Playbox. One of a group of children's annuals published in Britain by the Amalgamated Press, Playbox is considered the first comic annual. Originating as a children's supplement to the magazines Home Chat (1898) and The World and His Wife (1904), Playbox was launched as an annual in 1909 and was published until 1956. It starred the famous comic character “Tiger Tim,” who went on to feature in a number of AP annuals and weeklies. Tiger Tim and his friends, a group of anthropomorphized animals attending “Mrs. Hippo's Kindergarten,” later to become “Mrs. Bruin’s Boarding School,” appeared in several strips per annual (usually three pages) and in full-page illustrations. Also included were fantasy and adventure stories, additional comics, humorous poetry, and activities. Intended for young children, Playbox was profusely illustrated with color plates, text illustrations, and photographs. In 1925 the AP relaunched Playbox as a weekly comic aimed at girls, starring Tim's sister Tiger Tilly and her pals the Hippo Girls. Later redesigned for a mixed-sex readership, Playbox (weekly) ran until 1955.

[See also Animal Stories; Annuals; Children's Magazines; and Comic Books.]

BIBLIOGRAPHY


MARTHA SCOTT

Planché, James Robinson (1796–1880), English dramatist and historian who wrote nearly two hundred theatrical pieces, including several “extravaganzas” based on translations of French fairy tales, especially those of Madame d'Aulnoy and Charles Perrault. Planché's work was popular with English audiences because of the contemporary social, cultural, and political references that he added to the original stories. His extravaganzas, based on the French *folie férie* (fairy comedy) and English pantomime, employed intricately mechanized sets, fairy motifs, sumptuous decoration, music, dance, and historically accurate costumes. Because the plays' effects depend largely upon elaborate spectacles and contemporary references, it is challenging for readers today to appreciate their artistry. Planché's innovative use of puns and burlesque may have influenced W. S. Gilbert. Planché's most popular productions include *Puss in Boots* (1837), *Blue Beard* (1839), and *The White Cat* (1842). He also published several collections of fairy tales translated from French, including *The Fairy Tales of the Countess D'Aulnoy* (1855) and *Four and Twenty Fairy Tales Translated from Perrault* (1858).

[See also Adaptation; Aulnoy, Marie Catherine, Comtesse d'; Fairy Tales and Folk Tales; Pantomime; and Perrault, Charles.]

SIGRID ANDERSON CORDELL

Playground Rhymes. The most common form of children's poetry is also the most commonly overlooked: playground rhymes. A kind of folk poetry, playground rhymes exist somewhere between original composition and received oral tradition, and as such, they question dominant notions of the individual authorial genius, while simultaneously complementing adult literary poetic traditions through parody and appropriation. Playground rhyme—or playground poetry—is a term that refers to many forms of childhood folk poetry, each form serving multiple aesthetic and social functions. Some playground rhymes, for instance, are used to choose players in games ("'Eenie meenie minie moe, / Catch a tiger by its toe"), while others facilitate jump-roping ("Cinderella dressed in yellow / Went upstairs to kiss her fellow") or hand-clapping games ("Miss Mary Mac, Mac, Mac, / All dressed in black, black, black"). Still others censure poor behavior ("'No cuts, no butts, no coconuts"), mock authority ("Joy to the world, the teacher's dead, / I barbecued her head / Don't worry 'bout the body, / I flushed it down the potty"), mock peers ("I'm a monkey / You're a donkey / I smell sweet and you smell funky"), or defend against mockery ("Sticks and stones may break my bones / But words will never hurt me"). However, a common characteristic of all good playground rhymes is the flaunting of lyrical inventiveness and language play.

Like the nursery rhymes of Mother Goose, no one owns these poems; they belong to each child equally, and each child retains the right to alter and revise the poems as mood or situation dictates. One child, for instance, might chant, "Greasy grumpy gopher guts, / Mutilated monkey meat, / Little dirty birdie feet," while another might say, "Greasy grumpy gopher guts, / Marinated monkey meat, / Vulture vomit at my feet." Similarly, children feel free to insert the names of friends (or enemies) into the following common rhyme, personalizing it and thereby winning their peers' esteem: "X and Y sitting in a tree, / K-I-S-S-I-N-G. / First comes love, / Then comes marriage, / Then comes Z in a baby carriage."
In different communities one finds either different rhymes or competing versions of the same rhyme, which vary from street corner to street corner, playground to playground. With playground poetry, variety is the rule, each new generation reproducing and reimagining their rhymes, forming a canon of culturally specific poetry shared by all, internalized through memory and public recitation. Unlike children's poetry produced by adults, the production of playground rhymes is not monitored by authority figures. Thus they often contain vulgar, violent (and quite comical) imagery, resisting conventions of decorum and politeness while favoring the lewd and scatological. Their very nature makes it unlikely that playground rhymes would ever be anthologized for children, and thus most rhymes exist only in memory, in performance, or in collections made by folklorists. The most notable exception to this rule is Iona and Peter Opie's *I Saw Esau: The Schoolchild's Pocket Book*, which, in its most recent incarnation, is illustrated by Maurice Sendak in an oblique bid for a child audience.

Playground rhymes resist nostalgic notions of the innocent and obedient child, and thus tend to disturb adults, implying, as they do, sexualized, complicated children able to control their world through wordplay and sometimes violent imagery. The authors and performers of these rhymes rarely hesitate to employ so-called adult language, crafting a kind of children's poetry that would be impossible to find in children's literature produced by adults:

Abraham Lincoln
Was a good old soul.
He washed his face
In a toilet bowl.
He jumped out the window
With his dick in his hand,
And said, "Scuse me, ladies!
I'm superman."

The following parody of "Twinkle Twinkle Little Star" suggests the scatological and anti-authoritarian impulses common in playground rhymes:

Twinkle, Twinkle, little star;
Who the hell do you think you are?
Up in the sky you think you're it;
Down on earth you're a piece of shit.

As these rhymes illustrate, playground poetry demonstrates the child's preoccupation with the body and bodily functions, even as they promote group play, physical exchange, and unrestrained noise. They are composed and performed with the aim of producing strong bodily reactions: laughter, guffaws, gasps, groans, or, in the case of jump-rope rhymes, vigorous play. As they center on taboo subjects, the rhymes can be racist or can resist racism, as does this rhyme, first recorded in east Texas at the height of the civil rights movement:

Two, four, six, eight,
We ain't gonna integrate.
Eight, six, four, two,
Bet you sons-of-bitches do.

Other playground rhymes parody adult poetry. The best-known set of playground parodies includes the many variations on Isaac Watts's hymn "Joy to the World." With these poems, playground poets ally themselves with Lewis Carroll, an adult poet who used Watts's verse as a source for poetry. Based on Psalm 96:11–13, the hymn's religious theme is in conflict with the violence and revolutionary impulses of its many schoolyard variations, all of which question the hierarchical values implied by the hymn. One version reads:

Joy to the world, the school burned down,
And all the teachers died.
We're going to take the principal
And hang her from the toilet bowl.
With a rope around her neck,
A rope around her neck.

Other playground rhymes parody adult-produced television shows like *Barney*, which construct children as sweet and loving little angels ready and willing to learn politically correct lessons from equally sweet and loving adults:

I hate you, you hate me.
Let's tie Barney to a tree,
Pull the trigger.
Hit him on the head.
Whoopsy daisy, Barney's dead.

I hate you, you hate me.
Let's get together and kill Barney.
With a knife in the stomach and a bullet in the head.
Aren't you glad that Barney's dead?

Although not respected by most adults, the rhythms and rhymes of playground poetry have influenced the writing of many poets, from Allison Joseph to Theodore Roethke, who, for instance, in "I Need, I Need," includes these lines, which seem more at home on the playground than in a collection of adult poetry:

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The *Oxford Encyclopedia of Children's Literature*
Plays. Stage adaptations have long been made of literature—legends, folk tales, fables, and fairy tales—intended for children and young adults. However, it was with the publication of Lewis Carroll’s two children’s books, Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland (1865) and Through the Looking Glass and What Alice Found There (1871), that stage adaptations of literature for children and young adults by identified authors emerged. Many adaptations of contemporary literary works followed, with the Alice plays (1880 and 1882), F. Anstey’s Vice Versa (1883), William Makepeace Thackeray’s The Rose and the Ring (1890), Charles Kingsley’s The Water Babies (1902), and Heinrich Hoffmann’s Struwwelpeter (1903). Several of these continue to be performed in modern recycled versions. Frances Hodgson Burnett’s own adaptation of her novel Little Lord Fauntleroy (1886; dramatized 1888) became immensely popular in Britain and the United States, creating a new fashion for boys’ clothes, while Burnett also adapted her short novel Sara Crewe (1887) for the stage as A Little Princess (1902), incorporating and extending the stage version into the 1905 novel we know by this title today. Among musical adaptations, a version of Alice appeared in 1886, and Frank Baum’s own musical The Wizard of Oz, loosely based on his 1900 book, was performed in 1902. In 1929 A. A. Milne adapted Kenneth Grahame’s The Wind in the Willows (1904) as Toad of Toad Hall, a play with songs. Retrospective adaptations include those of Laura Ingalls Wilder’s Little House series, Roald Dahl’s books, and C. S. Lewis’s The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe. Recent notable plays include Jacqueline Wilson’s own versions of Double Act (1995) and The Lottie Project (1997), and literary award winners such as Louis Sachar’s Holes (1998), David Almond’s Skellig (2003), and Philip Pullman’s 1995–2001 trilogy His Dark Materials, which became a two-part six-hour National Theatre production in 2003. [See also Adaptation; Drama; Films: Film Adaptations of Children’s and Young Adult Literature; and biographies of figures mentioned in this article.]

Bridget Carrington

Plowman, Stephanie (1922–), British writer of historical fiction. Formerly a teacher, Plowman is a history graduate, and her out-of-print novels for teenagers are now eagerly sought after by devoted adult collectors. Her books