

## Humpty Dumpty: Was It Really An Accident ?

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### ABSTRACT

This lesson lends a new twist to a familiar nursery rhyme. The students will participate in a scripted trial about Humpty Dumpty's "accident".

### AGE LEVEL

Upper elementary (4,5,6)

### TIME REQUIRED

Two class periods

### MATERIALS NEEDED

One copy of trial for each participant.

### PROCEDURE

#### Day One

Reintroduce the nursery rhyme Humpty Dumpty to the class. Ask them why did Humpty Dumpty fall from the wall. Introduce the scripted trial to the class. Give each participant, except jury, a copy of the trial. Then let the class "perform" the trial.

#### Day Two

Review the opening and closing arguments of the trial. Let the jury deliberate a verdict. Discuss with the jury what facts helped them make their decision. Brainstorm with the class other nursery rhymes that involve unresolved crimes.

#### Optional

- Have the class "explain" what happened to cause the accidents in other nursery rhymes.
- Let cooperative groups work on other plays concerning nursery rhymes.

### OBJECTIVES

As a result of this lesson, students will:

- critically think about familiar nursery rhymes and come to logical conclusions for them.
- learn more about the roles of the court workers by actively portraying these workers.
- be able to analyze other nursery rhymes.

### EVALUATION

The teacher may evaluate the students on their participation skills in acting out the trial. Also the teacher may evaluate by giving the students the opportunity to make up satisfactory explanations for other nursery rhymes.

### Debrief

After the jurors have returned their verdict:

- Ask what was the compelling evidence for their verdict?
- How did they feel about the evidence presented?

Ask the rest of the "players":

- How did you feel about the way the trial went?
- Do you agree with the verdict?

Then lead into a discussion of what other Nursery rhymes have unsolved crimes in them. Let the class work in cooperative groups to have another trial.

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### **PARTICIPANTS**

Judge - Mother Goose  
Bailiff - Jack Horner  
Defendant - Roy L. Kingsman  
Defense Counsel - Twiddle Dee  
Prosecution - Twiddle Dum  
Witness for the Prosecution - Kirk Kingsman  
Witness for the Prosecution - Wily Wolf  
Juror - (1-12)

**Bailiff: (STAND)** All rise. The Superior Court for the State of Nurseryland is now in session. The Honorable M. Goose presiding.

**Judge: (ENTER THE ROOM AND TAKE YOUR SEAT)** Please be seated. This is the case of the State of Nurseryland versus Roy L. Kingsman which involves the charge that the defendant violated Criminal Code #12-345-6 and is now charged with the crime of first degree murder. **Court** is now in session. **(STRIKE THE GAVEL)** Is the Prosecution ready?

**Prosecution: (STAND)** Yes, Your Honor. **(SIT DOWN)**

**Judge:** Is the defense ready?

**Defense: (STAND)** Yes, Your Honor. **(SIT DOWN)**

**Judge: (LOOK AT THE PROSECUTION)** Counsel, you may proceed with your opening argument.

**Prosecution: (STAND, WALK AROUND THE TABLE AND LOOK AT THE JUDGE AND THE JURY)** Your Honor, the State will prove beyond a reasonable doubt that the defendant, Mr. Roy L. Kingsman, violated criminal code #12-345-6 and by doing so is guilty of first degree murder. The State will show the following facts in this case. On the morning of March 5, 1992, Mr. Roy L. Kingsman and Mr. Kirk Kingsman were out riding the King's horses on their daily patrols. At this time they happened along the wall that divides Nurseryland from Fairytale Land. Whereupon Mr. Roy L. Kingsman and Mr. Kirk Kingsman came upon the victim Mr. Humpty Dumpty sitting on a wall. Mr. Dumpty began making remarks about the King's horses. Mr. Kirk Kingsman proceeded on his daily route, but Mr. Roy L. Kingsman stopped and inquired of Mr. Dumpty as to why he was making these remarks. At that time an argument ensued. Because of his rather unusual sitting position, Mr. Dumpty rolled off the wall and broke into many pieces. Mr. Roy L. Kingsman then left the helpless victim and proceeded on his routine watch soon catching up to Mr. Kirk Kingsman. As the two approached the wall again, they found Mr. Dumpty lying in a heap on the road. Now Mr. Roy L. Kingsman will tell you that he and his companion, Mr. Kirk Kingsman, tried to put the pieces back together. He will also testify that the king's horses also tried to aid in this rather helpless attempt to piece Mr. Dumpty back together. But the prosecution will bring to you an eyewitness that was in the bushes during this whole ordeal. Mr. Wily

Wolf will testify that while he was out taking his elderly Grandma some cookies, he happened along this same road and heard the argument between Mr. Roy L. Kingsman and Mr. Dumpty. Mr. Wolf will tell you that he saw Mr. Kingsman agitate Mr. Dumpty to the point that he rolled off the wall and Mr. Kingsman left him for dead. Mr. Kingsman's weak attempt to "fix" Mr. Dumpty was just a cover-up for his felonious deed. Ladies and Gentlemen of the Jury, the State will rely on the eyewitness statement of Mr. Wily Wolf to prove its case. From the evidence you will hear, you will have no choice but to find the defendant guilty of the crime as charged. Thank you.

**(SIT DOWN)**

**Judge:** Thank you. The Court will now hear the Defense's opening statement.

**Defense: (STAND, WALK AROUND THE TABLE AND LOOK AT THE JURY)** Your Honor, the Defense intends to show the following facts in this case. First of all, you have all heard the prosecution tell you that Mr. Dumpty was in a precarious sitting position on the wall. Let's look at the anatomy of the victim. His rounded bottom does not lend itself to sitting stable. My client, Mr. Roy L. Kingsman, will testify that he was on his regular daily rounds with Mr. Kirk Kingsman. They came upon the wall that divides Nurseryland from Fairytale Land. Mr. Dumpty was sitting on the wall and began to make menacing remarks to the King's horses. Mr. Kirk Kingsman did proceed on his daily routine, but Mr. Roy L. Kingsman stayed behind to talk to Mr. Dumpty. He tried to explain to him that making nasty remarks about the King's horses is not the way that people in Nurseryland should act. At that time, Mr. Roy L. Kingsman will testify to you, Mr. Dumpty became rather upset. He began talking about his life on the wall and how nobody ever bothers to check on him. Mr. Roy L. Kingsman will tell you that he felt it best to let the matter drop, and so he continued on his rounds. Upon returning to the wall, he and Mr. Kirk Kingsman found Mr. Dumpty in a heap. They did try to put the pieces back together, but all the King's horses and the all King's men could not get Mr. Humpty Dumpty together again. Ladies and Gentlemen of the jury, my client, Mr. Roy L. Kingsman, is an honorable man who continues in his daily rounds of protecting our fair land. While Mr. Dumpty's demise is unfortunate, I am sure that the evidence that you will hear today will prove beyond a reasonable doubt that Mr. Dumpty's fall was an accident. Mr. Roy L. Kingsman should be found not guilty. Thank you. **(SIT DOWN)**

**Judge:** Mr. Dum, you may proceed with your first witness.

**Dum: (STANDING)** Thank you, your Honor. The state would like to call as its first witness, Mr. Wily Wolf.

**Judge:** Mr. Wily Wolf, please take the stand.

**Bailiff: (ADDRESSING MR. WOLF)** Raise your right hand and repeat after me. Do you swear or affirm that the testimony you are about to give is the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth?

**Wolf: I do. (SIT DOWN)**

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**Bailiff: (RETURN TO CHAIR)**

**Dum: (STAND AND APPROACH THE WITNESS)** State your name for the court, please.

**Wolf:** Mr. Wily Wolf.

**Dum:** Where do you live, Mr. Wolf?

**Wolf:** 321 Watch Hood Lane.

**Dum:** Where were you on the morning of March 5, 1992?

**Wolf:** I was in the woods on my way to bring my grandma some cookies.

**Dum:** Did you see anything unusual happen that day?

**Wolf:** I certainly did.

**Dum:** Tell the court what you saw.

**Wolf:** As I was walking rough the woods to take my grandma some cookies, you know she just loves the ones with the big chocolate chips, well, anyway, as I approached the wall between Nurseryland and Fairytale Land I saw a man on a horse talking to Humpty Dumpty.

**Dum:** Do you see that man in the courtroom today?

**Wolf: (POINTING TO ROY L. KINGSMAN)** Yes, that's him.

**Dum:** Let the record reflect that the witness identified the defendant. Now proceed Mr. Wolf, what did you see then?

**Wolf:** Well, this man was talking to Mr. Dumpty and then the conversation got really loud.

**Dum:** Could you hear what was being said?

**Wolf:** The man was teasing Mr. Dumpty about his rounded bottom. Who is this guy to talk about someone else? Has he looked in the mirror lately?

**Dee: (RISING TO ADDRESS THE JUDGE)** Objection -- the witness is offering opinion. I request that statement be stricken from the record.

**Judge:** Sustained. **(LOOKING AT MR. WOLF)** Please confine your testimony to the facts.

**Wolf:** Yes, your Honor.

**Dum:** Please continue, Mr. Wolf, what else did you see?

**Wolf:** As I was saying, this guy was really giving Humpty Dumpty a bad time. Humpty began to get really upset and started to rock. That man kept shouting at him until finally Humpty fell off the wall.

**Dum:** What happened then?

**Wolf:** The guy just rode off. He left Humpty lying there sort of helpless.

**Dum:** What happened next?

**Wolf:** Well, in just a few minutes the guy came riding along with another guy.

**Dum:** What did they do?

**Wolf:** They rode back by Humpty Dumpty.

**Dum:** Did they do anything?

**Wolf:** The other guy got down and tried to put Humpty Dumpty together again.

**Dee:** Were they successful?

**Wolf: No,** have you ever seen an egg that has been dropped that you could put back together again?

**Dum: No** further questions, your Honor. **(LOOK AT THE DEFENSE)** Your witness. **(SIT DOWN)**

**Twiddle Dee: (STAND AND APPROACH THE WITNESS)** Mr. Wolf, why were you hiding in the bushes?

**Dum: (STANDING)** Objection, Mr. Wolf did not indicate that he was hiding. **(SIT DOWN)**

**Judge:** Sustained. Please refrain from giving opinions.

**Dee:** Yes, your Honor. Mr. Wolf, why were you behind the bushes?

**Wolf:** As I said before, I was on my way to Grandma's house with cookies when I saw this man harassing Humpty Dumpty.

**Dee:** Please keep your comments to just the facts.

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**Wolf:** Hey man, those are the facts.

**Dee:** Tell us, Mr. Wolf, why did you wait to come forward to tell your story?

**Wolf:** You know wolves have been getting a bum rap in all of these stories. I think it's time people find out the truth.

**Dee:** Mr. Wolf, did you see Mr. Kingsman attack Mr. Dumpty?

**Wolf:** Not physically, but verbally. He called him fatso.

**Dee:** But words can't hurt you.

**Wolf:** Look we all have feelings. Words can hurt a lot more than sticks and stones.

**Dee:** But Mr. Wolf, did you see Mr. Kingsman physically cause Mr. Dumpty to fall from the wall?

**Wolf:** No, but . . .

**Dee:** No further questions. **(SIT DOWN)**

**Judge:** **(LOOK AT THE WITNESS)** You may step down Mr. Wolf. **(LOOK AT THE PROSECUTION)** Call your next witness.

**Dum:** **(STAND)** The prosecution calls Mr. Kirk Kingsman. **(SIT DOWN)**

Judge: Mr. Kirk Kingsman, please take the stand.

**Mr. Kingsman #2:** **(MOVE TO THE WITNESS STAND AND REMAIN STANDING)**

**Bailiff:** **(APPROACH THE WITNESS STAND)** Raise your right hand, please. Do you swear or affirm that the testimony you are about to give is the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth?

**Kingsman #2:** I do **(SIT DOWN)**

**Bailiff:** **(RETURN TO YOUR SEAT)**

**Dum:** Mr. Kingsman, where were you on the morning of March 5, 1992?

**Kingsman #2:** I was on routine patrol through Nurseryland.

**Dum:** Did anything unusual happen while you were on patrol?

**Kingsman #2:** What do you mean unusual?

**Dum:** Did you have any encounters during your patrol?

**Kingsman #2:** I did have a conversation with Humpty Dumpty.

**Dum:** What was the nature of the conversation?

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**Kingsman #2:** I asked him how things were going -- just simple chit-chat.

**Dum:** Was anyone with you at this time?

**Kingsman #2:** My partner, Roy L. Kingsman, was with me.

**Dum:** Did he also have a conversation with Mr. Dumpty?

**Kingsman #2:** Yes, he did talk to him.

**Dum:** What was the nature of his conversation?

**Dee: (STANDING)** Objection -- calls for speculation.

**Dum:** Mr. Kingsman was present at the time; he is aware of the kind of conversation it was.

**Judge:** Overruled.

**Dee: (SIT DOWN)**

**Dum:** Mr. Kingsman, what was the nature of the conversation?

**Kingsman #2:** Roy L. was joking with Mr. Dumpty about his figure.

**Dum:** Would you say Mr. Dumpty took this as joking?

**Kingsman #2:** Mr. Dumpty did seem to get upset, but it was all in fun.

**Dum:** What did you do?

**Kingsman #2:** I continued on my rounds.

**Dum:** Did you see Mr. Roy L. Kingsman again?

**Kingsman #2:** Yes, he caught up to me on patrol.

**Dum:** What was his attitude when he caught up to you?

**Kingsman #2:** He seemed a little rattled. I asked him if everything was okay and he snapped at me to leave it alone.

**Dum:** What did you do then?

**Kingsman #2:** I left it alone.

**Dum:** What happened next?

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**Kingsman #2:** We continued on our rounds.

**Dum:** Did you come back to the wall?

**Kingsman #2:** Yes.

**Dum:** What did you see when you returned to the wall?

**Kingsman #2:** Humpty Dumpty had fallen off the wall and was broken to pieces.

**Dum:** What was Roy L. Kingsman's reaction to this?

**Kingsman #2:** He asked if I liked scrambled eggs.

**Dum:** What did you do?

**Kingsman #2:** We got down and tried to put the pieces together, but Roy told me that it was hopeless. He was right.

**Dum:** No further questions. **(LOOKING AT DEFENSE)** Your witness.

**Dee:** **(LOOKING AT PROSECUTION)** Thank you. **(TURNING TOWARD WITNESS STAND)** Now, Mr. Kingsman, you said that you rode off when Roy L. Kingsman was still talking to Humpty Dumpty.

**Kingsman #2:** Yes, that's true.

**Dee:** So, you didn't actually hear the conversation between Mr. Kingsman and Mr. Dumpty. Did you?

**Kingsman #2:** Well, I didn't hear all of it, but I heard enough to know what it was about. They were arguing.

**Dee:** But you didn't hear all of it, did you?

**Kingsman #2:** No.

**Dee:** When you came back to the wall and saw Humpty Dumpty, what was your reaction?

**Kingsman #2:** I was shocked.

**Dee:** Now, you indicated that Mr. Roy L. Kingsman joked about Mr. Dumpty.

**Kingsman #2:** Yes, he did.

**Dee:** As you looked at Humpty Dumpty, did you think there was any hope to put him back together?

**Kingsman #2:** It did look hopeless, but I had to try.

**Dee:** So, Roy L.'s not trying to help may have been that he recognized the hopelessness of the situation.

**Kingsman #2:** Yes, that's true.

**Dee:** No further questions. **(SIT DOWN)**

**Judge:** **(LOOK AT THE WITNESS)** You may step down, Mr. Kingsman. **(LOOK AT THE PROSECUTION)** Call your next witness.

**Dum:** **(STANDING)** The Prosecution rests, your Honor. **(SIT DOWN)**

**Judge:** **(LOOKING AT DEFENSE)** Is the defense ready to proceed?

**Dee:** **(STANDING)** Yes, your Honor.

**Judge:** Call your first witness.

**Dee:** The defense calls Mr. Roy L. Kingsman. **(SIT DOWN)**

**Kingsman #1:** **(MOVE TO THE WITNESS STAND AND REMAIN STANDING)**

**Bailiff:** **(APPROACH THE WITNESS STAND)** Raise your right hand, please. Do you swear or affirm that the testimony you are about to give is the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth?

**Kingsman #1:** I do **(SIT DOWN)**

**Bailiff:** **(RETURN TO YOUR SEAT)**

**Dee:** Mr. Kingsman, where were you on the morning of March 5, 1992?

**Kingsman #1:** I was making my rounds through Nurseryland.

**Dee:** Did anything unusual happen that morning?

**Kingsman #1:** Well, as my partner and I approached the wall between Nurseryland and Fairytale Land, Humpty Dumpty started making some snide remarks about the King's horses.

**Dee:** Then what happened?

**Kingsman #1:** I told him he should have more respect for the King's men and all the King's horses.

**Dee:** What was his response?

**Kingsman #1:** He started saying how he wished he was in Fairytale Land instead of Nurseryland because he never really fit into Nurseryland.

**Dee:** What happened next?

**Kingsman #1:** I decided that he was having a bad day and it was just best to leave him alone.

**Dee:** Did you start an argument with him about his size?

**Kingsman #1:** I did not start the argument.

**Dee:** But did you argue?

**Kingsman #1:** Well, he did say that no one ever liked him because of his shape.

**Dee:** What was your reply?

**Kingsman #1:** I asked him if he ever considered doing something about his weight. Maybe he would feel better about himself if he wasn't so chubby.

**Dee:** What was his condition when you left him?

**Kingsman #1:** Well, I guess you could say that he was in a foul mood. Hey, you know everyone has those kind of days when nothing seems to go right -- well, I guess it was his day.

**Dee:** When you left Humpty Dumpty, was he still sitting on the wall?

**Kingsman #1:** Yes, he was.

**Dee:** No further questions. **(LOOKING AT PROSECUTION)** Your witness.

**Dum: (LOOKING AT DEFENSE)** Thank **you. (TURNING TOWARD WITNESS STAND)** Mr. Kingsman, you have testified that Humpty Dumpty was still sitting on the wall when you left him, is that correct?

**Kingsman #1:** Yes, that is correct.

**Dum:** But you also said that he was in a foul mood. Is that correct?

**Kingsman #1:** Yes.

**Dum:** What was he in a foul mood?

**Kingsman #1:** Hey, how should I know. Chubby people aren't always happy. No matter what we would like to think.

**Dum:** Mr. Kingsman, did you at one time have a weight problem?

**Kingsman #1:** I've had my problems, but I learned how to control myself. That's all it takes, a little self control.

**Dum:** So you feel that Mr. Dumpty did not have any self-control?

**Kingsman #1:** I didn't say that.

**Dum:** But would you say that you feel like that?

**Kingsman #1:** Well, he could take better care of himself. Get off that wall and exercise a little. That wouldn't hurt him.

**Dum:** Thank you. No further questions.

**Judge: (LOOKING AT THE WITNESS)** You may step down. **(LOOKING AT THE DEFENSE)** You may call your next witness.

**Dee:** The defense rests, your Honor.

**Judge:** Fine. We will now hear closing arguments. **(LOOKING AT THE PROSECUTION)** Mr. Twiddle Dum, are you ready to close?

**Dum: (STANDING)** Yes, your Honor. Thank you. **(LOOKING TOWARD THE JURY BOX)** Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, I want to thank you all for taking the time to hear this case. As you can see it is a very simple case of jealousy and power. Mr. Roy L. Kingsman knows that he has more self-control than Mr. Humpty Dumpty and he used that self-control to agitate Mr. Dumpty to the point that he fell off the wall. You heard the testimony from his partner, Mr. Kirk Kingsman, that he did nothing to help pick up the pieces of Humpty Dumpty when they returned and found him. Is this the action of a compassionate man? I should think not. Mr. Roy L. Kingsman knows his position as one of the King's men gives him power in Nurseryland and he used this power to belittle Humpty Dumpty. It was certainly a dastardly deed that was done. Mr. Wily Wolf testified that he watched from the bushes as Mr. Roy L. Kingsman taunted and teased Humpty Dumpty. Ladies and gentlemen, you have no choice but to return the verdict of guilty against Mr. Roy L. Kingsman. He is guilty of the death of Humpty Dumpty and has shown no remorse for this crime. Thank you.  
**(RETURN TO YOUR SEAT)**

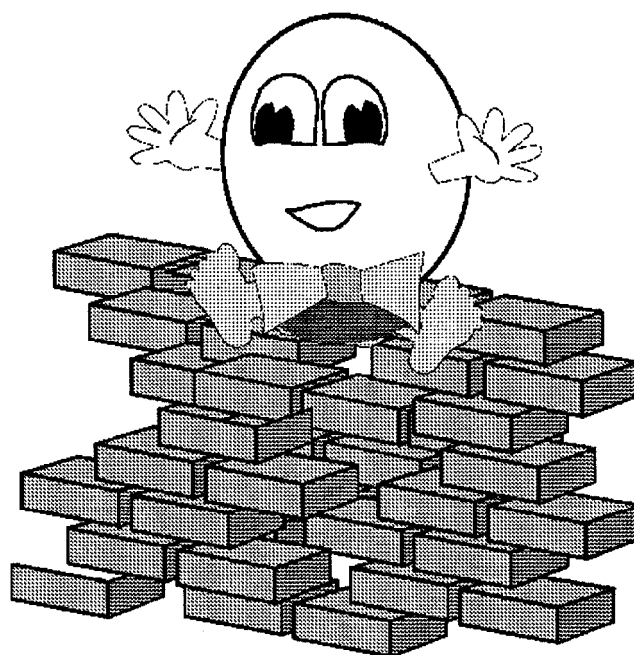
**Judge: (LOOKING AT THE DEFENSE)** Mr. Twiddle Dee, you may make your closing statements.

**Dee: (STANDING)** Thank you, your Honor. **(MOVE TOWARD THE JURY BOX)** Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, Mr. Twiddle Dum would have you believe that this is a simple open and shut case. But I submit that that is simply not the case. Mr. Kingsman has testified that Humpty Dumpty was still on the wall when he left him. Even Mr. Wolf, the prosecution's own witness, testified that Mr. Dumpty was still on

the wall when Mr. Roy L. Kingsman left the scene. If Mr. Dumpty fell off the wall, it is because of his agitation and not from the actions of my client. Mr. Roy L. Kingsman has been a member of the King's men for a number of years and has not had any problems. He may not have used good judgment in his comments to Humpty Dumpty, but that doesn't make him a murderer. Ladies and gentlemen, for you to return a verdict of guilty, then you must believe that the State has proven beyond a reasonable doubt that my client, Mr. Roy L. Kingsman, is guilty of murder. If you still have some doubts about this, then the verdict is simple -- not guilty. Thank you. **(RETURN TO YOUR SEAT)**

**Judge: (LOOKING AT JURORS)** It is now your responsibility to deliberate and decide if indeed you believe Mr. Roy L. Kingsman is guilty or not of the crime of which he is accused. Your decision must be unanimous.

**Bailiff: (REMOVE THE JURORS TO DELIBERATE)**



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