

Fostering Wonder

English Pre-Reader Curriculum — Sample

Information Sections · Lessons 1–2 · Charlotte Mason Method

© Fostering Wonder · Classic nursery-rhyme selections for reading instruction



Sample contents: This printable sample includes the curriculum information sections and the first two lessons only. Word cards for Lessons 1–2 are provided in the companion sample word-card printable.

English Pre-Reader Curriculum

Charlotte Mason Method

Using Classic Nursery Rhymes

Based on Volume 1, Part V, Sections IV–VI

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The CM Reading Philosophy

Charlotte Mason was clear: children should learn to read from real, beautiful language — not from made-up phonics sentences. Nursery rhymes are exactly the kind of living language she had in mind. Children often already know these rhymes by ear before they learn to read them, which makes whole-word recognition natural and joyful.

Her two goals for early reading: 1. The child will know approximately **1,000 words by sight** 2. The child will be able to **build new words from known sounds**

Lessons are **10–15 minutes maximum**, 3–4 days per week. Always end on success and delight — never push past the child's attention.

Who This Curriculum Is For

In Charlotte Mason's model, formal school lessons began when a child turned six, including reading lessons. We honor that by keeping these lessons short, concrete, and gentle.

Many modern school settings, including charter schools, ask Kindergarten students to show some form of reading practice. For those families, the English Pre-Reader curriculum may be used in Kindergarten as a gentle approach to reading, without turning early reading into long or pressured schoolwork.

This curriculum may also be used in 1st Grade if a child continues to need direct support in learning how to read. If you are using English Pre-Reader in 1st Grade, it may be used alongside the Grade 1 English curriculum: Pre-Reader provides reading instruction, while Grade 1 English meets the needs of literature, oral narration, copywork, poetry, and recitation.

A Note on Pacing

These lessons are broken into weeks and terms to give a clear structure, but the schedule is a guide — not a rule. Every child moves differently, and the teacher knows her student best.

Feel free to speed up or slow down based on your child's pace. If a week's material takes two sessions, that is perfectly fine. If your child is ready to move faster, move faster.

One practical approach: set a timer for 10–15 minutes at the start of each lesson. When the timer goes off, end the lesson — even if you are in the middle of something. Simply tell your child, *"We'll pick up right here next time."* This keeps lessons short, positive, and consistent, and it trains the child to look forward to the next session rather than dreading a long one.

If your child is moving quickly through these lessons but still needs support reading more complex words in independent reader books, you can adapt this same process to a book your child is already interested in. For example, if your child is beginning to read books like *Frog and Toad*, you may choose 5–10 words from the story and work through them using the same method used in this curriculum: looking carefully at the word, finding it, building it, and reading it in context. This can help build your child's reading vocabulary from books they genuinely want to read, until they are confident enough not to need that level of support.

How I Like to Use It

A gentle rhythm for real children

I often like to use this curriculum alongside a simple set of Bob Books and a [Word Mastery reader](#). This gives the child a gentle mix of whole-word reading, letter-based practice through simple stories, and extra confidence with the sounds and patterns they are learning.

A rhythm I often like is one day of Word Mastery, one day of Fostering Wonder Pre-Reader, and one day of a Bob Book that uses the current letter or pattern the child has been practicing. Depending on your child's engagement, you can combine some of these on the same day or spread them out more slowly across the week.

The goal is not to rush. Go at your child's pace. Some children are ready to move quickly, and others need more time with repetition, play, and gentle review. That is perfectly fine.

If my student is ready for it, I like to give them a word book — a blank book where they can begin writing down the words they are learning during our lessons. This makes the words more personal to them and gives them a little place to collect the words that are becoming familiar.

If the student still needs this support but would like more of a challenge, I also like to have them use the word cards they have already learned to create sentences. If there is a word they want to use in their sentence but it has not been studied yet, I use a blank word card to fill that space. This creates interest and excitement because the child naturally wants to find out what that new word looks like so they can add it to their word cards.

A simple way to store one set of the target-word cards your child is learning is to place them in a ziplock bag or another small container. This makes it easy to access all the words your child has learned when you reach the review activities.

Note on Narration

There are **no narration prompts** in the English Pre-Reader curriculum. Charlotte Mason did not require formal narration before age 6. Pre-Reader children may naturally talk about what they hear — that is wonderful and welcome — but it is never prompted, required, or assessed. Formal narration begins in Grade 1.

How Each Lesson Works

Every lesson follows Charlotte Mason's exact method from Volume 1, Part V:

A Note on Root-Word Forms

In a few lessons, a target word is intentionally presented in its root (base) form rather than exactly as it appears in the rhyme. For example, **king** is taken from **king's**, **farmer** from **farmer's**, and **baker** from **baker's**. At this Pre-Reader level, the child is first presented with the root word for whole-word recognition. The changed form remains visible in the rhyme so the child can later notice how the root word appears with an ending in context.

Step 1 — Introduce the word Write the target word on a whiteboard. Say it clearly. Ask the child to look at it carefully — every letter, every shape — until they can close their eyes and "see" it in their mind's eye. Once the word is in the student's mind's eye, ask the student to close their eyes and try to finger spell the word by using their pointer finger in the air, making big "imaginary" strokes for each letter until they spell the whole word. Once the student can do this successfully, they are ready for Step 2.

Step 2 — Find it in the card pile Lay all word cards face up (target words + distractor words mixed). Child finds the target word.

Only target words are added to the child's learned-word bank. Distractor cards are used for finding practice and stay separate until and unless that word is explicitly introduced as a target in a later lesson.

Step 3 — Build it with letter tiles Child spells the word using magnetic letters, wooden tiles, or foam letters. If they struggle, uncover the board — never allow a misspelling to sit. Miss Mason stressed the importance of not allowing the child to place a misspelled word in their mind's eye. For that reason, correct misspelled words quickly and do not let an incorrect spelling remain in front of the student's view for too long.

Step 4 — Add to the word column Add the learned word to a growing column of known words on the side of the board.

Step 5 — Rearrange the column Once 3–5 words are known, arrange them in varied orders. Child reads down the column each time.

Note: The column in Steps 4–5 uses only the target words for the current lesson — the words introduced from this lesson's rhyme. It is not a review of the full learned-word bank. That review happens in Step 1 and includes only words that have been explicitly taught as targets.

Step 6 — Read the rhyme Find the learned words in the printed rhyme. Then read the full rhyme together — teacher first, then together, then child alone as able.

Step 7 — Word building (2–3 min) Change the beginning letter or sound in a known word while keeping the ending sound the same. Use that shared word ending to create and read new words in the same word family. Keep it playful — not a drill.

Required Materials

- Whiteboard and marker (or large paper)
 - Letter tiles (magnetic, wooden, or foam)
 - Printed word cards (included for all 33 instructional lessons; review Weeks 12, 24, and 36 reuse earlier target-word cards)
 - A printed or illustrated copy of the nursery rhymes
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Educationally Appropriate Content

Academic skills addressed: - Phonological awareness and phonics - Sight word recognition (whole-word reading) - Reading fluency — oral reading of connected text - Oral language development - Poetry appreciation and memorization

This curriculum presents **31 distinct classic nursery rhymes** across 36 weekly lessons.

"Humpty Dumpty" and "Jack and Jill" each continue into a second lesson, and the three term-review lessons revisit a rhyme chosen by the child. Their rhythm, repetition, and familiar language support early word recognition, phonological awareness, and oral language development.

LESSON 1

Rhyme: "Humpty Dumpty"

Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall, Humpty Dumpty had a great fall. All the king's horses and all the king's men couldn't put Humpty together again.

Target words: sat · on · a · wall **Distractor words:** cat · an · tall · bad · hat · map · ran

Lesson Steps

Step 1 — SAT Write **sat** on the board. "This word is SAT. Look at every letter carefully. Close your eyes — can you see SAT?" Ask the child to close their eyes and finger spell **sat** in the air with big imaginary strokes: s · a · t. Then have the child find **sat** in the card pile and build it with letter tiles: s · a · t.

Step 2 — ON Write **on** on the board. "ON — a tiny but very important word. You will see it often when you read. Look carefully." Ask the child to close their eyes, see **on** in their mind's eye, and finger spell it in the air: o · n. Then have the child find **on** in the card pile and build it with letter tiles: o · n.

Step 3 — A Write **a** on the board. "This tiny word A — you hear it all the time. Just one letter, but it does a big job." Ask the child to close their eyes, see **a** in their mind's eye, and finger spell it in the air. Then have the child find **a** in the card pile and build it with the letter tile: a.

Step 4 — WALL Write **wall** on the board. "WALL — look at the double L at the end. Two l's!" Ask the child to close their eyes, see **wall** in their mind's eye, and finger spell it in the air: w · a · l · l. Then have the child find **wall** in the card pile and build it with letter tiles: w · a · l · l. Point out the double L.

Step 5 — Column reading Arrange all four words in a column. Read together. Rearrange. Read again. Once this is done, invite the student to make their own column in a different order from the one you made. Then have the student read their new column of words.

Step 6 — Read the rhyme Read "Humpty Dumpty" aloud together. Child finds each target word in the rhyme first, then reads the whole rhyme.

Step 7 — Word building From **sat**: change S to H → **hat** / change S to M → **mat** / change S to B → **bat** *"Look how many words rhyme with sat! That -at sound is very useful."*

Memorization: Recite together "Humpty Dumpty".

LESSON 2

Rhyme: "Humpty Dumpty" (continued — review and deepen)

Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall, Humpty Dumpty had a great fall. All the king's horses and all the king's men couldn't put Humpty together again.

Target words: all · the · great · fall · king **Distractor words:** sat · on · had · wall · small · tall · call

Lesson Steps

Step 1 — Review known words Quickly read through all the child's new words they have learned from the start of Lesson 1.

Step 2 — ALL Write **all** on the board. "*ALL — another important little word. Look at the double L at the end — two l's together!*" Ask the child to close their eyes, see **all** in their mind's eye, and finger spell it in the air: a · l · l. Then have the child find **all** in the card pile and build it with letter tiles: a · l · l.

Step 3 — THE Write **the** on the board. "*THE — probably the most common word in English. You'll see it everywhere. Look at it carefully — T-H-E.*" Ask the child to close their eyes, see **the** in their mind's eye, and finger spell it in the air: t · h · e. Then have the child find **the** in the card pile and build it with letter tiles: t · h · e.

Step 4 — GREAT Write **great** on the board. "*GREAT — in this rhyme, a great fall means a very big or serious fall. Look at every letter carefully.*" Ask the child to close their eyes, see **great** in their mind's eye, and finger spell it in the air: g · r · e · a · t. Then have the child find **great** in the card pile and build it with letter tiles: g · r · e · a · t.

Step 5 — FALL Write **fall** on the board. *"FALL — look at the double L at the end. This word has the same ending pattern as wall and all. Can you see it?"* Ask the child to close their eyes, see **fall** in their mind's eye, and finger spell it in the air: f · a · l · l. Then have the child find **fall** in the card pile and build it with letter tiles: f · a · l · l.

Step 6 — KING Write **king** on the board. *"KING — the K makes the same sound as C sometimes. Listen: king. K-I-N-G."* Ask the child to close their eyes, see **king** in their mind's eye, and finger spell it in the air: k · i · n · g. Then have the child find **king** in the card pile and build it with letter tiles: k · i · n · g.

Step 7 — Column reading Arrange the target words for this lesson in a column. Read together. Rearrange. Read again. Once this is done, invite the student to make their own column in a different order from the one you made. Then have the student read their new column of words.

Step 8 — Read the rhyme Child now knows most of the key words. Read "Humpty Dumpty" together — child reads known words, teacher helps with unknown ones.

Step 9 — Word building From **fall**: change F to W → **wall** (already know it!) / change F to C → **call** / change F to T → **tall** *"All these words rhyme with fall — they all end with -all!"*

Recitation: Child recites "Humpty Dumpty" from memory — as much as they know.
