

Nursery rhymes are an important part of their routine when Baby-Read readers are reading to their assigned families. “Experts in literacy and child development have discovered that if children know eight nursery rhymes by heart by the time they’re 4 years old, they’re usually among the best readers by the time they’re 8.” (Fox, M. 2001, Reading Magic. San Diego, CA.



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Harcourt). These children become more attuned to the sounds of their language, and they often have a richer vocabulary. “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.” This language activity of taking turns — your child talks/coos and then you respond — is extremely important in bonding, social development and brain development. 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, and both have a common foundation of tone patterns, stress voice inflection and the rhythm of language. 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.” (2010, kbyueleven.org)

Rhymes teach: (1) language development: as children recite or listen to nursery rhymes they learn new vocabulary and practice the rhythm and grammar of their language without even knowing it; (2) pre-reading skills such as following the sequence of the narrative, cause and effect, and problem and solution; (3) math concepts such as counting in “One little piggy, two little piggies, three little piggies ...” ; (4) comfort and support as they are places children can retreat to; (5) creative dramatization: children love to act out the rhymes; (6) are just lots of fun for babies and toddlers. (the measuredmom.org and 2010 kbyueleven.org)

BabyRead volunteers coach moms and grandmoms to use nursery rhymes and songs as they read to their babies and toddlers. We also provide families with CDs of nursery rhymes and songs.

Do these nursery rhymes sound familiar? Baa, Baa Black Sheep, A-Tisket, A-Tasket, Hickory, Dickory Dock, Humpty Dumpty, Little Bo Peep, Mary Had a Little Lamb, London Bridge is Falling Down, Mary, Mary Quite Contrary.

BABYREAD’S MISSION is to raise the literacy level in Oconee County by encouraging moms/caregivers to read daily to children from birth. This prepares children for success in school and in life. BabyRead readers read with moms/caregivers in person in public places such as town libraries. Questions? Contact Caren von Hippel, Ph.D., BabyRead President, at babyread@charter.net or visit babyread.org.