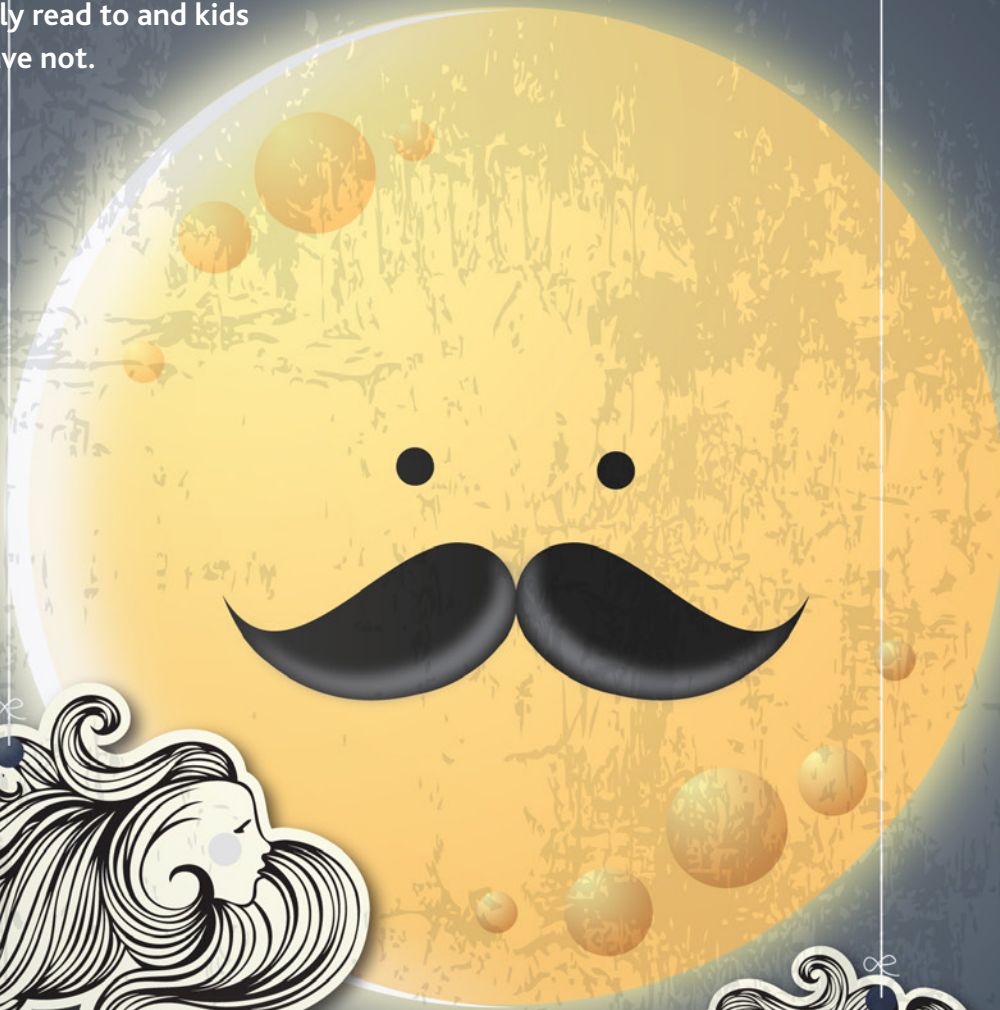


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By Skye Forrester

# Once upon a time

Storytelling predates the written word. Every society and culture from the beginning of time has a tradition of storytelling. Ancient storytellers were very important people – they were the custodians of culture, legend and history. Other than keeping an account of the past, storytellers also created explanations for natural phenomena – such as what lightning was or why drought occurred. Many myths have been created in this way, using the art of storytelling to impart lessons and share concepts.



**S**ome of the greatest stories ever told revolve around death, birth and love. Perhaps this is because these three concepts are common among any and all cultures around the world, and have been throughout history. Think of the nativity story about the birth of Jesus; Romeo and Juliet - arguably the greatest love story of all time; or the story of Hachik , the remarkably loyal dog to his deceased owner.

## Reasons for Rhymes

Nursery rhymes are short and sweet stories designed to share lessons with our little ones. The history and origins of most nursery rhymes reflect events in history. Two examples of these types of rhymes are 'Ring a Ring o Rosies', referring to the Bubonic plague and 'Remember Remember' which alludes to Guy Fawkes' thwarted attempt to blow up the English Houses of Parliament. Many of the words and nursery rhyme lyrics were used to parody the royal and political events of the day. Some of those events in history, though still portrayed in nursery rhymes, are long forgotten by most of society today. The lessons and events live on in catchy play-time rhymes.

## Brainy Benefits of Bedtime Stories

In English, there are 44 different language sounds, called phonemes, ranging from 'ee' to 'ss'. The more frequently your child hears these sounds, the faster they become at processing them. Trying to learn a language becomes easier for your toddler when he can hear the difference between, for example, 'tall' and 'doll'. While learning to read, your bubba will be more adept at sounding out unfamiliar words on the page. If you've ever finished a bedtime story with your child, you'll know they'll invariably insist for you to read it "again, again!". While on the surface this might look like a calculated tactic to delay dreaded bedtime (and it probably is), reading a book repeatedly can actually help your child develop her logic skills.

Kids don't catch everything the first time they hear a story, but as they hear it repeated to them, they begin to notice patterns and sequences emerging. They'll be able to predict what's coming up on the next page based on what you've just read to them.

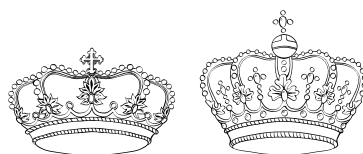
Reading aloud with children, teaches them to analyse and reflect on the text, introducing new perspectives and different ways of thinking. This aids in problem solving later on in life. Thinking aloud while reading the story is a great way to add to your child's knowledge on the topic. For example, if you were reading a book with your child about dogs, you might note, "A Labrador, just like Aunty Sarah's dog! But Rover is brown. I didn't know there were black ones."

## Bonding Over Books

Remember snuggling up with your mom or dad, book between you, the scent of baby powder under your nose? To some, those are our most happy and comforting memories. While we can all imagine how bedtime stories are a great way to bond with our kids, research has shown that little ones learn a great deal more than we ever thought possible when we read to them. "There's a clear indication of a neurological difference between kids who have been regularly read to and kids who have not," says G. Reid Lyon, Ph.D., chief of the child development and behaviour branch of the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development in Bethesda, MD. Cuddling up with your child to a good book will also help them to associate reading with warm and fuzzy feelings, inviting a predisposition to become an avid reader when they're older.

### did you know?

*The story of 'Jack & Jill' is actually about King Louis XVI and his Queen, Marie Antoinette. Both were beheaded in 1793; hence the lines Jack 'lost his crown' and 'Jill came tumbling after'.*



## 5 good reasons for reading bedtime stories to your little ones

1. Bedtime stories help to relax your child's mind and provide a relief from anxiety.
2. Reading to your children helps to cultivate a healthy reading habit.
3. The attention span of your kids is largely enhanced while listening to a story.
4. Stories with good moral at the end will encourage your child to be honest, building a strong moral compass.
5. Listening to stories increases their imaginative power as well as analytical and lateral thinking.

