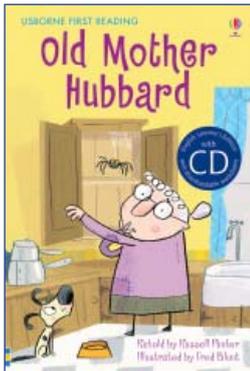


Old Mother Hubbard • Teacher's notes



Author: traditional rhyme, adapted by Russell Punter

Reader level: Elementary

Word count: 197

Lexile level: 420L

Text type: Nursery rhyme (extended)

About the story

“Old Mother Hubbard went to the cupboard” begins the familiar nursery rhyme. But the cupboard is empty, so Old Mother Hubbard and her dog Spot go to the butcher’s and choose a bone – only to find that Mother Hubbard has no money with her. No-one notices the thief emptying the cash register, but when Mother Hubbard and Spot leave the shop, the thief trips over Spot’s leash and is arrested by a passing policeman. The butcher is delighted and gives Mother Hubbard a reward – and there is “best steak all year” for Spot.

The original “Old Mother Hubbard” rhyme was published in 1805, and was one of the most popular English nursery rhymes of the nineteenth century. After the familiar first verse, which may well be much older than the rest (the character of Mother Hubbard dates back to at least the late sixteenth century), the dog performs all kinds of increasingly bizarre tricks such as smoking a pipe, playing the flute, riding a goat, dying and coming back to life. In this updated version, Mother Hubbard’s dog still has a central, but slightly more believable, role.



About the author

Russell Punter was born in Bedfordshire, England. When he was young, he enjoyed making up and illustrating his own stories. His ambition as a boy was to become a cartoonist. When he grew up, he studied art at college before becoming a graphic designer and writer. He has written over twenty children’s books.

Key words

Your students might not be familiar with some of these words, which are important in the story.

p2 cupboard	p15 picked out
p3 fetch	p16 snag
bone	p18 cry [meaning “shout”]
p4 bare	p19 hurried
p6 shut up	p20 speed
p9 butchers	tripped
p10 lane	lead
p12 ‘Til [short for “until”]	p21 cash [informal]
p14 plenty	p22 relief
doggie-sized	p23 reward
treat	p25 steak

Key phrases

p3	poor doggie
p10	off [down the lane...] went... [NB the inversion of “Old Mother Hubbard... went off down the lane” as a stylistic device to support the rhyme]
p12	came to a stop what was what
p18	Stop thief!
p19	in a flash
p21	went flying along with
p23	my dear



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Before reading

You could ask if any of your students has a dog, or search for some pictures of dogs to show them. What do dogs like to eat? [Canned dog food and dog biscuits are convenient, but dogs also love fresh meat and bones to chew.]

Look at the cover of the book. Who is Old Mother Hubbard? You could explain that “old mother” doesn’t literally mean that she is a mother, it’s a way of saying “old lady”. What can you tell about Old Mother Hubbard from the picture? [Look at the empty cupboard and the patches on her clothes – she probably doesn’t have very much money.] And what about her dog – what do you think he is waiting or hoping for?

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Reading or listening

You can listen to the story on CD or read it aloud to the students, take turns to read or read together silently. Each double page spread in the book is one track on the CD, so that you can pause between tracks or repeat tracks if your students need it. The first reading is in a British English accent, and it is followed by an American English reading. The words are exactly the same. After the story, there is a short selection of key phrases that can be used for pronunciation practice.

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During reading: you might like to ask some of these questions.

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| p5 | What is the dog’s name? How do you think he feels? How does Old Mother Hubbard feel? | p17 | Look back through the story. Can you see where Old Mother Hubbard left her money? Can you see what is happening behind Bob? |
| p9 | What is the weather like outside? | pp22-23 | Think of some words to describe: Bob, Old Mother Hubbard, Spot, the thief. |
| pp12-13 | What is Spot doing? What clothes can you see on the characters in the picture? | p25 | How do Old Mother Hubbard and Spot feel now? |
| p15 | How does Spot look now? | | |
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Puzzles

You might like students to work on these in pairs or small groups. If so, ask the “After reading” questions before doing the puzzles.

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After reading

Try asking your students to act out the story in small groups. There are parts for: Old Mother Hubbard, Spot, Bob the butcher, the thief, the policeman. They will need to devise extra dialogue for all the parts (although Spot can “speak” most effectively by barking and whining).

You could also recreate the story as a local newspaper report, with quotes from Bob and Old Mother Hubbard and a picture of Mother Hubbard and Spot.

