



## Jump Rope Rap

Way back in the early 60s, I got hooked on a children's rhyme book my sister Mary owned. Among other goodies, it contained a collection of rhymes that kids recite as they jump rope. I remembered the name of the book to be "Rhymbles" and Googled for it, to no avail. Recently Mary mentioned the book in an email, but spelled it "Rimbles." I had been spelling it wrong! That's why I couldn't find it. I see it now available here and there as a used book: Rimbles, by Patricia Evans.

So I found the book, but I also was motivated to look around the web for other examples of jump-rope rhymes, and they are everywhere, by the hundreds. In schoolyards and sidewalks I'm sure there are thousands, and new ones born by the bazillions every summer.

Some are old, with versions going back to at least the 1700s, like *Peas Porridge Hot*, that most everyone has probably heard:

*Pease porridge hot, pease porridge cold  
Pease porridge in the pot, nine days old  
Some like it hot, some like it cold,  
Some like it in the pot, nine days old*

Then there are newer ones, some developed by kids having fun interpreting grownup situations:

*Had a little sportscar 248  
Took it round the corner  
And slammed it on the brakes  
Bumped into a lady, bumped into a man  
Bumped into a policeman, man oh man  
Policeman caught me  
Put me in jail  
All I had was ginger ale*

These new kid creations are often downright surreal:

*Three, six, nine, the goose drank wine,  
The monkey chewed tobacco  
On the Street car line  
The lion choked, the monkey croaked,  
And they all went to heaven  
In a little row boat*

...or sound (to me) like Beatles' songs:

*Charlie Chaplin went to France,  
To teach the ladies the hula dance.  
First on the heels,  
Then on the toes,  
Around and around and around you go.  
Salute to the Captain,  
Bow to the Queen,  
Touch the bottom of the submarine.*

...and, more sweetly:

*Down by the riverside green grass grows  
Where someone walks, some tiptoe.  
She sings oh, she sings so sweet,  
She calls to someone across the street  
Tea cakes pancakes everything you see  
Meet me at the park at half past three.*

Some are pure whimsy:

*I know something but I won't tell  
Three little monkeys in a peanut shell  
One can read and one can dance  
One has a hole in the seat of his pants*

Some are established enough to have their own Wikipedia entry, like *Miss Lucy Had a Baby*:

*Miss Lucy had a baby  
She called him Tiny Tim  
She put him in the bathtub  
To see if he could swim  
He drank up all the water  
He ate up all the soap  
He tried to eat the bathtub  
But it wouldn't go down his throat  
Miss Lucy called the doctor  
Miss Lucy called the nurse  
Miss Lucy called the lady  
With the alligator purse  
In came the doctor  
In came the nurse  
In came the lady  
With the alligator purse  
'Mumps' said the doctor  
'Measles' said the nurse  
'Nothing' said the lady  
With the alligator purse*

Some are mysterious:

*I like coffee, I like tea  
I like sitting on Bobby's knee  
Salute to the king  
And bow to the queen  
And turn your back  
On the gypsy queen*

Many of them hint at sexuality:

*Ink, ink, a bottle of ink,  
The cork fell off and you stink.  
Not because you're dirty  
Not because you're clean,  
Just because you kiss the girls  
Behind the magazine*

...and in a more romantic mood:

*The wind the wind the wind blows high  
It blows Mary through the sky  
She is fair and she is pretty  
She is the girl from the tin can city  
She can play the piano, 1 2 3  
Mary, Mary, who is she?  
Johnny, Johnny says he loves her.  
Off they go with a kiss, kiss, kiss.  
He took her to the courtyard,  
Asked her, Will you marry me?  
Yes no maybe so, yes no maybe so.*

This one explains you can't buy love:

*Johnny gave me apples,  
Johnny gave me pears.  
Johnny gave me fifty cents  
To kiss him on the stairs.  
I gave him back his apples,  
I gave him back his pears.  
I gave him back his fifty cents  
And kicked him down the stairs.*

This one adds the always popular themes of sickness and death:

*Last night, night before, my boyfriend  
Took me to the candy store  
He bought me ice cream  
He bought me cake  
He brought me home with a belly ache  
Mamma, mamma, I feel sick  
Call the doctor quick, quick quick  
Doctor, Doctor will I die?  
Close your eyes and count to 5*

And some, though surprisingly few, are about childhood itself:

*First grade babies  
Second grade tots  
Third grade angels  
Fourth grade snots  
Fifth grade peaches  
Sixth grade plums  
Seventh grade ladies  
Eighth grade bums!*

To me, these are great examples of how writing in rhyme can be silly fun, and speaking as a writer, that is easy to forget. I should write myself a note. On the way to heaven in a little row boat.