

**Literacy Activities Using  
Favorite Rhymes and Songs**

**Do You Know the**

**Muffin Man?**



**Pam Schiller  
and  
Thomas Moore**

**An Essential Preschool  
Literacy Resource**

# **Do You Know the Muffin Man?**

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By Pam Schiller and Thomas Moore

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*The Complete Curriculum for Infants* by Pam Schiller

*The Instant Curriculum; Revised Edition* by Pam Schiller and Joan Rossano

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**An Essential Preschool  
Literacy Resource**

**Pam Schiller  
and  
Thomas Moore**



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# Introduction



## Songs, Chants, and Rhymes

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Rhyme, rhythm, and music are essential parts of a quality early childhood curriculum. These play a role in setting the tone of the classroom, developing skills and concepts, helping children make transitions, and building a sense of community. Of course, if you ask the children, they will say that rhyming and singing are part of their daily activities because they're just plain fun!

## Early Literacy Skills

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In recent years, with a strong national focus on early literacy, we have begun to examine and define the valuable role singing songs and reciting chants and rhymes plays in laying the foundation for reading readiness. We know, for example, that singing songs and reciting chants and rhymes help build vocabulary and develop sound discrimination. The size of a child's vocabulary (*oral language*) and his or her skill in being able to discriminate sounds (*phonological awareness*) are strong predictors of how easily a child will learn to read when exposed to formal instruction. But oral language and phonological awareness are not the only skills that are developed when children are exposed to songs, chants, and rhymes. They also help develop listening and comprehension skills. With conscious effort, singing songs and reciting rhymes and chants can be used to provide opportunities for children to develop *letter knowledge and recognition* and to become familiar with the conventions of print.

## Song, Chants, and Rhymes as a Springboard

---

Song, chants, and rhymes can be used to develop every aspect of reading readiness including disposition. In order for children to become avid readers they need to master the skills (*mechanics*), but they must also have the desire to read (*disposition*). Disposition grows from positive experiences. Singing songs and reciting chants and rhymes provide a natural way to build the development of reading readiness skills while ensuring the acquisition of disposition.

*Do You Know the Muffin Man?* is a collection of traditional songs, chants, and rhymes with suggestions for ways they can be used to support the development of





basic reading readiness (*literacy*) skills. Simply singing the songs and reciting the chants and rhymes with children is a great first step, but to capitalize on the full range of benefits inherent in using songs, chants, and rhymes as a springboard to literacy, they must be used intentionally as real learning opportunities. The activities suggested with the songs, chants, and rhymes in this book provide opportunities for enhancing the development of listening and oral language development skills, as well as opportunities for building comprehension skills, supporting print awareness, and refining the knowledge and recognition of letters.

## Cross-Generational Links

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Children should be introduced to songs, chants, and rhymes that span time. First, they need selections that are traditional—so traditional that their grandparents, even great-grandparents, will recognize them. This includes songs such as “Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star” and “Yankee Doodle” and the poems and rhymes of poets like Robert Frost, Langston Hughes, and Laura Richards. Children also need to experience songs, chants, and rhymes that are modern traditional such as “Itsy Bitsy Spider,” “Miss Mary Mack,” and “Peanut Butter.” These are selections that have words, tunes, or both that are familiar to their parents. Finally, children also need to have their own songs, chants, and rhymes—new selections that will someday be the classics of their generation. These might include “Sing a Song of Opposites,” “Once There Were Three Brown Bears,” “Humpty Dumpty Dumpty” and “This Old Man Is Rockin’ On.”

Songs, chants, and rhymes that span several generations help maintain threads of unity as a society, as a culture, and as a perspective on history. They tie us to tradition while respecting our evolution into the future. Songs, chants, and rhymes are markers for each generation—a way to say, “This is who we were.” Some fond memories might include singing with your families—at church, around the piano at family gatherings, in the car, while you worked, maybe even singing to your new baby brother. Nothing is more fun and satisfying than singing together. Do you remember the first time you came home from school singing a song and your mother or father said, “Hey, I know that song!”

To provide this link for children, they need exposure to many songs, chants, and rhymes. The wider the breadth of that exposure, the greater their ability to see the threads that link us to one another. *Do You Know the Muffin Man?* embraces the concept of cross-generational music and rhymes and, although we hope children will have some exposure at home, we want to widen the exposure through the use of both familiar and new songs, chants, and rhymes in the classroom.



## Regional Links

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Songs, chants, and rhymes are also diverse when viewed from a geographical perspective. Not everyone in this country knows every song in this book. There are a few exceptions, but for the most part songs, chants, and rhymes are regional and sometimes even local. However, again, the wider the exposure the more likely children are to grow into adults who can sing their old favorite songs with any group of people from any age group and from any geographic location. The goal is to connect people one to another.

## What Does Brain Research Say About Singing?

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Singing makes us feel good, and when we feel good, our body releases endorphins into our system that will help boost our memory. Singing also requires that we take in additional oxygen, which increases our alertness. Singing is a great activity for enhancing brain functions.

## Using This Book

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There are more than 250 songs, chants, and rhymes in *Do You Know the Muffin Man?* The follow-up activities for each selection focus on using the song, chant, or rhyme to enhance the development of literacy skills. Because questions are a great way to stimulate both thinking (*comprehension*) and speaking (*oral language*), we have included suggested questions to ask children in many of the activities. Stimulating discussions are a great way to build oral language and comprehension skills. This is an often overlooked opportunity for building literacy skills. The book also provides reflection questions to use at the end of each day. Research suggests that this is one of the best ways to help children process what they have learned.

Many of the songs, chants, and rhymes in this book include examples of different literary terms, including alliteration (when several words in a row have the same beginning letter and sound), onomatopoeia (a word that sounds like its meaning), and exclamations (words and phrases used to show emotion). Explain to the children what the terms mean, and point them out whenever they occur. (All literary terms appear in boldface type.)

Throughout this book, we present a variety of ways to help children practice writing some of the words from the songs, chants, and rhymes. Some children may be able to write many of the words. Therefore, we suggest letting each child make his or her own Word Box (shoebox with a lid). Let the children decorate them as



desired. Suggestions for words to practice writing are made throughout the book. If able, children can write the suggested words on index cards and keep them in their Word Box.

In the appendix you will find rebus recipes, patterns, and a list of words in American Sign Language to teach children.

*Do You Know the Muffin Man?* can be used to support your daily lessons or as stand-alone lessons. There is a theme chart (appendix p. 223) that provides a map for how the songs, chants, and rhymes might fit in with specific themes. This will help you use the selections as a support to the themes you are teaching. If you want to use the songs, chants, and rhymes as support to specific aspects of literacy, you can use the index. For example, if you are looking for activities to support the development of listening skills, simply look under “listening” in the index to find those songs, chants, and rhymes with specific suggestions for listening. You can do the same for oral language, phonological awareness, print awareness, comprehension, and letter knowledge and recognition.

The songs, chants, and rhymes in this book also make great transition activities. Print your favorites on index cards and keep them in your pocket. Take one out during transitions and watch it work its magic.

## Keep the Joy

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Please be careful not to over-teach lessons. Choose only one or two of the follow-up activities each time you use a song or rhyme. Do not lose the song or rhyme in the drill and practice of skills. Over-teaching lessons will turn children off and the joy of the song, chant, or rhyme may be lost to them forever.

Don't forget your own joy. Singing comes from within all of us and there is truly no such thing as a person who cannot sing. Singing is your internal voice of celebration and although you may not be a Pavarotti, Garth Brooks, Patti LaBelle, or a Barbara Streisand, you have a voice that is uniquely yours. If you claim you can't sing you will model that thinking for children. And by not singing, you send the same subtle message. No one should deny his or her joyful expression. We want all children to find their internal voice of joy. You are their guide. “Children... seem to have a clearer understanding of what constitutes a good voice. The children I know hear every voice for what it has to offer: Beauty. Power. A way for human beings to connect. The opening of a soul.” [Moore, T. (2002, July). If you teach children, you can sing. *Young Children*, p. 84-85.]



## When You Don't Know the Tune

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There may be traditional songs in *Do You Know the Muffin Man?* that are unfamiliar to you. Familiarity with songs is determined by life experiences, geographic location, cultural background, family traditions, and a whole array of circumstances that may never be identified. What is so wonderful is that the great diversity of traditional songs created by these differences provides opportunities for us to continue to add new songs to our personal collections throughout our lives.

If you come to a song you don't know, look it up on one of the websites provided in the appendix (p. 241). Most sites provide an opportunity to actually hear the lyrics. If there is a song you can't find, say it as a chant or rhyme. The inherent value of the rhyme and rhythm will still provide a rich language experience for the children.

## Learn While the Children Learn

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One of the best things this book offers is the inherent opportunity within the songs, chants, and rhymes to help children enhance the development of early literacy skills. It can help you see a myriad of possibilities. It will also help you better articulate the value of singing and reciting chants and rhymes. With accountability knocking at the door of the classroom, it is critical to speak to the educational and learning value of these activities. This is a new era for all of us. The best way to grow with our profession is by experiencing firsthand the kinds of activities that can best guide the literacy journey for young children. There is no teacher like experience.

We know that you and the children in your classroom will enjoy the activities in *Do You Know the Muffin Man?* Singing and reciting chants and rhymes are just plain fun for all of us. You can't help but fall in love with language when you experience it with rhythm, cadence, rhyme, and melody. Keep a song in your heart and a poem in your pocket—they are great tools for developing a foundation for literacy!





# The Alphabet Forward and Backwards

## The Alphabet Forward and Backwards

(Tune: Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star)

A - B - C - D - E - F - G,  
H - I - J - K - L - M - N - O - P,  
Q - R - S - T - U - V,  
W, X, Y, and Z.

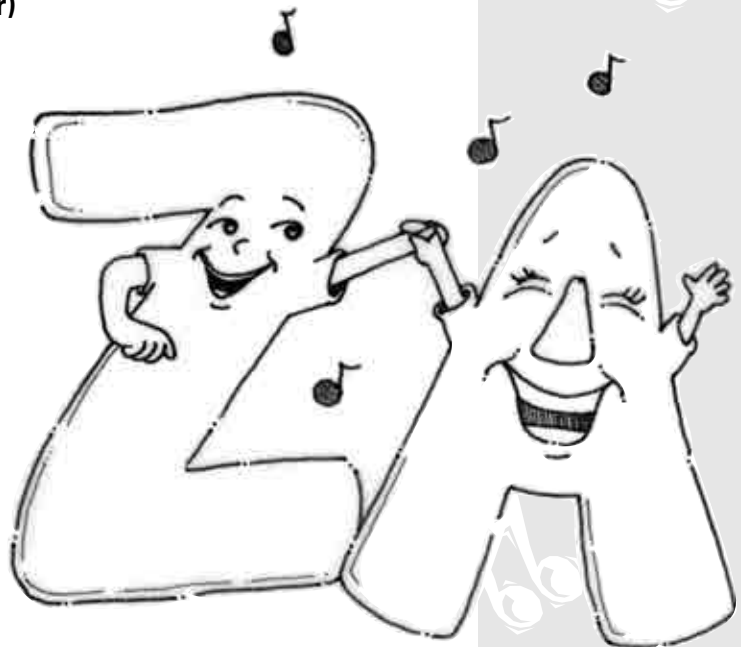
Now I know my ABC's.

Next time sing them backwards with me.

Z - Y - X - W - V - U - T,  
S - R - Q - P - O - N - M - L,  
K - J - I - H - G - F,  
E - D - C, B and A.

Now I've said my ZYX's.

Bet that's not what you expected!



## Related Songs, Chants, and Rhymes

### Alphabet Boogie by Thomas Moore\*

B-a-Ba, B-e-Be, B-i-Bi, B-o-Bo, Bi-Bo-Bu, I love you.

C-a-Ca, C-e-Ce, C-i-Ci, Co-o-Co, Ci-Co-Cu, I love you.

\*I Am Special CD, Thomas Moore Enterprises

### Alphabet Song (Tune: Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star)

A - B - C - D - E - F - G,  
H - I - J - K - L - M - N - O - P,  
Q - R - S - T - U - V,  
W, X, Y, and Z.

Now I know my ABC's.

Next time won't you sing with me?

### THEME CONNECTIONS

Alphabet  
Humor  
Nursery Rhymes  
School



**Nursery Rhyme Rap (Tune: Ninety-Nine Bottles of Pop on the Wall)**

*Jack and Jill went up the hill  
 To get a pail of water.  
 Jack fell down and broke his crown  
 And Jill came tumbling after.  
 Oh, A B C D E F G...H I J K L...M N O P...Q R S... TUVWXYZ!  
 Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall  
 Humpty Dumpty had a great fall.  
 All the king's horses and all the king's men,  
 Couldn't put Humpty together again.  
 Oh, A B C D E F G...H I J K L...M N O P...Q R S...TUVWXYZ!  
 Little Miss Muffet sat on her tuffet  
 Eating her curds and whey.  
 Along came a spider who sat down beside her  
 And frightened Miss Muffet away.  
 Oh, A B C D E F G...H I J K L...M N O P...Q R S...TUVWXYZ!  
 Hey, diddle diddle, the cat and the fiddle  
 The cow jumped over the moon.  
 The little dog laughed to see such a sight,  
 And the dish ran away with the spoon.  
 Oh, A B C D E F G...H I J K L...M N O P...Q R S...TUVWXYZ!  
 Little Boy Blue, come blow your horn,  
 The sheep's in the meadow, the cow's in the corn.  
 Where is the boy who looks after the sheep?  
 He's under the haystack fast asleep.  
 Oh, A B C D E F G...H I J K L...M N O P...Q R S...TUVWXYZ!  
 Hickory, dickory, dock,  
 The mouse ran up the clock.  
 The clock struck one, the mouse ran down,  
 Hickory, dickory, dock.  
 Oh, A B C D E F G...H I J K L...M N O P...Q R S...TUVWXYZ!*

**Literacy Activities**

(Select one or two follow-up activities to do each time you sing a song or say a rhyme.)

**Oral Language Development**

1. Discuss the alphabet with the children. Explain that the alphabet is a family of letters that go together in a special order. Show them that letters are mixed up when they are used in words, but they are in order when they stay together as a family of letters.



2. Discuss the difference between forward and backward. Have a child demonstrate moving forward and then backward.

### **Letter Knowledge and Recognition**

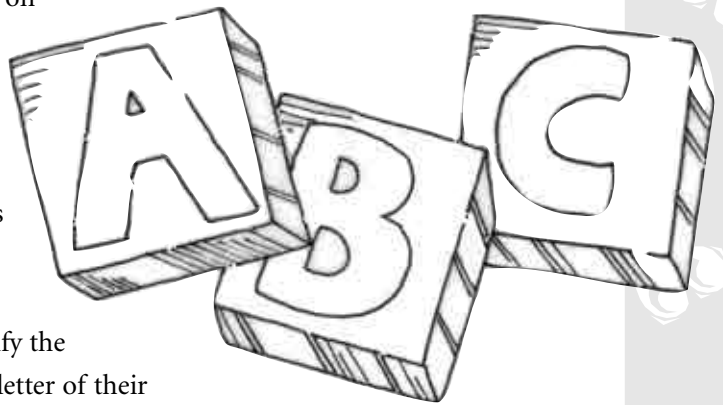
1. Point to the alphabet (alphabet wall cards) as you sing the song. Ask questions. *Which letter is the first letter of the alphabet? Which letter is the last letter in the alphabet? Which letter of the alphabet is the same as the first letter of your name?*
2. Place four consecutive alphabet cards on the floor. Ask the children to close their eyes while you remove one of the letters. When they open their eyes, can they tell you which letter is missing?
3. Read your favorite alphabet book. As you read about each letter, ask the children to indicate when the letter is the first letter of their name.

### **Learning Centers**

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#### **Blocks (Alphabet Blocks)**

Place stick-on letters from A to Z on square blocks, or photocopy the alphabet letter patterns (appendix p. 232) and tape them to the blocks. Encourage the children to arrange the blocks in alphabetical order. Try arranging the letters in sequences of four. Ask the children to identify the letter that is the same as the first letter of their name. *Can you find all the letters in your name?*



#### **Fine Motor (My Favorite Letter)**

Encourage the children to make their favorite alphabet letter out of playdough.

#### **Language (ABC Train)**

Photocopy the train patterns (appendix p. 236-237) to make an alphabet train. Make one engine and 26 cars. Print one letter on each train car (or use stick-on letters). Ask the children to arrange the cars in alphabetical order.

#### **Writing (ABC Magnetic Letters)**

Invite the children to arrange magnetic letters or the Alphabet Letter Patterns (appendix p. 232) in alphabetical order.





# Teach literacy with over 250 favorite songs, rhymes, and activities!

**Do You Know the Muffin Man?** is filled with activities to accompany well-known rhymes, songs, and chants. The activities help lay the foundation for reading by developing listening and oral language skills, comprehension skills, print awareness, and knowledge and recognition of letters. And, the activities are just plain fun!

Singing songs and reciting rhymes and chants with children is a great first step towards literacy, and the ideas in **Do You Know the Muffin Man?** will breathe new life and learning into familiar songs, rhymes, and chants. The best-selling authors of **Where is Thumbkin?** have created a second collection of learning activities that is destined to become a favorite!

## EACH SELECTION IS ACCOMPANIED BY

- ♪ Related rhymes, songs, and chants
- ♪ Follow-up literacy activities, including ideas for developing oral language and phonological awareness
- ♪ Learning center ideas
- ♪ Outdoor play and/or music and movement activities
- ♪ Reflections

*"Pam & Thomas have put together a wonderful literacy book using favorite children's songs as a catalyst. This book will inspire parents and teachers to share the joy of music with their children while developing language and reading skills."*

—Jackie Silberg, best-selling author and children's musician

*"Language development is the most important factor in a child's readiness to read. Pam Schiller and Thomas Moore have teamed up to produce a great music-related resource that will build children's vocabulary in a fun and appropriate way."*

—Al Rasso ("Mr. Al"), children's recording artist and early childhood consultant



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## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Pam Schiller, Ph.D. is a highly respected early childhood consultant who shares her extensive knowledge in workshops, radio and television interviews, and as a popular keynote speaker



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