Nursery Rhyme Origins and History

Literature And History · Answer Key · 15 Questions

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

A) Elizabeth I

B) Mary I

C) Anne Boleyn

D) Victoria

2. The nursery rhyme 'Ring a Ring o' Roses' is frequently, though debatably, linked to the symptoms of which historical epidemic?

A) The Great Plague of London

B) The Spanish Flu

C) The Antonine Plague

D) The Justinian Plague

3. 'Humpty Dumpty' was originally portrayed as what type of object in early versions of the riddle, before it became a personified egg?

A) A cannon

B) A clumsy person

C) A siege engine

D) A fragile vase

4. In 'Jack and Jill', the characters are often theorized to represent which French monarchs who were executed during the French Revolution?

A) Louis XIV and Marie Antoinette

B) Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette

C) Charles X and Marie Antoinette

D) Louis XVIII and Josephine

5. The rhyme 'London Bridge is Falling Down' is believed by some historians to allude to which historical event involving Norse attacks on London?

A) The Viking siege of 1014

B) The Norman Conquest of 1066

C) The Great Fire of 1666

D) The Peasants' Revolt of 1381

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6. Which nursery rhyme is widely interpreted as a coded critique of the mismanagement of the English Treasury and the corruption of the wool trade?

A) Baa, Baa, Black Sheep
B) Little Bo Peep
C) Three Blind Mice
D) Hey Diddle Diddle

7. The lines in 'Three Blind Mice' are historically conjectured to refer to the persecution of which group by Queen Mary I?

A) The Lollards
B) The Oxford Martyrs
C) The Knights Templar
D) The Levellers

8. What is the primary literary function of the 'nonsense verse' found in many nursery rhymes, popularized by authors like Edward Lear?

A) Political satire
B) Phonetic play and structural subversion
C) Religious instruction
D) Agricultural calendar tracking

9. 'Little Miss Muffet' is often associated with the daughter of which prominent 16th-century entomologist?

A) Thomas Muffet
B) John Ray
C) Carl Linnaeus
D) Charles Darwin

10. The rhyme 'Sing a Song of Sixpence' has been interpreted by some as a hidden allegory for what specific historical practice?

A) The printing of the King James Bible
B) The levying of the window tax
C) The collection of feudal tithes
D) The smuggling of spices

11. 'Who Killed Cock Robin' is historically viewed as a satire on the political downfall of which British Prime Minister in 1742?

A) Robert Walpole
B) William Pitt the Elder
C) Lord North
D) The Duke of Newcastle

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12. Which of the following is considered the earliest recorded printed collection of nursery rhymes, published in the 18th century?

A) Mother Goose's Melody
B) The Canterbury Tales
C) Grimm's Fairy Tales
D) Alice's Adventures in Wonderland

13. 'Georgie Porgie' is often theorized to be a lampoon of which historical British figure known for his extra-marital affairs?

A) George Villiers, 1st Duke of Buckingham
B) George IV
C) George III
D) Prince George of Denmark

14. Many nursery rhymes rely on which specific literary device to aid in oral transmission across generations?

A) Mnemonic repetition and end-rhyme
B) Complex metaphor
C) Free verse
D) Apostrophe

15. The rhyme 'Pop! Goes the Weasel' is thought to reference the pawning of a tradesman's tool, specifically what kind of tool?

A) A shoemaker's last
B) A blacksmith's hammer
C) A weaver's shuttle
D) A carpenter's plane

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