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## Expanding Horizons

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# EXPANDING HORIZONS

## Mother Goose is Alive and Culturally Relevant

Sharon Crawley

I was surprised and dismayed when I read a feature article in a recent issue of the *Palm Beach Post Newspaper* (Hiaasen, 1991) titled "Has Mother Goose Lost Its Use?" Robert Shockey (past president of the National Middle School Association) made the following statements while being interviewed, "I doubt seriously if they (Mother Goose rhymes) are being used extensively... I don't see much value in them." (Many other negative comments regarding Mother Goose were contained within the article.) The feature was written in such an authoritative manner that I began to wonder if I were out of touch with recent trends in society and if "Mother Goose" actually were dead. It was not a week later when I came across a Hallmark greeting card which pictured Snoopy reading: "Old Mother Hubbard went to the cupboard, to get her poor dog a bone. But when she returned, that's when she learned..."

You'll have to find the card to find out what she learned. Two weeks later I turned on the TV and there was a HUGGIES commercial advertising Mother Goose nursery rhyme disposable diapers. Yes, I was confident that Mother Goose was alive and culturally relevant. A recently published reading series, *The Jamestown Heritage Readers* (1991), includes a number of Mother Goose nursery rhymes and suggestions for using them with students.

Publications during the past five years have dealt with cultural literacy and its importance. To be culturally literate, as E.D. Hirsch (1987) writes, is to have the basic information used

in communication. It is, in part, to give our children "the elements of our literacy and mythical heritage that are often alluded to without explanation, for example, Adam and Eve, Jack Sprat, Jack and Jill, Little Jack Horner" (Hirsch, 1987, p. 30). As you can see, Mother Goose is a part of this literary heritage. Even the name, Mother Goose, appears in Hirsch's list of 5,000 items which represent cultural literacy. The book *What Do Our 17 Year-Olds Know* (Ravitch and Finn, 1987) highlights the importance of exposing young children of all socioeconomic levels to good literature. Poetry and rhymes are included in good literature. Mother Goose is a classic.

Dougherty and her colleagues (1989) write that using nursery rhymes helps children: develop a familiarity with good literature; understand the concept of story because nursery rhymes are short and have a clear beginning, middle and end; develop graphophonemic skills through the rhyming patterns; learn that separate words are used in written communication; develop oral communication skills because nursery rhymes are rooted in oral tradition. Galeano (1983) adds that nursery rhymes provide opportunities for students to act out the actions of the rhyme, thus connecting physical movement activities to the use of nursery rhymes. Nursery rhymes also provide opportunities for vocabulary development.

Rogow (1982) used nursery rhymes to encourage developmentally delayed blind and physically handicapped children, between the ages of 15 months and 7 years, and their mothers and teachers to interact socially. Glenn and Cunningham (1982) report that handicapped infants with Down's syndrome recognized and preferred listening to rhymes rather than regular talk by their mothers; and they found that nursery rhymes are important to word recognition and social routines (Glenn and Cunningham, 1984).

### **Using Mother Goose**

Various authors (Galeano, 1983; Haake, 1990; Hall, 1985; Zjawin, 1980) describe ways in which Mother Goose can be used in the classroom. Let's look at some suggestions.

**Language arts.** 1) Categorize or develop word lists related to nursery rhymes (action words, names of people, names of places, names of items). 2) After students have memorized the words to a nursery rhyme, print the rhyme on a chart. Children can “read” the chart. Children can identify words they know. These words can be printed on cards by the teacher and placed into word banks for children. 3) Linguistic spelling patterns can be used for teaching word recognition and spelling. Categorize rhyming words (e.g., crown, down, town; horn, born, corn). 4) Collecting and labeling objects identified in Mother Goose rhymes leads to word recognition. 5) Nursery rhymes can be extended by having students add a middle or ending line. Why did Jack and Jill fall? How did Jack feel when he jumped over the candle stick? 6) Teachers and students can tell felt board stories using Mother Goose nursery rhymes. 7) Students can create their own nursery rhymes by using Mother Goose rhymes as patterns. 8) Students can compare and contrast Mother Goose rhymes from different countries.

**Movement.** 1) Encourage students to act out the rhymes. They can “jump over the candle stick,” “sit on a tuffet,” “fall and tumble down the hill,” or “blow their horns.” 2) Encourage students to act out, or pantomime, Mother Goose rhymes while other students guess the nursery rhyme.

**Art.** 1) Using papier maché to make Humpty Dumpty eggs can be an interesting activity for students. A balloon can serve as the base around which papier maché is placed. 2) Students can be encouraged to draw sequential cartoon strips to illustrate favorite nursery rhymes. 3) Students can compare and contrast the different artistic renditions of Mother Goose.

**Music.** 1) Students can recite, or sing, nursery rhymes to music they create. 2) Certain nursery rhymes, such as “Three Blind Mice,” can be sung in the round. 3) Rhythm instruments can be used by students to keep beat with the rhyming.

**Science.** 1) Students can find out what animals lay eggs, the nutritional value of eggs, and make deviled eggs after learning “Humpty Dumpty.” 2) “Mary, Mary, Quite Contrary” can lead to a discussion of plants, their parts, how they grow, how to

care for them, and their uses. 3) After reading "Jack Sprat" students can find facts about the four basic food groups, and the role of fat and lean meats in our diets.

**Mathematics.** 1) Nursery rhymes such as "One, Two, Buckle my Shoe" can be used for counting. 2) Students can measure the different sizes of eggs after reading "Humpty Dumpty," or different sizes of candle sticks after reading "Jack Be Nimble."

### Figure 1 Collections of Mother Goose Rhymes

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It is obvious, from the twenty-one activities listed above, that Mother Goose nursery rhymes can be connected with many activities from a variety of subject areas. They provide a solid basis for engaging in many whole language activities. Where can you find Mother Goose rhymes? There are many versions of Mother Goose from which to choose. Several sources are presented in Figure 1.

Mother Goose rhymes are suitable for children and students of all ages. They offer springboards for learning vocabulary, listening, writing, creative dramatics, science and math. They provide a natural avenue for engaging in whole language activities. The rhythms of Mother Goose rhymes stay on the tongues and in the hearts of young and old alike. Yes, I am happy to report that Mother Goose is alive and culturally relevant.

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## Predictable Books in a Middle School Class Writing Program

Linda Jones McCoy  
Victoria Hammett

It is January 29th at reading time. Vicky gathers the students near her. She recites *Brown Bear, Brown Bear* by Bill Martin, Jr. (1967) to them and then displays a large copy of the poem and reads it, while they follow along. The students are encouraged to join in on the reading. After the reading of the poem has been completed in this way, the teacher invites the students to look more closely at the literary pattern the author has used. She leads a discussion of the pattern of repetition which has been used in each episode and how each episode interlocks with the next (Martin and Brogan, 1972).

This step is followed by a brainstorming activity where class members name the state symbols for Kansas because January 29th is Kansas Day, the date Kansas became a state. The teacher writes *buffalo* by the space marked *State Animal* on a prepared chart followed by all of the other state symbols, including such obscure symbols as the state rock. Then she invites them to hang their own words on the Brown Bear pattern to write a new version of the poem which will include the Kansas state symbols. This is an excerpt:

*Kansas, Kansas, what do you see?  
I see a Jayhawk looking at me.  
Jayhawk, Jayhawk, what do you see?  
I see a sunflower looking at me.  
Sunflower, Sunflower, what do you see?  
I see a buffalo looking at me.*

You might expect this scene to take place in a primary grade classroom, probably first grade. But these children were sixth graders in a heterogeneously grouped classroom in southeast Kansas working under the direction of an experienced teacher who was just beginning to incorporate structural linguistic predictable materials into her reading program. The Brown Bear material and the follow-up rewriting projects are often viewed by teachers as primary grade work,

but the strategies used are not grade specific. Nor is the reading material. They may be used for reading and writing instruction at any grade level where a skillful teacher shares a good piece of children's literature with the class, leads them to discover the literary pattern used by the author, and then invites the class or an individual to use that same pattern to develop a story or poem of their own.

January 29th in Kansas means a review of the state symbols in classrooms all over the state. In many classes, children will color in or draw their own pictures of Jayhawks and buffaloes and sunflowers and the state seal. Native Kansans know the major state symbols (although they may falter on such things as the state rock or the state insect) because they have had some sort of review every January throughout their school days. To make this review interesting and worthwhile, Vicky's lesson provides the yearly review at a level sophisticated enough for middle schoolers while incorporating whole language techniques increasingly found in classrooms throughout the nation.

This lesson may be followed by another Kansas whole language exercise the next day. While the lesson may be used at nearly any grade level, our example again takes place in Vicky's sixth grade classroom. Vicky is a history buff, and her students have been doing an in-depth study of early Kansas history. She reads to the class the classic picture book *Over In The Meadow* (Keats, 1971). She shows and leads discussion about the pictures in the beautifully illustrated book and again invites the class to discover the author's literary pattern. The book begins:

*Over in the meadow, in the sand, in the sun,  
Lived an old mother turtle and her little turtle one.  
"Dig!" said the mother. "I dig," said the one.  
So he dug all day,  
In the sand, in the sun.*

Displaying a chart on which the few key words in each episode are written along with blanks for all other words, she asks the class to work together to change *Over In The Meadow* into another Kansas poem under their authorship. As they



dictate, she writes the words in the proper spaces on the chart, helping the class to make it seem that this is about Kansas while maintaining the original rhythm and rhyme scheme. After one or two episodes are completed in this way, the students are assigned a number. (*Over In The Meadow* starts with one turtle and works up to ten fireflies.) They may then work in groups of two or three or work individually, if they choose, to complete a stanza. The teacher circulates the room, helping individuals and groups when needed and encouraging their efforts. The following poem, "Over in Kansas," incorporating some lively elements of Kansas history, results.

*Over in the meadow in the grass and the sun,  
Lived an old mother sunflower and her little flower one  
"Bloom," said the mother. "I'll bloom," said the one.  
And they bloomed all day in the grass and the sun.*

*Up in the sky in the clouds in the blue,  
Lived a mother tornado and her little 'nados two.  
"Blow," said the mother. "We'll blow," said the two.  
So they blew all day in the clouds in the blue.*

*Over in the prairie in a nest by a tree,  
Lived a mother meadowlark and her little larks three.  
"Chirp," said the mother. "We chirp," said the three.  
So they chirped all day in the nest by the tree.*

*Over on the plains where the meadowlarks soar,  
Lived a father pioneer and his children four.  
"Sow," said the father. "We'll sow," said the four.  
So they sowed all day where the meadowlarks soar.*

*Over in the prairie where it's hard to stay alive,  
Lived a cottonwood tree and her seedlings five.  
"Grow," said the mother. "We'll grow," said the five.  
So they grew all day where it's hard to stay alive.*

*Near Stafford County by the old salt licks,  
Lived a Cheyenne woman and her children six.  
"Hunt," said the woman. "We'll hunt," said the six.  
So they hunted all day by the old salt licks.*

*Home on the range there beneath the heaven,  
Lived a herd of bison and their calves seven.*

*"Graze," said the mother. "We'll graze," said the seven.  
So they grazed all day there beneath the heaven.*

*Just below the mounds where the grasshoppers ate,  
Lived a gal named Bender and her corpses eight.  
"Flirt," said her father. "I'll flirt," said Kate.  
So she flirted all day where the grasshoppers ate.*

*Over in the field where the wheat grows fine,  
Lived old farmer Jones and his children nine.  
"Thrash," said the farmer. "We'll thrash," said the nine.  
So they thrashed all day where the wheat grows fine.*

*Here in Kansas, long ago, way back then,  
Lived a gal named Carrie and her hatchets ten.  
"Chop," said Carrie. "We'll chop," said the ten.  
So they chopped up saloons here in Kansas way back then.*

While rewrites of pattern books are fun, resulting in fine products from the students' creative efforts, they cannot, of course, constitute the whole writing program in this sixth grade class. Other process writing activities such as those suggested by Graves (1983) must also take place so the students do not come to view writing as only pattern writing. Pattern writing, however, can provide many excellent opportunities for the class to look closely at interesting literature and use their own creative efforts to produce a worthwhile piece of writing in a situation where every student can experience success – success in reading and success in writing. As the students' skill in writing improves, more sophisticated writing patterns can be explored.

Using Laura Joffe Numeroff's *If You Give A Mouse A Cookie* (1985) as a pattern, a girl in Vicky's class wrote:

***If You Give A Kid A Driver's License***

*If you give a kid a driver's license, he will want a used car.  
If he gets a used car, he will want a Ferrari instead.  
If he gets a Ferrari, he will want a totally rad corvette.  
If he gets a corvette and you refuse him another car,  
he will want a radio to go in his corvette.  
If he gets a radio to go in his corvette, he will want a tape  
player.  
If he gets a tape player, he will want tapes to go with it.  
Now he will want a c.b.*

*If he gets a c.b., he will want a car phone.*

*When he gets the car phone, he will want a portable t.v. for the car.*

*Then a c.d. player and some c.d. tapes.*

*Now he will want some loud speakers.*

*While he's occupied with these, he will have a wreck and want another used car.*

Vicky's sixth graders now demonstrate to themselves and their audience that they are both readers and writers. Pattern writing using predictable text helped to get them started writing. To broaden the writing program beyond pattern writing, daily sessions of Marathon Writing (McCoy, 1988), where the students and the teacher all write without stopping for about ten minutes each day on any topic they wish, can help develop writing mileage in a non-threatening way. Additional writing assignments or establishment of a Writing Workshop (Hansen, 1987) where the students write about the books they are reading can combine with pattern and marathon writing to make a well-rounded reading and writing program in a middle school class.

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# Computers and the Developmental Learner

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Even though the results of current research investigating the effectiveness of computers in the classroom are mixed, most studies report the popularity of computers with both teachers and students alike. Additionally, some studies validate the successful intervention of computerized instruction in reading and writing classrooms (Valeri-Gold and Deming, 1990, 1991; Deming and Valeri-Gold, 1990). Because of the computer's ability to make instruction more flexible and versatile, computer learning can be used to move college developmental writers away from restricting pen and paper writing tasks or "drill and kill" types of exercises. Computers can also help developmental educators teach college-level content area materials and reinforce the basic reading and writing techniques in the classroom or in a learning laboratory setting. In addition, specific computer activities can be developed for college developmental learners to aid students in the communicative arts.

## Figure 1 Computer Self-Awareness Survey

**Directions:** Please respond to the questions stated below concerning the use of the computer for your reading and writing assignments.

1. What experiences do you have with the computer?
  2. How will writing on the computer differ from writing with a pen or pencil?
  3. How do you feel about using the computer in this class?
  4. Will the computer affect your attitude and practices about writing? Why or why not?
  5. What are the advantages of using the computer for writing? Why?
  6. What are the disadvantages of using the computer for writing? Why?
  7. Have you taken any computer courses? When? Where?
  8. Do you know any wordprocessing programs? Which ones?
  9. Do you know any other computer programs? Which ones?
  10. Do you know how to use a computerized spellcheck or thesaurus?
- (Lansing, 1984; Deming, 1987; Gold and Deming, in press)

Gerrard (1989) notes that the computer can assist basic writers because it can help control the writing process by dividing it into its stages: prewriting, drafting, rewriting, and proofreading, while using commercially-produced software designed for each stage. Deming and Valeri-Gold (1990) recommend using a variety of business computer software, especially database programs, with basic writers to design a whole language curriculum.

**Figure 2**  
**Computer Exercises for Narrative Selections**

**Directions:** Take your writing folder and floppy disks from the file cabinet in the learning lab. After reading the narrative selections in your anthology, do the following exercises on the wordprocessor. Remember to imagine a reader as you write.

1. Write a personal narrative and print a copy. Take it to the lab tutor or a friend to read. Write a second draft and print a copy of all drafts to your reader.
2. Compose a narrative poem (one which tells a story). Do not worry about rhyme or meter. Use a graphics program to decorate it.
3. Choose your favorite narrative from this chapter or a narrative of your choice. Create a new narrative by changing its beginning and ending. Make copies and share your writing during group conferences.
4. Create a collaborative narrative by connecting computer terminals. Students can alternatively write sentences or work in groups of three at one computer. Print copies to share aloud with your peers in class.
5. Select a narrative in this chapter and write new sentences using the vocabulary words listed in your selections to demonstrate your understanding of the unknown words. Save your vocabulary words in your vocabulary database.
6. Keep a journal about your everyday experiences (good and bad) using the wordprocessor. Share your concerns and discoveries with others in your class.
7. Write a review of a narrative. Save it on a disk, so that other students can read it. Submit your review to the school's desktop publishing newsletter.
8. Write a letter to your pen pal using the electronic bulletin board sharing your "Most Embarrassing Moment!" or "Greatest Moment."

Now return your folders to the file cabinet.

Many software programs and techniques can be creatively designed to teach students the necessary reading and writing skills to succeed in college. The following computer exercises are suggested for either classroom or laboratory use with college developmental readers and writers.

**Figure 3**  
**Computer Exercises for Process Writing**

**Directions:** Work in small groups; use your computer.

1. Word process a "how to" essay. Take it to the lab tutor or a friend to read. Write a second draft incorporating your friend or tutor's suggestions and give a copy of all drafts to your teacher.
2. Find an example of a process essay or article from a newspaper or magazine. Use the outline function on your wordprocessing program to outline the major divisions of the text or write a summary of the author's main points. Or leave parts of the outline out to be filled in by other students.
3. Wordprocess a process essay, using a recipe format, on non-food topics such as "How to have a happy relationship" or "How to make a million dollars," or "How to drive your English teacher crazy." Remember to include the necessary "ingredients" and a step-by-step plan to follow. Save your recipes in your database file on process essays. Decorate your essays using a desktop publishing or graphics program.
4. Pretend that your state has been selected to host the Olympic Games. Wordprocess an editorial for your school newspaper detailing how members of your student body can become actively involved in planning the games. Or write a letter and send it to the Olympic Committee.
5. Imagine you are interviewing for a job as a sports announcer for a local television station. Choose a partner to role play the job interview, with one person acting as the employer and the other as the potential employee. Write a dialogue for this interview and dramatize it for your classmates.

**Computer activities**

At the beginning of the academic term, instructors might assess their students' computer expertise many times. Often educators either overestimate or underestimate their students' computer abilities or they do not realize the range of technological expertise in their classes. To individualize instruction in the computer classroom, a computer self-

awareness survey, such as the one shown in Figure 1, can be administered to the students during the first week of class. The same survey can be administered at the end of the course to measure students' growth in computer knowledge. Furthermore, this survey can provide educators with a more accurate picture of what experiences their students have with different types of computer software, particularly word-processing and other applications software.

In order to foster a whole language curriculum, computer exercises can be introduced to the class. The computer exercises shown in Figure 2 can be used with students after they have read a potpourri of literature selections in anthologies. The exercises can be adapted for a variety of literary selections identifying particular rhetorical modes. Additional activities can be added or deleted based on the individual needs of the students and the learning environment. Students can also use the computer for projects related to process writing exercises, such as those shown in Figure 3. These exercises and those shown in Figure 2 are adapted from Valeri-Gold and Deming (in press).

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