Each integrated unit contains:

- 6 pages of teaching notes in an integrated teaching sequence
- 10 practical blackline masters
- National Profile outcomes
- A useful resource list
Nursery Rhymes

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EARLY CHILDHOOD

Learning Area Focus Studies of Society and Environment

Topic Nursery rhymes are an important part of our social history and oral traditions. The rich language and rhythm of nursery rhymes serve to evoke wonderful images of places, times and events. While nursery rhymes have been around for centuries, many of the rhymes were not intended for children. They told of superstitions and social customs and gave explanations for unexplainable physical phenomena. However, nursery rhymes have amused, placated and entertained generations of children and adults alike. While many cultures have a tradition of nursery rhymes that are passed on from adults to children, this unit focuses on the nursery rhymes most children in Australia would be familiar with. The unit could be adapted to include rhymes from other cultures.

National Profile Outcomes

Students will:

- **SOSE 1.1** Understand that nursery rhymes are a feature of the childhood of many children, both past and present.
- **SOSE 1.3** Make connections between nursery rhymes and their origins.
- **SOSE 1.9** Recognise that nursery rhymes are a common feature of many cultures.
- **English 1.3** Draw on knowledge of rhythm and rhyme when exploring the text of rhymes and use this knowledge when innovating on text.
- **English 1.5b** Rearrange and sequence pictures and the text of familiar rhymes to ensure sense is maintained.
- **English 1.7** Demonstrate an understanding of the connection between oral and written nursery rhyme texts.
- **Mathematics 1.3** Answer questions about time, sequence and number by acting out nursery rhymes and manipulating objects.
- **Mathematics 1.11** Count and order collections of pictures and objects when looking at nursery rhymes dealing with numbers.
- **Mathematics 1.21** Refer to recurring daily events when describing time.
- **Science 1.3** Identify features of the day and night sky as presented in nursery rhymes and relate them to behaviour in everyday life.
- **Arts 1.1, 1.6, 1.11, 1.1. 1.21** Draw upon play and imagination when creating art works about nursery rhymes.

Resources

Nursery rhyme collections
Tomie dePaola, *Tomie dePaola’s Mother Goose*, Methuen.
Jan Ormerod (illustrator) and Pat Thompson (selector), *Rhymes Around the Day*, Puffin.
Sarah Pooley (selected and illustrated by), *A Day of Rhymes*, Bodley Head.

Picture books
William Stobbs, *This Little Piggy*, Bodley Head.

Reference books
Nursery Rhymes
Teaching Notes

Setting the scene
Display a variety of nursery rhyme anthologies, big books, posters, cards, etc and give students opportunities to read and explore these texts without adult intervention.

Have students work in pairs or groups of three. Provide each group with an anthology of nursery rhymes and a small bundle of bookmarks (or bits of paper). Have students look through their anthologies and identify any nursery rhymes they know by placing a bookmark on the appropriate page. Most students will identify the rhyme by recognising the pictures.

When each group of students has located one or two known rhymes, bring the class together and share the rhymes. Look at the pictures together and identify the same rhyme in different collections. Compare the wording and the pictures and enjoy saying the rhymes together.

Enable students to share rhymes they know that were either not included in the books or were not located.

Favourite rhymes
Give each student a small piece of paper and have them draw a picture of their favourite nursery rhyme. Ensure all pieces of paper are the same size. With the assistance of the students, use the pieces of paper to create a picture bar graph of favourite nursery rhymes. Ask students to make some generalisations, for example most students like 'Hey Diddle Diddle' the best; only two children like 'Jack and Jill'. Scribe these onto paper and display them around the graph.

Sheep
'Baa Baa Black Sheep'
This rhyme from the Middle Ages tells of the problems farmers had when much of the land in England was used purely for the rearing of sheep. The boy in the rhyme most probably represented the general population who were left with whatever money was remaining after the King (the master) and the Dame (the wool merchants) had taken their 'share'.

Make a large-print version of the rhyme and use it for shared reading. Make a black sheep, three brown sacks, a man, a woman and a boy out of felt and use these on a felt board to illustrate the rhyme. Ask students to match the sacks to each character as the rhyme is recited.

Word mix
Encourage students to match the sentence strips on **BLM 1** with the corresponding lines of the rhyme. Ask students to cut up the sentence strips along the black lines, mix them up and then reconstruct the text by sticking the strips onto a larger sheet of paper in the correct order. Ensure students have access to a correct model of the rhyme for reference. They can then illustrate their work. Display these around the room.

Nursery rhyme drama
Provide opportunities throughout the unit to dramatise the rhymes. Some rhymes such as 'Twinkle Twinkle Little Star' and 'I'm a Little Teapot' lend themselves to hand and finger actions. Others can be dramatised. As the rhymes are so short, students should be given the opportunity of acting out several rhymes during a session. For example, with 'Jack Be Nimble', some students could 'jump over the candle stick' whilst the rest of the group recite the words; for 'The Grand Old Duke of York', have students work in small groups to make a hill out of blocks, boxes, books, etc. They can act out the poem using Duplo or plastic people or some other classroom objects as substitutes for the soldiers.
Sheep watch
With students, brainstorm other nursery rhymes that are about sheep, for example, ‘Little Bo Peep’, ‘Mary Had a Little Lamb’ and ‘Little Boy Blue’. Read these rhymes together.
Have each student paint a picture of one of these rhymes. Provide them with collage materials such as wool, material scraps, fake fur scraps, string, coloured paper scraps, craft glue and scissors.
Encourage students to add details to their pictures by using these materials. Supply small photocopied versions of each rhyme and challenge students to find the one that matches their picture. This could then be glued on to the finished picture.

Jack
There are a number of nursery rhymes which feature Jack as a main character. With students, brainstorm names of these poems, for example ‘Jack Be Nimble’, ‘Jack Spratt’, ‘Jack and Jill’ and ‘Little Jack Horner’.

‘Jack and Jill’
Jack and Jill’ is probably familiar to most students. Ask students if they can recite it from memory. If not, read it aloud to them. Explain that vinegar and brown paper was once thought to be a cure for headaches.
Using a large-print version of the rhyme, engage students in a shared reading session. Discuss meanings of words such as pail, crown, trot and caper. Ask students what they think about the merits of using vinegar and brown paper as a first aid treatment.
If possible, take students for a walk to a nearby park with a grassy hill (don’t forget permission notes, parent helpers, first aid kit, sunscreen and hats). Encourage students to walk, run and roll down the hill. Take some photos of your ‘Jacks and Jills’. Back in the classroom, encourage students to brainstorm a list of words to describe the sensations of rolling down the hill. Display these with the poem and the photos.

Jack before Jill
Using BLM 2 have students cut out the picture squares and stick them onto a larger piece of paper in the correct sequence. They might like to illustrate their work before it is displayed in the classroom or library.

Jacks of all trades
Through shared reading experiences, introduce other rhymes which feature Jack as a main character (e.g. ‘Jack Be Nimble’, ‘Jack Spratt’ and ‘Little Jack Horner’).
Discuss the similarities and differences between these rhymes. Do the ‘Jacks’ always look the same? Is each rhyme only about Jack or are other characters involved? Where is each rhyme set?
Have students paint pictures of their favourite ‘Jack’ rhyme.

Cats
Cats are popular animals with most children and are a common feature of many nursery rhymes.

‘Hey Diddle Diddle’
‘Hey Diddle Diddle’ is thought to have originated during Elizabethan times as a tribute to Queen Elizabeth I and her love of dancing and music. Queen Elizabeth is represented by the cat and the fiddle represented her enjoyment of the music played on this instrument.
Read the rhyme to students from a number of sources and discuss with them how the rhyme is (almost) the same each time. Explain that the pictures that accompany the rhyme, however, usually differ as they depend on how the illustrator imagined the scene. Have the students illustrate the rhyme and then compare the different pictures. After completing the paintings, you can then compare the illustrations accompanying the various book versions of the rhyme. Ask students if the illustrations affect the mood of the poem.
Over the moon

Using ‘Hey Diddle Diddle’, have a brainstorming session listing all the things the cow could have seen as she jumped over the moon. With the students, make a mural showing what the cow saw. Have some students paint or draw the cow, others could draw the moon and others still could draw the things the cow might have seen. Display these illustrations with suitable labels and a large-print version of the rhyme.

Cat chat

Ask students if they can think of other nursery rhymes that feature cats (see below). List these on the board. Engage students in shared reading sessions of some large-print versions of the rhymes.

Ask students if they know what an interview is. Explain that half of the class will be asked to interview some of the different cat characters found in nursery rhymes (consisting of the other half of the class). With students, discuss what questions could be asked in the interviews. You might like to use these questions as discussion starters:

‘Pussy Cat, Pussy Cat, Where Have You Been?’: Where is London? (Locate it on a large wall map.) Who has been there? What is the name of the Queen who lives in London? Does Australia have a Queen? How could you get to London? Who’s chair do you think the mouse ran under? What is that kind of chair called?

‘Ding Dong Dell, Pussy’s In the Well’: Why do you think Johnny Green put the cat in the well? How would the cat get out?

‘There Was A Crooked Man’: What does ‘crooked’ mean? What would a crooked cat look like? What is a mile? Explain to the students that we no longer measure in miles, but in kilometres, and that there are 1,000 metres in a kilometre and about 1,600 metres in every mile. How long do you think it would take to walk a kilometre? A minute, an hour, a couple of hours, a day? What is a sixpence? a stile?

Once questions have been brainstormed, discuss the possible answers. Then divide the class into two groups – one group to ask the questions and one to take on the role of the cat answering the questions. Have all the cats sit at the front of the classroom. They might like to get dressed-up in their best cat gear for the interview. The reporters can face the cats. Some reporters might like to bring home-made microphones and tape-recorders. Discuss if these could be of use and if so why.

Before the interview begins, remind students not to interrupt each other during the interview session. The reporters should take it in turns to ask questions. Try to ensure that everybody has a turn at either asking or answering a question.

A tail length

Use BLM 3 to help explore the concept of length.

Have students make a short/long/in-between tail for each cat using paper, wool scraps, string, raffia, scissors and glue. Discuss how they will ensure that the tails are of different lengths. On a separate piece of art paper, have students draw (or use the collage materials to make) different types of tails, for example curly tails, fluffy tails, spotty tails, thin tails, etc. Place students into groups and ask each group to discuss whose cat has the longest tail; whose has the shortest or the curliest, etc. How do they know?

Numbers

Many nursery rhymes involve counting and numbers. They provide the perfect way to explore numbers in a fun and meaningful way.

‘Three Blind Mice’

Begin your exploration of numbers with a rhyme all students will hopefully know – ‘Three Blind Mice’. Invite students to recite the rhyme to you, or read it aloud to them.

This rhyme originated after the reign of Mary Tudor in the mid 1500s. It tells of Mary’s trying to remove the Protestant faith from England. Mary returned the land taken by Protestants to their Catholic owners, thus taking on the role of a ‘farmer’s wife’ and she ‘cut off the tails’ of the ‘blind mice’ by having Protestants burnt at the stake.
Bathing with numbers

Use a large-print version of ‘Rub-a-Dub-Dub’ to engage the students in a shared reading session. Discuss the meaning of the word, ‘tub’. Ask students if they know what a butcher, a baker and a candlestick maker do. Ask students to suggest reasons why the three of them fell out of the tub. Give students three different coloured cubes or blocks. Explain that each colour represents either the butcher, the baker or the candlestick maker. Challenge students to rearrange the cubes as many times as they can to show the different orders the three men could sit in the tub, for example the butcher, the baker and the candlestick maker or the baker, the candlestick maker then the butcher, etc. Ask the students to record their findings pictorially on BLM 4. Ask students to compare their answers. How many different ways can the people sit?

A ream of rhymes

Use large-print versions of the rhymes below for shared reading. Explore the numbers in the rhymes by having students complete the activities which follow.

‘Sing a Song of Sixpence’ – have students each draw a huge pie. Ask students how many blackbirds make up four and twenty. Invite students to make sponge-print pictures of blackbirds, to cut them out and have them coming out of the huge pie. With students, count and number the birds. Ask them to check that they have the correct number of birds. Use the birds for counting forwards and backwards and recognising numerals.

‘Good morning, Mrs Hen’ – after students become familiar with this rhyme, give each a copy of BLM 5 and ask them to colour the chickens according to the instructions.

Time

Time is a difficult concept for young children to grasp. Having to make the connection between analogue and digital time adds another dimension. The focus of these activities is not to teach the concept of time but to make students aware that time is an integral part of our everyday lives.

The mouse ran up the clock

‘Hickory Dickory Dock’ is a good rhyme to begin with as it has a strong rhythm and will probably already be known by most students. Using a large-print version of the rhyme, engage students in a shared reading session. When the rhyme is familiar, ask students to improvise on the text by changing the time and the mouse’s subsequent action, for example ‘The clock struck two, the mouse went boo’, ‘The clock struck three, the mouse bit me’, etc. Record these new versions along with the original and have them available for students to read independently.

Crafty clocks

Use BLM 6 to make a clock. Give each student a paper plate. Ask them to cut out the clock face on the worksheet, to trace over the numerals given as dots and then to paste the face onto the plate. Provide each student with two cardboard strips for the hands on the clock and have them attach the hands to the centre of the plate with a split pin. (You will probably need to do this for each student.) The students then need to cut out the words ‘Hickory Dickory Dock’ and paste them onto the clock face in the correct sequence. Provide some small coloured paper squares to use for making a decorative pattern around the edge of the plate. Once the clock face is completed, attach each one to a large coloured paper rectangle (see the picture on BLM 6) and have students paint in the pendulum. Then, using paper scraps or collage materials, have each student make a mouse and attach this to the clock. Display them with the original rhyme and the students’ improvised versions.
Morning, noon or night
With students, read the rhymes that mention time. Examples are ‘Cobbler, Cobbler Mend My Shoe’, ‘Elsie Marley’ and ‘Wee Willie Winkie’. Once these rhymes are familiar, use them to explore the idea of morning, afternoon and night. Show the times detailed in ‘Cobbler, Cobbler’ on the clock face and talk about what times of the day these occur. Does the time of half-past two only occur in the afternoon? When else can it occur? Is there another time of half-past eight? Show the times written about in ‘Elsie Marley’ on the clock face. Is this time early or late in the morning? What are you usually doing at nine o’clock in the morning? What are you usually doing at nine o’clock in the evening? In the rhyme ‘Wee Willie Winkie’, the time of eight o’clock is referred to once again. Is this eight o’clock in the morning or at night? What time do you go to bed?

Using BLM 7, have students draw pictures of the things they might be doing at certain times. The important concept here is the difference between the kind of activities that can be done in the morning, afternoon or night, not the exact time. Once completed, bring students together and compare their answers. Encourage the students to make some generalisations about the sorts of activities they are involved in at different times of the day.

Rhymes
With students, brainstorm some of the rhyming words in the nursery rhymes, for example ‘diddle’ and ‘fiddle’; ‘Polly’ and ‘Dolly’; ‘dub’ and ‘tub’. Have students complete BLM 8.

Mix and match
Hand out copies of BLM 9 and BLM 10. Explain that they are going to make a mix-and-match book. Ask students to cut along the black lines. They might need an adult to help them. Have students put the four pictures in one pile and the four pages of text in another pile. Place one pile above (not on top of) the other. Have students use half an A4 page as a cover. Staple the outside edges together so that it looks like a book. They might like to glue, or staple, a thin strip of paper around the spine of the book to reinforce it. Ask them to colour in the pictures and then challenge them to match the nursery rhymes. Use the backs of the pages to make four more mix and match rhymes in their books.

Culminating Activity
Invite students to come to school dressed as their favourite nursery rhyme character. Give parents plenty of warning, and encourage them to keep costumes simple.

Invite parents to come to a short performance of some of the class’s favourite nursery rhymes. Ensure you have a good mixture of rhymes that can be recited by all your students and some that can be performed by small groups of students.
Baa Baa Black Sheep

Have you any wool?

Three bags full.

Baa baa black sheep,

Yes sir, yes sir,
Jack and Jill

Put the nursery rhyme in the right order and draw in the pictures.

‘He went to bed to mend his head
With vinegar and brown paper.’

‘Jack fell down and broke his crown
And Jill came tumbling after.’

‘Jack and Jill went up the hill
To fetch a pail of water.’

‘Up Jack got and home he trot
As fast as he could caper.’
Tall tales

Make a tail for each cat. Then try making other sorts of tails.

Hey diddle diddle,
The cat and the fiddle,
The cow jumped over the moon.
The little dog laughed to see such fun,
And the dish ran away with the spoon.

short tail
middle-sized tail
long tail
Rub-a-dub-dub

‘Rub-a-dub-dub,
Three men in a tub
And who do you think they be?
The butcher, the baker
The candlestick maker,
Turn them out, knaves all three.’
Good morning, Mrs Hen

Colour the chickens in the correct colours.

‘Good morning, Mrs Hen,
How many chickens have you got?
Madam, I’ve got ten:
Four of them are yellow
And four of them are brown
And two of them are speckled red,
The nicest in the town.’
Hickory Dickory Dock

Hickory
Dickory
Dock
Name: ................................................................. Date: .................................................................

**Time**

Draw something you might be doing at these times.

8 o’clock in the morning

8 o’clock at night

half past two in the morning

half past two in the afternoon
Rhyme time

Match the rhyming words and colour them in.

Then join the rhyming words to the name of the rhyme they come from.

The Queen of Hearts

Little Bo-Peep

Hey Diddle Diddle

Little Boy Blue
Mix-and-match books

Cut along the black lines. Put the pictures into one pile and the words into another pile. Use half an A4 piece of paper to make a cover. Ask your teacher to staple down the sides.

Baa Baa Black Sheep

Hey Diddle Diddle

Jack Spratt Could Eat No Fat

Hickory Dickory Dock
Mix-and-match books, continued

Colour in the characters from the nursery rhymes.