Historical Origins of Nursery Rhymes

History Of Nursery Rhymes · Answer Key · 15 Questions

1. Which historical figure is most commonly associated with the theory that 'Mary, Mary, Quite Contrary' refers to the religious policies of Queen Mary I?

A) Elizabeth I
B) Mary Tudor
C) Mary Queen of Scots
D) Anne Boleyn

2. The rhyme 'Ring a Ring o' Roses' is frequently, though controversially, linked to which historical event in London?

A) The Great Fire of 1666
B) The Peasants' Revolt
C) The Great Plague of 1665
D) The Norman Conquest

3. 'Humpty Dumpty' appeared in a 17th-century context not as an egg, but as what type of mechanism?

A) A siege engine
B) A type of ale
C) A parliamentary decree
D) A maritime compass

4. The lyrics 'Three Blind Mice' were first published in 1609 by Thomas Ravenscroft; what do they supposedly describe regarding Queen Mary I?

A) The blinding of peasant protesters
B) The execution of three Anglican bishops
C) The suppression of Catholic monasteries
D) The loss of three naval ships

5. 'London Bridge is Falling Down' is historically believed to reference the 1014 attack by which leader?

A) William the Conqueror
B) King Canute
C) Olaf II of Norway
D) Harald Hardrada

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6. The rhyme 'Georgie Porgie' is often analyzed by historians as a satirical commentary on which English monarch?

A) George I
B) George II
C) George III
D) George IV

7. 'Jack and Jill' is theorized by some etymologists to be a coded reference to the execution of which French figures?

A) Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette
B) Robespierre and Danton
C) Napoleon and Josephine
D) Marat and Charlotte Corday

8. 'Little Jack Horner' is traditionally linked to Thomas Horner, a steward to the Abbot of Glastonbury, during which historical process?

A) The Hundred Years' War
B) The Dissolution of the Monasteries
C) The English Civil War
D) The Glorious Revolution

9. The rhyme 'Sing a Song of Sixpence' has been interpreted by some as a metaphor for what specific historical activity?

A) The printing of the King James Bible
B) The levying of taxes by the Tudors
C) The discovery of the New World
D) The trade of spices with the East

10. 'Baa, Baa, Black Sheep' is often linked to the medieval taxation of which commodity in England?

A) Coal
B) Wool
C) Grain
D) Iron

11. The character 'Yankee Doodle' was originally used by British troops during the American Revolutionary War to mock whom?

A) George Washington
B) The Continental Army
C) The French allies
D) The British loyalists

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12. 'Ladybird, Ladybird' is frequently interpreted as a reference to the persecution of which group during the Reformation?

A) Catholics
B) Puritans
C) Quakers
D) Huguenots

13. 'Who Killed Cock Robin' is sometimes historically linked to the fall of which political ministry in the 18th century?

A) The Walpole Ministry
B) The Pitt Ministry
C) The North Ministry
D) The Grenville Ministry

14. 'Old Mother Hubbard' was written by Sarah Catherine Martin; historians suggest the 'Hubbard' may be a caricature of whom?

A) Cardinal Wolsey
B) Oliver Cromwell
C) Elizabeth I
D) George III

15. 'Ten Little Indians' (originally 'Ten Little Niggers') was written in 1868 by Septimus Winner; what was its original context?

A) A political protest
B) A minstrel show song
C) A children's lullaby
D) A celebratory anthem

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