**Ring around the Rosy**

**Connections to the Bubonic Plague (Black Death)?  
The words to the Ring around the rosy children's ring game have their origin in English history . The historical period dates back to the Great Plague of London in 1665 (bubonic plague) or even before when the first outbreak of the Plague hit England in the 1300's. The symptoms of the plague included a rosy red rash in the shape of a ring on the** [**skin**](http://www.rhymes.org.uk/ring_around_the_rosy.htm) **(Ring around the rosy). Pockets and pouches were filled with sweet smelling herbs ( or posies) which were carried due to the belief that the disease was transmitted by bad smells. The term "Ashes Ashes" refers to the cremation of the dead bodies! The death rate was over 60% and the plague was only halted by the Great Fire of London in 1666 which killed the rats which carried the disease which was transmitting via water sources. The English version of "Ring around the rosy" replaces Ashes with (A-tishoo, A-tishoo) as violent sneezing was another symptom of the disease. We recommend the following site for comprehensive information regarding the Bubonic Plague.**[**http://www.william-shakespeare.info/bubonic-black-plague-elizabethan-era.htm**](http://www.william-shakespeare.info/bubonic-black-plague-elizabethan-era.htm) **Views of the Sceptics  
The connection between this Rhyme was made by James Leasor in 1961 in his non-fiction book ' The Plague and the Fire. Some people are sceptical of the plague interpretations of this rhyme, many stating that words in the rhyme cannot be found in Middle English. The sceptics must be referring to the later version of the rhyme, possibly with American origins, the English version is "Ring a ring o' rosies" using the Middle English "o" as a shortening of the word "of". The written word " posies" is first mentioned in a poem called 'Prothalamion or A Spousal Verse' by Edmund Spenser (1552-1599). We believe that this addresses the views of the sceptics.**

**London Bridge is Falling Down**

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| **The Wooden Bridge The 'London Bridge is falling down' Nursery Rhyme is based on the one of the most famous landmarks in London. It's history can be traced to the Roman occupation of England in the first century. The first London Bridge was made of wood and clay and was fortified or re-built with the various materials mentioned in the children's nursery rhyme. Many disasters struck the bridges - Viking invaders destroyed the bridge in the 1000's which led to a fortified design, complete with a drawbridge. Building materials changed due to the many fires that broke out on the bridge. The Stone Bridge The first stone bridge was designed by Peter de Colechurch and built in 1176 and took 33 years to build and featured twenty arches the dimensions of which were sixty feet high and thirty feet wide and was complete with tower and gates. The flow of the Thames under the bridge was used to turn water wheels below the arches for grinding grain. By the 1300's the bridge contained 140 shops, some of which were more than three stories high. ( The reference to Silver and Gold in the rhyme relates to the trading which was conducted on the bridge). London Bridge survived the Great Fire of London in 1666 but its arches and foundations were weakened. (Buildings with thatched roofs were banned in London following the Great Fire of 1666 and this ban was only lifted with the construction of the New Globe Theater in 1994 - the following website is highly recommended for further details of the Globe** [**william-shakespeare.info**](http://www.william-shakespeare.info) | |
| **The Modern Re-builds! In the 1820s a new London Bridge was built on another site, north of the old one. This new bridge opened in 1831 and the old bridge was demolished. In the 1960s yet another London Bridge was built. The London Bridge of 1831 was transported, stone by stone, to Lake Havasu in Arizona, USA.** |  |

Pop Goes the Weasel

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| **The Nursery Rhyme, 'Pop goes the weasel' sounds quite incomprehensible in this day an age! The origins of the rhyme are believed to date back to the 1700's. We have listed two versions of the rhyme on this page. The first rhyme is the better known version - some translation is in order!**  **Pop and Weasel? These words are derived from Cockney Rhyming slang which originated in London. Cockneys were a close community and had a suspicion of strangers and a dislike of the Police (they still do!) Cockneys developed a language of their own based roughly on a rhyming slang - it was difficult for strangers to understand as invariably the second noun would always be dropped. Apples and Pears ( meaning stairs) would be abbreviated to just 'apples', for instance, "watch your step on the apples". To "Pop" is the slang word for "Pawn". Weasel is derived from "weasel and stoat" meaning coat. It was traditional for even poor people to own a suit, which they wore as their 'Sunday Best'. When times were hard they would pawn their suit, or coat, on a Monday and claim it back before Sunday. Hence the term " Pop goes the Weasel"**  **In and out the Eagle? The words to the Rhyme are "Up and down the City road, in and out the Eagle - That’s the way the money goes - Pop! goes the weasel". The Eagle refers to 'The Eagle Tavern' a pub which is located on the corner of City Road and Shepherdess Walk in Hackney, North London. The Eagle was an old pub which was re-built as a music hall in 1825. Charles Dickens (1812-1870) was known to frequent the Music Hall. It was purchased by  the Salvation Army in 1883 ( they were totally opposed to drinking and Music Halls). The hall was later demolished and was rebuilt as a public house in 1901.** | |
| **Alternative Lyrics "A penny for a spool of thread, a penny for a needle" - this version has led to a 'weasel' being interpreted as  a shuttle or bobbin, as used by silk weavers, being pawned in a similar way as the suits or jackets owned by the Cockneys.** |  |