

The Theater Department of the



Presents...

# Mother Goose's Birthday

A Participation Play Based on Mother Goose Rhymes



**TOURING**

**May 16-20, 2011**

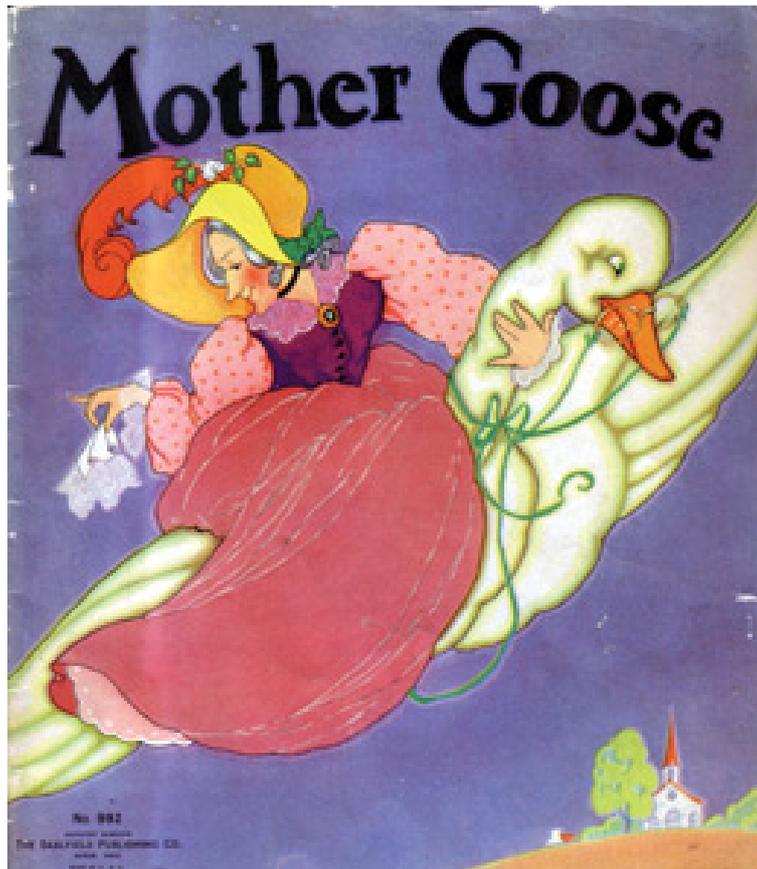
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## Introduction

Welcome! Thank you for selecting our production of *Mother Goose's Birthday* to come to your school. This production is presented by the College of Saint Benedict / Saint John's University Theater Department. The facilitators/actors are students from CSB/SJU who love to perform with young people.

Our performance will be a fun-filled thirty-five minutes sharing nursery rhymes and stories from the wonderful Mother Goose!



This resource is designed to be used before or after your students participate in a production of *Mother Goose's Birthday*.

The information and activities may be adapted to meet your classroom time and needs. Please feel free to copy pages in this guide as needed for student use.

## Synopsis

**In our performance**, the “audience” members will pretend to accompany an facilitator/actor (who pretends to be a friend of Mother Goose) on a journey to the Puppet-Master’s house to help surprise Mother Goose on her birthday. The young participants will learn about several kinds of puppets and pretend to be marionettes operated by invisible strings. After Mother Goose and her Gander arrive, the Puppet-Master and friends will help the children become small seeds that grow into a garden of beautiful flowers. Mother Goose and the Puppet-Master will have the children help them tell a story called “The Mislaced Rhyming Rock”.



In this story we discover that Mother Goose has been having trouble creating new rhymes; she thinks it is because her wonderful rhyming rock is nowhere to be found. Each participant helps create the story by manipulating a simple puppet character. Of course, the Rhyming Rock is finally found, rhymes are recited, some are sung and Mother Goose has her Best Birthday Ever!



## Theater and Improvisational Performance

**Theater** is a form of art. Usually theater is performed for a live audience. Actors use props, sets, lighting, costumes, and their voices and bodies to tell the story. In our production, the college students will help the “audience” (the young people) help create the performance.

There are many different forms of theater, including comedy, tragedy, and musical theater.

This is a special performance because it is created through participation; it requires the cooperation of the whole audience. The young people not only watch, but they also pretend to be part of the story.

**Props** are small pieces that help add to look of the set. They can also tell the audience more about the characters. A stuffed animal, a storybook or a rhyming rock are all examples of props.

**Costumes** are clothing that the actors wear to make them look more like their character. Some costumes are really complicated, but some look just like normal clothes. In our performance, Mother Goose wears her long skirt, an apron, a hat, a blouse and a vest. Her goose wears a bonnet. The Puppet-master is dressed in a colorful outfit that shows off this character’s cheerful personality. The facilitators/actors each wear different outfits with bright silly hats.

**NOTE:** Sometimes the young people in our participatory audiences come dressed as a character from a Mother Goose rhyme! You might consider doing this too!

### THEATER AND MUSIC

Theater often includes some form of music and this performance is no exception. The young people will sing such rhymes as “Row, Row, Row Your Boat”, “Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star”, and “Mary Had a Little Lamb”. They will also sing “Happy Birthday” to Mother Goose, and, if there is time, she will teach them an alphabet song which can include almost every Mother Goose rhyme you can find.



## Types of Puppets

**Glove Puppets:** These puppets fit over your hand. They can be made from socks, gloves, cloth, paper bags—any material as long as your hand is inside the puppet.



**Rod Puppets:** These puppets are usually held up with some sort of stick, or rod; for example, a spoon puppet is a rod puppet.



**Shadow Puppets:** These puppets are especially famous in Asian countries such as China, Japan and Indonesia. The puppeteers operate the puppets behind a screen with a light behind them. On the other side of the screen the audience sees the moving shadows made by the puppets.



**Marionettes:** The puppets are three dimensional and are usually jointed. They are operated by strings attached to the puppet in specific spots. If you have seen the movie *The Sound of Music* you have seen a marionette puppet show.

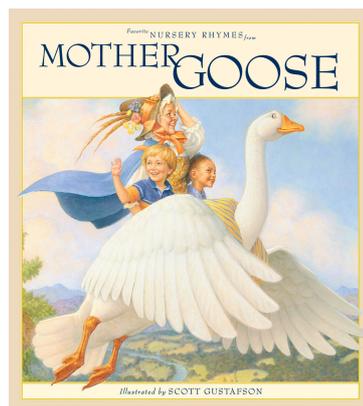
**Junk Puppets:** These are puppets made with any combination of objects that already exist. It is the way the objects are put together that determines whether they operate as Glove, Rod, Shadow, or Marionette Puppets.



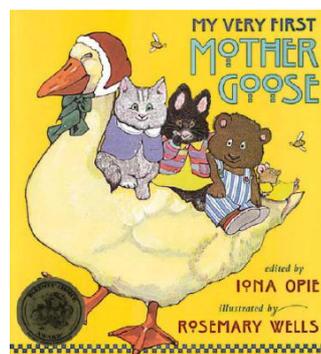
## Mother Goose

Mother Goose is an important part of American childhood. But who is Mother Goose? Where did she come from?

Mother Goose is the imaginary author of nursery rhymes and fairy tales. No one knows exactly where she came from, but she has been around for a long time. References to Mother Goose date back to the 17<sup>th</sup> century, almost 400 years ago! Most people think the legend of Mother Goose came from England, but it actually came from France. Mother Goose is probably not based on a real person. She probably is reference to any woman who kept geese, or who gathered children about her to tell stories. Mother Goose is usually shown as an elderly woman wearing a big hat and a shawl, riding on top of a flying goose.



However, sometimes Mother Goose is shown as a goose.



Many collections of Mother Goose rhymes have been published. Many children learn these rhymes in early childhood to this day. Many Mother Goose rhymes have interesting stories about how they fit into history.

## History in Mother Goose Rhymes

Sometimes these rhymes were made to preserve history. Now, though, we often forget the historical significance of these rhymes. One rhyme that has historical significance is “Mary, Mary, Quite Contrary”.

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



The Mary in the rhyme most likely refers to Mary, Queen of Scots, who ruled Scotland from 1542-1567. The line “How does your garden grow?” refers to Mary’s rule over her kingdom. The “pretty maids” in the poem are Mary’s four ladies-in-waiting. One source says that the “silver bells” are the bells at Mary’s wedding. Another source tells us that when Queen Mary married the King of France and went to live in Paris, she began to wear fancy, colorful clothing; some of her dresses had little silver bells sewn onto them. When her husband died without an heir, Mary had to return to Scotland where the local people did not enjoy fancy clothes, dancing or spending money on “frivolous” things. Some said this rhyme was created to make fun of her “French” ways.

Another rhyme with historical significance is “There was a Crooked Man”:

There was a crooked man and he walked a crooked mile,  
He found a crooked sixpence upon a crooked stile.  
He bought a crooked cat, which caught a crooked mouse.  
And they all lived together in a little crooked house.

The “Crooked Man” in this story refers to a Scottish general. In the time of King Charles I, England and Scotland were arguing about the border between their countries. The border is the “crooked stile” in the rhyme. Eventually, though, Scotland and England were able to come to an agreement, which is shown in the rhyme at the very end by the line “And they all lived together in a little crooked house”.

## Mother Goose Characters in Our Play

**Baa Baa, Black Sheep**

**The Dish and the Spoon**

**Humpty Dumpty**



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**Jack Sprat and His Wife**



**Georgie Porgie**

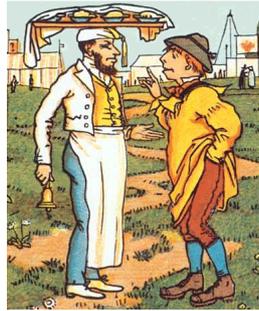


# Mother Goose Characters in Our Play

Mary Had a Little Lamb



Simple Simon



Little Jack Horner



Little Bo Peep



Little Miss Muffet and the Spider



Mary, Mary, Quite Contrary



Jack Be Nimble



The Three Blind Mice



## Mother Goose Coloring Pages

Found at [niteowl.org/kids/](http://niteowl.org/kids/)



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

## Mother Goose Coloring Pages

Found at [niteowl.org/kids/](http://niteowl.org/kids/)



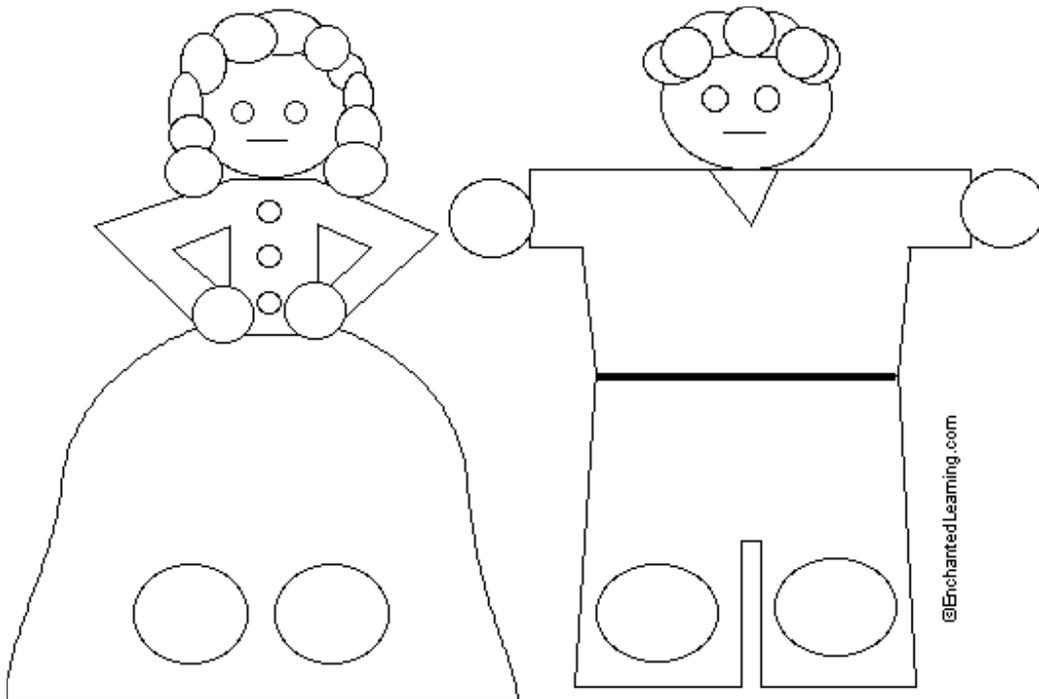
**Old Mother Goose when  
She wanted to wander  
Would ride through the air  
On a very fine gander.**

## Mother Goose Activities

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.

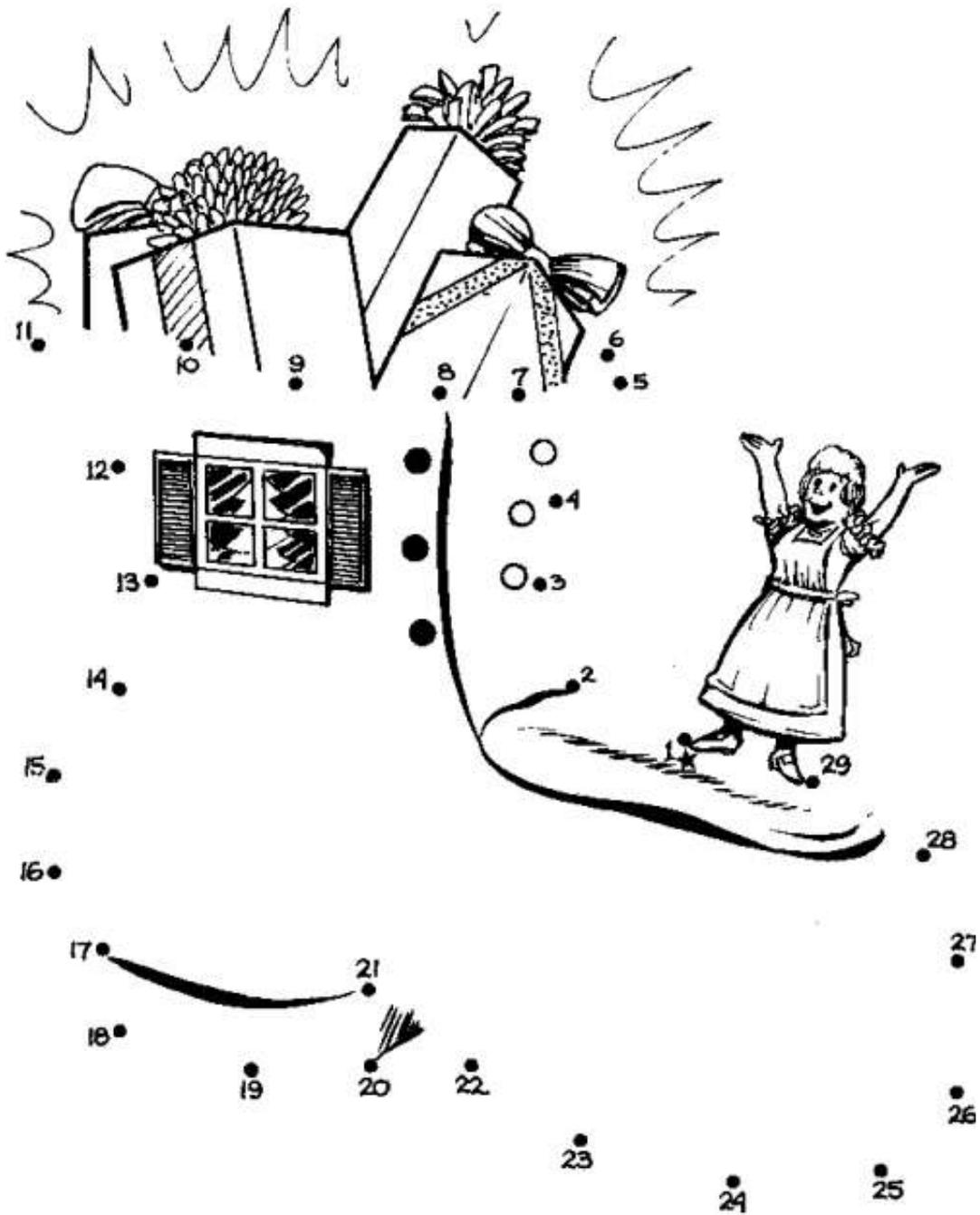
Materials needed:

- Jack and Jill finger puppet templates
  - a brown paper bag
  - crayons/ markers
  - scissors
1. Color the finger puppets with marker or crayons
  2. Cut out the finger puppets
  3. Turn the open bag upside-down. Move Jack and Jill up the “paper bag“ hill and down the other side as they fall down



## Mother Goose Activities

### The Old Woman Who Lived in a Shoe Dot to Dot



# Mother Goose Activities

## Super Sleuths

Play the game of "Who Am I?" with your students by giving clues to nursery rhyme characters. For example:

- I am round.
- I sit upon a wall.
- I fell down.

## Character Parade

Encourage your students to dress up as a nursery rhyme character. Have a parade for the whole school to enjoy.

## Sequels

Many nursery rhymes lend themselves to further development. What happened to Mary and her lamb? Does the hickory dickory dock mouse have other adventures? Is the crooked man ever straightened out?

## Illustrated Nursery Rhymes

Have your students make a collection of illustrations for nursery rhymes. You can post them in your classroom or library as an art gallery or bind them into a book.

## Choral Readings

As your students get more and more familiar with favorite nursery rhymes, they will be able to perform them. Select a few, practice reading them together, and host a performance for other classes and parents.

## How Many?

Pass out copies of a nursery rhyme to your students. Ask them to tally:

- Words with double letters
- Words that have an "O" in them
- Rhyming words
- Words that repeat in the rhyme
- Nouns or verbs or adjectives (for older students)
- Any other category that you can think of

Activities on this page from [teachervision.fen.com](http://teachervision.fen.com)

