



There Was An Old Woman

There was an old woman who lived
in a shoe.

She had so many children she didn't
know what to do!

So she gave them some broth
without any bread,

Then whipped them all soundly
And sent them to bed.



Origins of the Rhyme:

This rhyme is believed to have origins in English history. There are two choices: The first relates to Queen Caroline (There was an old woman) wife of King George II who had eight children. The second version refers to King George who began the men's fashion for wearing white powdered wigs. He was consequently referred to as the old woman! The children were the members of parliament and the bed was the House of Parliament - even today the term 'whip' is used in the English Parliament to describe a member of Parliament who is tasked to ensure that all members 'toe the party line'. Some sources also say that the old woman could refer to Elizabeth Vergoose of Boston, who had 6 of her own children + 10 stepchildren. As a point of historical interest the wigs worn by women of the period were so large and unhygienic that it became necessary to include mousetraps in their construction!

This is a YouTube video of the rhyme:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GFwJW-G3fKc>

This YouTube video changes the ending to "kissed them all soundly and then sent them to bed."

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yyfhVcKWXSo>

After watching both videos, graph which version your students like better. Ask them why.



Folding Card, *The Old Woman Who Lived in A Shoe*, 6 April 1883. Noel Wisdom Chromolithograph Collection, Special Collections Department, The University of South Florida Tampa Library



William Wallace Denslow's illustration for *There Was An Old Woman ...*, from a 1901 edition of *Mother Goose*