

Abstract

Japanese nursery rhyme had begun its history in the pre-printing era and has been handed down for long generations. After a breaking off of these forty to fifty years, people have become aware of the power of nursery rhymes and have started singing and playing nursery rhymes with children at kindergarten, public library, and so on.

1. A Short History

In Japan, nursery rhymes have been handed down from generation to generation among children and parents, brothers and sisters, families, and friends for many years since the pre-printing era. Many rhymes have been enjoyed while bringing up children in everyday life. The purpose wasn't for education but for the joy of singing rhymes to or with children.

However, these days, children's way of life has changed, and we rarely see children singing and playing nursery rhymes. TV, mobile phones, and electronic games have taken their place, and the habit of reading in children's everyday lives has declined.

Recently, young mothers, fathers, child-care specialists, librarians, and volunteers who are involved in picture book reading and storytelling have become aware of the power of nursery rhymes. They have started singing and playing nursery rhymes with children. The scenes of many children enjoying nursery rhymes inspires them and helps them to continue.

Child Care Salon



Raccoon Dog in a fist mountain



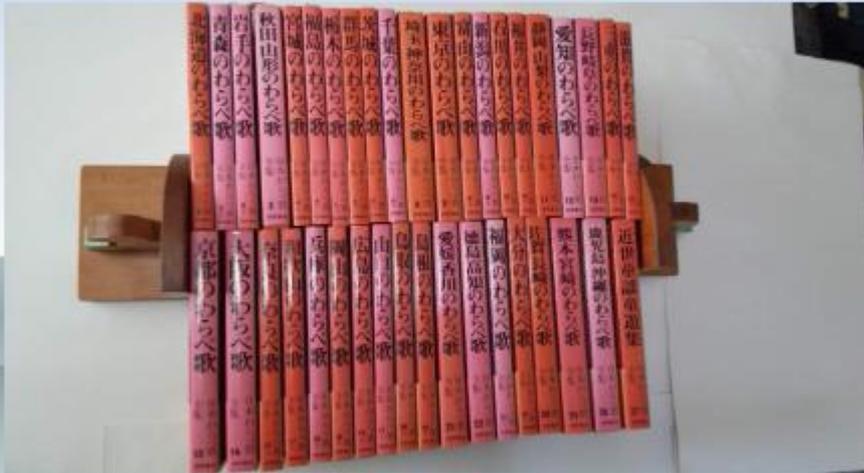
2. Books of Nursery Rhymes

The origin of nursery rhymes can be traced back to the Muromachi era 600 years ago. Nobody knows the authors because rhymes were long handed down through the generations by oral tradition.

In 1974, the famous poet Hakushu Kitahara published *An Anthology of Japanese Nursery Rhymes*, (Sanseido) which contained many rhymes, across the whole country.

In 1985, *A Complete Anthology of Japanese Nursery Rhymes* (Yanagihara Publishing Co.Ltd.) was published in 37 volumes by scholars from each prefecture. These books aren't for children but for grown-ups.

A Complete Anthology of Japanese Nursery Rhymes



Fumio Koizumi, who was a scholar of folk music, also collected nursery rhymes from all over Japan and published *Children's Play and Rhymes: [Subtitle is Nursery Rhymes have lives]* (Soshisya Publishing Co.Ltd.) in 1986,

As a result, nursery rhymes appeared in textbooks for children.

Children's Play and Song/1985



3. Picture Book Nursery Rhymes for Children

In 1994, a publisher for young children published a picture nursery book inspired by picture books of Mother Goose from the UK and the USA. The title was *Agarime Sagarime* (KOGUMA Publishing Co., Ltd.) and I was one of the editors. Just by looking at the pictures in this book, you can understand how to play. It also informs us of the joy of the rhymes and shows Japanese culture by using a collage of Japanese kimono patterns.

Agarime Sagarime/1994



Where is this Jizo come from?



4. What are Nursery Rhymes?

Nursery rhymes are composed of simple and easy to recite words. The rhythm and the intonation fit the Japanese language.

Anyone can sing rhymes, everywhere, with anyone. We don't need any special instruments. Sometimes we use a beanbag, a jumping rope, a bamboo rod, a ball, a woolen yarn, picture card and so on. Nursery rhymes are the introduction to words, music, play, and exercise (using the hands, the feet, the fingers, and the body), and life. They are also the first step for reaching out to the community and society. Above all, they are the beginning of contact and communication.

5. The Way to Cultivate Listening Ability

To unborn babies, who hear the mother's language from the womb, nursery rhymes are rhythmic and melodic. When a mother sings or repeats rhymes, the baby hears and begins to listen to pleasant sounds. Hearing the mother's voice, the baby feels at ease, relies upon her, and tries to communicate. In this way, words are amassed in the baby's head and heart. It is said that babies of 18 months old acquire one word for every two hours. For these babies we would like to talk in fine and decent words. They will be all ears once they catch the voice and will ask to be sung to over and over. The words and the rhythm will be comfortable. This is the reason why nursery rhymes are called 'magic and music' (as said by the UK poet and critic Sir Herbert Read).



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6. Rhymes with Play

There are so many kinds of rhymes with topics on things such as seasons, nature work, families, nurses, living, numbers, events, habits, customs, food (rice cakes, fine wheat noodles), people in history, and so on.

Japanese Nursery Rhymes

- Jiiii kaite pon!
(Write a letter,pon!)
- Pottun potupotu amegahuru Pottun potupotu amegahuru zaaaaatto amegahuru!
(Drip drop Drip drop The Rain is falling. Drip drop Drip drop The Rain is falling.
And then came the showering)
- お月さま えーらいの、鏡のように なったり、櫛のように なったり、春夏秋冬
日本中を照らす。
A moon,moon. You are so busy. Sometimes you become round as a mirror.
Sometimes you become thin as a comb.and you, spring,summer , autumn, winter.
You shine about us ,everywhere in japan.

These are the best way to concentrate on reading aloud picture books and story telling. Children who have repeatedly heard and listened to rich phrases coming from human voices find it easy to listen to picture book reading and storytelling. In story hours in libraries, schools, and some other child-care facilities nursery rhymes have been spreading gradually. I hope children will sing rhymes and play by themselves.

Rhymes with play Nozomi Kindergarten



Nozomi Kindergarten



To conclude, I will sing and play a delightful rhyme that is sung using beanbags by the people of Fukushima, where the nuclear power station was damaged by the big earthquake and tsunami in 2011.

'Making of Rice cake' Nursery Rhyme in Fukushima



- Pettala pettan!

Pound and Pound We are making rice cakes. Pound and Pound We are making rice cakes.
Then. to the next person..

Pound and Pound We are making rice cakes. Pound and Pound We are making rice cakes.
Then. to the next person..To share some rice cakes.

Pound and Pound We are making rice cakes. Pound and Pound We are making rice cakes.
Put it into the cupboard.

A mouse comes. and took the rice cakes.

Pound and Pound We are making rice cakes. Pound and Pound We are making rice cakes.
Put the rice cakes to shrine alter.

And we pray that we get good rice this year too,we pray.

Sometimes you become round as