

Cumbria County Council
Chat Play Share
Rhymes and songs

Mary, Mary, quite contrary

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How does your garden
grow?

With silver bells and
cockleshells

And pretty maids all in a row

<https://wordsforlife.org.uk/activities/mary-mary-quite-contrary/>

Birth – 2 years



Hold hands and sing the rhyme whilst swaying to the beat to and fro. You may also enjoy sitting opposite your child on the floor, holding hands and moving backwards and forwards in a rowing movement. Smile and make eye contact as you take turns to gently push and pull each other just as you take turns when in conversation.

2-3 years



Clap your hands or tap your body as you sing the rhyme to feel the beat as you sing. Talk about the rhyme and then paint a picture or make the garden out of playdoh to encourage your child to use verbal and physical language to describe sounds, words, and music.

3-4 years



Experiment with household implements to make noises to demarcate the beat of the rhyme. Pots and pans make a good starting point. Talk about the differences in sounds you can make with different materials e.g., metal, or wooden spoon against a glass or plastic beaker. Talk about pitch (high or low sound) and dynamics (loud or quiet).

Chat Play Share...Other ideas you could try....

Share a story together about growing plants and chat about the pictures and story. Point out words that rhyme or make up actions to go with the story. Examples of stories:

- Jasper's beanstalk by Nick Butterworth
- A Seed In Need by Sam Godwin
- The Tiny Seed by Eric Carle
- Mouse finds a seed Nicola Moon
- Contrary Mary by Anita Jeram
- The Bad Seed by Jory John

Electronic versions of stories can also often be found online. Some children prefer information books to stories and there are lots about growing plants and gardening or child friendly information can be found on-line.

For babies make a treasure basket of shells and bells to explore. Always check that items are suitable to go in the mouth and are not a choking hazard.

Discuss the meaning of the word 'contrary'. Talk about what your day would look like if you were being Contrary Mary. Can you do things upside down or back to front? Can you eat jelly with a knife and fork or perhaps wear odd socks?

Talk about bell shaped flowers and gardening. Where else would you find a bell and who's attention are you trying to attract? How does a flower attract the attention of bees and butterflies?

Role play garden centre or florist. Make your own flowers to sell or use wildflowers from your own garden. Talk about the colour, size, and shape of the flowers. How many petals can you count? What shape are the leaves? Collect some free paint sample cards and match them to the colours of the flowers. Discuss shades of colour. What else can you think of that is the same colour?



FUN FACT: Belladonna means beautiful lady in Italian-it's also the name of a poisonous plant also known as deadly nightshade. It has purple flowers and dark, inky berries that are slightly sweet. Belladonna's so toxic that eating a small quantity of its leaves or berries can be fatal to humans, particularly children, and some animals. Many plants are poisonous so please check before touching.