

# CrossTalk

August CROSSWORDS Language Studio's Newsletter 2007

## Nursery Rhymes??!

Nursery Rhymes in Europe have been handed down throughout the centuries to the delight of generations of children. They are innocent, **nonsensical ditties** sung by, or to, children often accompanied by skipping, dancing and other games, and always with great fun and joy. "Mary, Mary", "Humpty Dumpty", "Jack and Jill", and many, many more. And, oh, how the children love them! But are they just innocent little **fancies** invented only to entertain children with?

Some scholars believe nursery rhymes have hidden political and social meanings. There are disagreements about these supposed "hidden" meanings, but if some of the more common interpretations are true, then these "innocent" rhymes are anything but innocent!

Take "Mary, Mary Quite Contrary" for instance.



*Mary, Mary quite contrary,  
How does your garden grow?  
With silver bells and cockle shells  
And pretty maids all in a row.*



One theory has it that this Mary was in fact Mary Tudor, Queen Mary the first daughter of King Henry VIII, who was sometimes also called "Bloody Mary" (is that where the cocktail got its name?). The "garden" in the poem refers to the increasing number of graves she put her Protestant enemies in – she was a **staunch** Catholic. "Silver Bells, Cockle Shells"? – these were instruments used to torture her **foes** with! And, the "Pretty Maids All in a Row" ... ?

The "maid" was an early English **prototype** of the **infamous** guillotine used in France during the French Revolution!

Speaking of the French Revolution, how about:



*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.*



It is claimed that the "Jack" in this poem was King Louis XVI of France. Louis/Jack, as every history **buff** knows, was beheaded by a guillotine – "broke his crown" – and "Jill" who "came tumbling after", was, of course, Queen Marie Antoinette! So, this joyful little Nursery rhyme is, in fact, a history lesson about the execution of the King and Queen of France in 1793!

Let's try another one:



*Ring around the rosy  
A pocketful of posies  
"Ashes, Ashes"  
We all fall down!*



Think, this time, of the Bubonic Plague **afflicting** London in 1665. An early **symptom** of this disease was a rosy red **rash** on the skin – "ring around the rosy". "A pocket full of posies" – people believed that the plague was spread by bad smells, so they carried around sweet smelling flowers/posies to **ward off** the disease. The "Ashes, Ashes" some say is a reference to the cremation of the dead, and "we all fall down", which children love to enact when singing this rhyme is, well, dieing from the plague!

So much for the "innocence" of nursery rhymes....!

## Glossary

(These words are in **colour** in the story)

**nonsensical** 戯けた

**ditties** 短い歌

**fancies** 空想

**staunch** 忠実な

**foes** 敵

**prototype** 原型

**infamous** 悪名高い

**buff** 専門家

**afflicting** 苦痛をもたらす

**symptom** 症状

**rash** 発疹

**ward off** 撃退する

# A Word From Us



**Joshua Says:** Next month we will be welcoming a new teacher to Crossroads. Michael is from America and has been teaching in Europe. As well as teaching, Michael has played guitar professionally in the past. We are all looking forward to helping him settle in to a new life in Matsuyama. But, as we welcome one teacher, we sadly have to say goodbye to another. Alice will be leaving us to return home. Everyone at CR is going to miss her greatly when she goes and we can only wish her the greatest of good fortune in her future.

**Junko Says:** Last month's Performance Night was another great success! I am so surprised at how well our students do on these nights. This has been the third Performance Night since moving to our present location and they just keep getting better and better. To the students who perform on these nights, I can only express my appreciation and admiration to you. You are *so* entertaining! But, even more importantly, your English is getting really so Good!! Check out the shots on P3 for some of the fun...



**Alice Says:** This month I made the long trip back home in order to attend my brother's wedding. Many of you know this already because I have shown you the photos of the happy occasion! Of course, the biggest worry in Britain is always the weather – even in Summer! However, we were very lucky and the weather stayed fine. This is just one of the reasons why it was a truly magical day! I was very happy!

**Iain Says:** The university is on summer vacation and I have a little time to read and catch up on some leisure activities. These days I have been exploring the online virtual world of Second Life. This is a three dimensional environment where you can walk around and shop for goods, talk to people, watch movies, and take classes. It is very interesting to experience the internet in this way and I hope some of you try it. It is a little complicated to use now, but many technology experts think that within four or five years 80% of internet users will be walking and flying their virtual selves around in three dimensional cyber worlds.



**Adrienne Says:** Cats can be quite complex. It seems that Leo, the big cat who left home, has been living at a neighbor's house down the street. He likes the fish-flavored cat food over there, according to the neighbor. Occasionally, he comes home for a brief visit, but his brother, Jack, who is now the main cat, growls at him and attacks him until he leaves again! It's a good idea to always keep a back-up on hand; back-up batteries, back-up lights, perhaps, a back-up man!?!?

**Greg Says:** What would you try to achieve if you knew you wouldn't fail? Most people don't begin because of their fear of failure. Babe Ruth struck out 1330 times but he never quit. John Creasey got 753 rejections on his way to publishing 564 books. Colonel Sanders received over 1000 rejections before selling his chicken recipe and Wilma Rudolph, paralysed in her left leg at the age of 4, began walking at 9 and in 1960 won the Olympic 100m, and 200m. What is your dream? Don't hold back...you can do it!!!



**Dean Says:** It's been a very hot month, but it's almost Autumn now. Let's hope it starts to cool down soon. How did you spend your Obon holiday? I went to Kyushu for a few days and spent most of my time in and out of baths, rivers, creeks, natural outdoor hot springs and of course, the sea. I found a beautiful natural hot spring in the mountains above Beppu and some gorgeous beaches on the Sada Peninsula in Ehime. Beautiful spots abound in this area of Japan!

