular interactive game.

# Rhymers Are Readers: The Importance of Nursery Rhymes

## What Can I Do for My Child?

### For Babies to Toddlers (0–2 years), continued

**Six to nine months:** At this stage a baby is becoming much more mobile—sitting, crawling, standing, and getting into everything! Your baby’s constant babbling is beginning to sound more like real words. Their “baby talk” has a range of tones similar to adults, such as in questions, commands, and descriptions. Knee bouncing rhymes as well as ankle rides like “Tom, Tom the Piper’s Son” and “Humpty Dumpty” are often enjoyed now. When washing you might use songs such as “This Is the Way We Wash Our Hands.” You could introduce simple instruments to accompany your songs like a shaker, rhythm sticks, bells, or a pot and wooden spoon for a drum. Other suggestions include “A-Hunting We Will Go,” “The Grand Old Duke of York,” and “She’ll Be Coming ’Round the Mountain.” For rhymes, use “See Saw Marjory Daw,” “To Market, to Market,” and “Leg Over Leg.”

**Nine to twelve months:** Now your baby will be climbing, crawling, cruising, and possibly walking. It is important to talk to your child about everything and to provide names for things. They are imitating language, and some words may even sound like real words. They are starting to recognize and meaningfully use the rhythms, tones, and facial expressions of language. Try adding action games such as “Jack and Jill,” “Head and Shoulders,” “Old McDonald Had a Farm,” and “Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star.” As interest in words grows, continue reciting nonsense verse and more complex rhymes so they can hear the richness in their language. Even tongue twisters like “Peter Piper” are great. Some rhymes like “The Muffin Man,” “Jack Sprat,” and “Little Tommy Tucker” are good to try; and reading stories, longer nursery rhymes, or rhymes from Dr. Seuss can be part of your child’s bedtime routine.





# Rhymers Are Readers: The Importance of Nursery Rhymes

## What Can I Do for My Child?

### For Toddlers (2–4 years)

- Ask questions to extend the stories, such as “Where did Little Miss Muffet go when she ran away?” or “What do you think happens next?” Let children imagine.
- Give them rhyming riddles to solve. For example, “I’m thinking of a word that rhymes with ‘go.’ I can tie it on a present or put it in my hair. What word could it be?”
- Focus on counting and alphabet rhymes to help them begin learning those skills.

### For Older Children (4–5 years)

- By this age most children have memorized their rhymes. Use this time to teach them the meaning behind some of their favorites. Read books and stories on the history behind rhymes such as “Hey Diddle, Diddle” or “Ring Around the Rosey.”



# Rhymers Are Readers: The Importance of Nursery Rhymes

## Book List

### Title:

*Amazing Grace*  
*Ants Go Marching, The*  
*Baloney (Henry P.)*  
*Bingo*  
*Bubbles, Bubbles*  
*Busy Body Book, The*  
*Caps for Sale*  
*Chicken Little*  
*Classic Color Rhymes*  
*Classic Lullaby Rhymes*  
*Click, Clack, Moo: Cows That Type*  
*Commotion in the Ocean*  
*Cookie's Week*  
*Cows in the Kitchen*  
*Do You Want to Play?*  
*Do Your Ears Hang Low?*  
*Eensy, Weensy Spider, The*  
*Fathers, Mothers, Sisters, Brothers*  
*Five Little Bats Flying in the Night*  
*Five Little Dinosaurs*  
*Five Little Monkeys Bake a Birthday Cake*  
*Five Little Monkeys Jumping on the Bed*  
*Five Little Monkeys Sitting in a Tree*  
*Five Little Monkeys Wash the Car*  
*Five Little Monkeys with Nothing to Do*  
*Five Little Sharks Swimming in the Sea*  
*Giggle, Giggle, Quack*  
*Gingerbread Girl, The*  
*Giraffes Can't Dance*  
*Grapes of Math, The*  
*Itsy Bitsy Spider*  
*Little White Duck*  
*Mary Had A Little Jam*  
*More Mother Goose Favorites*  
*Mother Goose Counting Rhymes*  
*Mother Goose Flies Again!*  
*My Crayons Talk*  
*My First Action Rhymes*  
*My First Songs*  
*She'll Be Coming 'Round the Mountain*

### Author:

Sylvia Walker  
Ann Owen  
Jon Scieszka and Lane Smith  
Scholastic Staff Inc.  
Kathi Appelt  
Lizzy Rockwell  
Esphyr Slobodkina  
Laura Rader  
Illustrated by Josie Yee and Blanche Fisher Wright  
Illustrated by Josie Yee and Blanche Fisher Wright  
Doreen Cronin  
Giles Andreae  
Cindy Ward  
June Crebbin  
Bob Kolar  
Various Illustrators  
Mary Ann Hoberman  
Mary Ann Hoberman  
Steve Metzger  
Will Grace  
Eileen Christelow  
Eileen Christelow  
Eileen Christelow  
Eileen Christelow  
Eileen Christelow  
Steve Metzger  
Doreen Cronin  
Lisa Campbell Ernst  
Giles Andreae  
Greg Tang  
Iza Trapani  
Walt Whippo  
Bruce Lansky  
Tomie dePaola  
Studio Mouse  
Tomie dePaola  
Patricia Hubbard  
Illustrated by Lynne Cravath  
Illustrated by Jane Manning  
Chris Demarest

### Subject:

Classic Songs  
Classic Songs  
Oral Language  
Classic Songs  
Dramatic Play  
Dramatic Play  
Math  
Short Story Comprehension  
Short Story Comprehension  
Short Story Comprehension  
Oral Language  
Oral Language  
Math  
Oral Language  
Oral Language  
Classic Songs  
Classic Songs  
Short Story Comprehension  
Dramatic Play  
Dramatic Play  
Dramatic Play  
Dramatic Play  
Dramatic Play  
Dramatic Play  
Short Story Comprehension  
Short Story Comprehension  
Dramatic Play  
Math  
Classic Songs  
Classic Songs  
Classic Songs  
Short Story Comprehension  
Short Story Comprehension  
Short Story Comprehension  
Oral Language  
Dramatic Play  
Dramatic Play  
Classic Songs



# Rhymers Are Readers: The Importance of Nursery Rhymes

## Book List

Title:	Author:	Subject:
<i>Skiddamarink</i>	Illustrated by G. Brian Karas	Classic Songs
<i>That's Not Fair, Hare!</i>	Julie Sykes and Tim Warnes	Short Story Comprehension
<i>There's a Hole in My Pocket</i>	Akimi Gibson	Classic Songs
<i>Three Little Kittens, The</i>	Lorianne Siomades	Short Story Comprehension
<i>Tumble Bumble</i>	Felicia Bond	Dramatic Play
<i>Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star</i>	Iza Trapani	Classic Songs
<i>We All Went on Safari</i>	Laurie Krebs	Math
<i>Wee Sing and Learn Colors</i>	Pamela Conn Beall and Susan Hagen Nipp	Math
<i>Wee Sing Nursery Rhymes &amp; Lullabies</i>	Pamela Conn Beall and Susan Hagen Nipp	Short Story Comprehension
<i>We're Going on a Bear Hunt</i>	Michael Rosen	Math
<i>We're Going on a Lion Hunt</i>	David Axtell	Math
<i>Wheels on the Bus</i>	Raffi	Math
<i>Wheels on the School Bus, The</i>	Mary-Alice Moore	Math
<i>Who Took the Cookies from the Cookie Jar?</i>	Bonnie Lass and Philemon Sturges	Math
<i>Who's Been Eating MY Porridge?</i>	Nick Ward	Math
<i>Yankee Doodle</i>	Mary Ann Hoberman	Classic Songs
<i>You Are My Sunshine</i>	Steve Metzger	Classic Songs

*This is a small reference sample of books that can be found at your local library.*

# Rhymers Are Readers: The Importance of Nursery Rhymes

## Activities

### Nursery Rhymes with a Twist (as seen on ZOOM)

Cast: Mother Goose, Jack, Jill, cat, cow, dog, two rhythm clappers, two bakers, and Little Jack Horner

Props: a cardboard sun and moon, a cake, a pie, a rocking chair, and a book

Costume ideas: reading glasses for Mother Goose, matching hats for Jack and Jill, face makeup for the cat, cow, and dog, and baker hats

Setting: outdoors

(Mother Goose, off to the side, is reading from a book of nursery rhymes and rocking in a rocking chair. Jack and Jill go up the hill, and Jill pretends to snowboard. The sun is shining behind the scene.)

**Mother Goose:** Jack and Jill went up the hill to fetch a pail of water. Jack fell down and broke his crown, and Jill came snowboarding after!

(Mother Goose turns page in nursery rhyme book. The cat, cow, and dog take positions.)

**Mother Goose:** Hey-diddle-diddle, the cat and the fiddle, the cow jumped over the moon. The little dog laughed to see such sport, and then he tried it the next afternoon!

(Mother Goose turns page in nursery rhyme book. The rhythm clappers and bakers take positions. Clappers clap to the song.)

**Mother Goose:** 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 a Z. Then put it on the table for the ZOOMers and me.

(Mother Goose turns page in nursery rhyme book. Little Jack Horner takes position.)

**Mother Goose:** Little Jack Horner sat in a corner, eating his holiday pie. He stuck in his thumb and pulled out a strawberry and said . . .

**Jack Horner:** Hey! What happened to the plum?



# Rhymers Are Readers: The Importance of Nursery Rhymes

## Activities

### Here Is the Beehive

(Hold up a fist.)

Here is the beehive. Where are the bees?

They're hidden inside, where nobody sees.

Watch! Watch! as they come out of the hive.

One, two, three, four, five! (Count with your fingers.)

Bzzzzzzzzzz! (Make flying motions with your hand.)



Let the children dress up as the nursery rhyme characters and act them out as you say them.



Share treats that go with the rhymes, such as plums after reciting "Little Jack Horner."



Make booklets out of the nursery rhyme. Put pictures (or have the children draw pictures) and one phrase of the rhyme on each page.



Put each phrase of the rhyme on a card and mix the cards around. Have the children put them in the right order.

Use instruments (or clapping, snapping, stomping, etc.) to enhance the rhythm of the rhyme. Recite rhymes and songs that use movement, such as "Do Your Ears Hang Low?" and "The Hokey Pokey."



Use boxes to create "blocks," with each side showing a picture that represents part of a nursery rhyme. Children can stack them to tell the nursery rhyme as written, or they can mix them up and come up with their own rhymes. Be silly!

# Rhymers Are Readers: The Importance of Nursery Rhymes

## Activities

### Caterpillar

Instructions for making a caterpillar sock puppet:

Glue pom-poms for the caterpillar's eyes and nose on the outside of an old sock. Turn the sock inside out. Glue a felt butterfly on the toe of the inside of the sock. Begin the poem with your hand inside the sock so that the caterpillar is seen on the outside. When the caterpillar spins a cocoon, pull the cuff up over the head. To reveal the butterfly, turn the sock inside out.

#### Rhyme

A caterpillar crawled to the top of a tree.

"I think I'll have a nap," said he.

So under a leaf he began to creep.

He spun a cocoon, and he fell asleep.

For six long months, he slept in his bed.

Until spring finally came along and said,

"Wake up, wake up, you sleepy head!"

Out of the leaf he did cry,

"Look! I've become a butterfly!"

#### Actions without a sock puppet

(Extend your left arm. Wiggle right index finger down your left arm.)

(Pretend right index finger is talking.)

(Wrap left hand around right index finger.)

(Shake left fist.)

(Hook thumbs together. Extend fingers.)

(Wiggle fingers like wings.)

# Rhymers Are Readers: The Importance of Nursery Rhymes

## Activities

### Butterfly Crafts, Fingerplays, and Poems

#### My Friendly Caterpillar

My friendly caterpillar (Fingers crawl up arm.)  
Made its cocoon one day. (Close hands together.)  
It turned into a butterfly  
(Open hands with thumbs hooked together.)  
And quickly flew away. (Flap hands.)

#### Butterfly Life Cycle Bracelet

Take one pipe cleaner and thread pony beads on in the following order: one white bead to represent the **egg**, one red bead to represent the **head** of the caterpillar, three green beads to represent the caterpillar's **body**, a glitter bead to represent the **chrysalis**, and one **butterfly** bead at the end. After the children are done with the bracelet, ask them individually to tell about their life cycle bracelet.

#### Handi-Pillars

To make this cute caterpillar, make a palm print with yellow paint to represent the caterpillar's head. Use a different color of paint to make each hand print segment of the caterpillar's body, creating a pattern. When the paint is dry, use a marker to add more details.

#### Cupcake Liner Butterflies

Items required: cupcake liners, markers, crayons, and pipe cleaners. 1) Flatten out cupcake liners. 2) Color liners with markers or crayons. 3) Pinch liners in the center and wrap with pipe cleaners. 4) Use the left over pipe cleaner to make antennae.

#### Butterfly Song: "Pretty Butterfly"

*Sing to the tune of "Up on the House Top" (Christmas song).*

First comes a butterfly and lays an egg.  
Out comes the caterpillar with many legs.  
Oh, see the caterpillar spin and spin  
A little cocoon (chrysalis) to sleep in.  
Oh, oh, oh, look and see. Oh, oh, oh, look and see.  
Out of the cocoon (chrysalis) my, oh, my—  
Out comes a pretty butterfly.

#### Life Cycle With Macaroni

*Submitted by Peg*

Put everything on a paper plate divided into four sections.  
Eggs: rice  
Caterpillar: spiral pasta  
Cocoon: shell pasta  
Butterfly: bowtie pasta

#### Longly Spells Butterfly

Bother them and they will fly away.  
Under the flowers,  
They will stay.  
Then when they are sure that you have left,  
Every one of them will leave that place,  
Red, black, yellow, and gold.

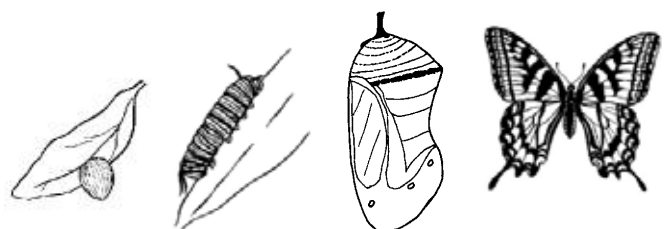
For every one there's a new pattern,  
Like hearts and circles,  
In one little line,  
Every color will combine.  
Swiftly they fly into the sky.

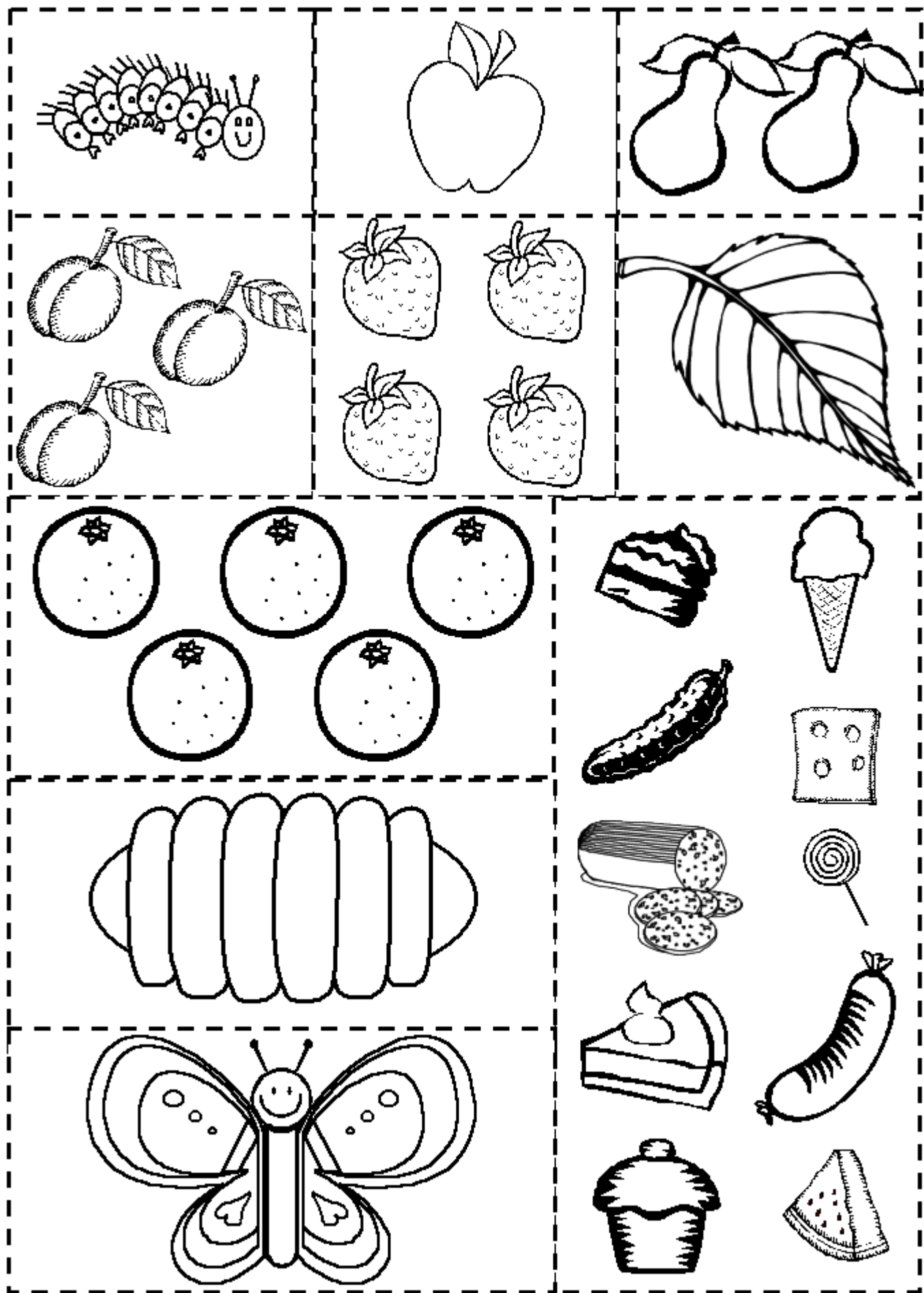
*Crissy, age 13, Dempsey Middle School, Delaware, OH*

#### The Life Cycle of a Butterfly

First I am an egg.  
Then I am a caterpillar.  
Now I am a cocoon.  
Now I am a butterfly!

*Nneka, First Grade, Chicago, IL*





*The Very Hungry Caterpillar sequencing cards*



# Rhymers Are Readers: The Importance of Nursery Rhymes

## Activities

### Tiny Tim Poem

I have a little turtle;  
His name is Tiny Tim.  
I put him in the bathtub  
To teach him how to swim.

He drank up all the water  
And ate up all the soap.  
Now he's home and sick in bed  
With bubbles in his throat!  
Bubble, bubble, bubble,  
Bubble, bubble, bubble,  
Bubble, bubble, bubble,  
Bubble, bubble, POP!

I miss my little turtle,  
Whose name is Tiny Tim.  
I will call him on the telephone—  
I would like to visit him.

Tiny Tim is better now;  
His tummy doesn't hurt.  
He will never eat the soap again—  
He says it doesn't work.  
Bubble, bubble, bubble,  
Bubble, bubble, bubble,  
Bubble, bubble, bubble,  
Bubble, bubble, POP!

(Children love this. Sing it with a nice big green turtle puppet and a lot of expression!)

### Tiny Tim Fingerplay

I have a little turtle; his name is Tiny Tim.  
(Cup your hands together.)  
I put him in the bathtub to teach him how to swim.  
(Make motion like you are putting him in the tub.)  
He drank up all the water  
(Cup hands to your mouth like you are drinking.)  
And ate up all the soap.  
(Play like you are eating soap.)  
Now he's home and sick in bed with bubbles in his throat!  
(Put hands around throat.)

### Creative Turtle Collage

Cut large turtle shapes from green construction paper. Provide the children with scraps of colored paper (any kind). The children can tear the paper into tiny pieces and stick them on the turtle shell.

### Turtles: A Counting Poem

One lonely turtle, feeling so blue;  
Along came another, and now there are two.  
Two happy turtles, on their way to the sea;  
Along came another, and now there are three.  
Three happy turtles, wishing for some more;  
Along came another, and now there are four.  
Four happy turtles, going for a dive;  
Along came another, and now there are five.

### Turtle Cookies

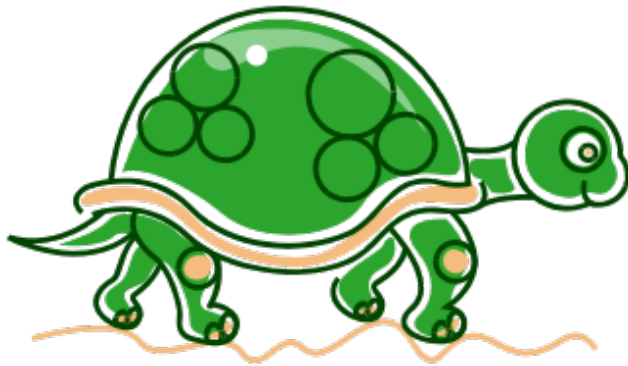
Make rolled sugar cookie dough, or buy refrigerated slice-and-bake dough. Give the children green jelly beans sliced in half horizontally. Push them into the dough to make arms, legs, and a head. Have the children shake green sugar on their cookie. Bake as directed.

Now read about Franklin!

# Rhymers Are Readers: The Importance of Nursery Rhymes

## Activities

### Props for “Tiny Tim Poem”



### Props for “Turtles: A Counting Poem”



# Rhymers Are Readers: The Importance of Nursery Rhymes

## Additional Resources

### Mother Goose Nursery Rhymes

This collection of nursery rhymes is listed alphabetically by theme and by category.

[www.apples4theteacher.com/mother-goose-nursery-rhymes](http://www.apples4theteacher.com/mother-goose-nursery-rhymes)

### The Mother Goose Pages

This website provides a resource of nursery rhymes by theme, suggested activities by age, and related arts and crafts.

[www-personal.umich.edu/~pfa/dreamhouse/nursery/rhymes.html](http://www-personal.umich.edu/~pfa/dreamhouse/nursery/rhymes.html)

### PBS Teachers: Nursery Rhymes

Find ideas for using the Learning Triangle with nursery rhymes.

[www.pbs.org/teachers/earlychildhood/theme/nurseryrhymes.html](http://www.pbs.org/teachers/earlychildhood/theme/nurseryrhymes.html)

### Speakaboos

Listen to or watch nursery rhymes, record yourself, do arts and crafts, play games, and sing karaoke.

[www.speakaboos.com/stories/nursery-rhymes](http://www.speakaboos.com/stories/nursery-rhymes)

### Leading to Reading

Listen to nursery rhymes and other stories, or play games (by age group).

[www.rif.org/kids/leadingtoreading/en/babies-toddlers/nursery-rhymes.htm](http://www.rif.org/kids/leadingtoreading/en/babies-toddlers/nursery-rhymes.htm)