

# GRUMBLES TOWN

FROM  
THE

Mother-Goose Voices With a Twist

POEMS BY Jane Yolen AND

Rebecca Kai Dotlich

ILLUSTRATIONS BY

Angela Matteson

WORDSONG

Highlights



# AN EDUCATOR'S GUIDE TO

In **Grumbles from the Town**, authors Jane Yolen and Rebecca Kai Dotlich share favorite Mother Goose characters in a fun new way. The playful rhymes, rhythms, and wordplay make this book a great read-aloud. With humor and fun on every page, the exuberantly detailed illustrations bring these characters to life.

This guide is designed to enhance a young reader's experience with the book and to suggest some activities for further exploration. Common Core State Standards for first and second grades are referenced for each activity.

## Pre-Reading

Look at the cover of **Grumbles from the Town**. Do you recognize any of the characters? **[RL.2.7]**

## Discussion Questions and Research

There is a letter from Mother Goose to the reader at the beginning of the book. What is the author describing when she calls something "a long, slim vee?" What is Mother Goose holding in the picture? What's sticking out of her hat? **[RL.2.1; RL.2.7]**

What are some of the things the kids like to do in "Summer in the Shoe?" How do they describe living in a shoe? **[RL.2.1]**

Look at the picture on pages 8 and 9. How is the shoe like a typical home? How is it different? **[RL.2.7]**

In "Spider Recalls the Tuffet Fright," the author rhymes "trapeze" with "spidereeze." What do you think "spidereeze" means? What else does she rhyme with "trapeze?" **[L.2.4; RL.2.1]**

John has "one shoe off, both socks on" in the poem "Sleepy John." Why do you think John went to sleep wearing a shoe? Who else is asleep in the picture? **[RL.2.1; RL.2.7]**

In the poem "Snoring Short Story," the last lines read, "Usually when it rains. / Especially when it pours, / I snores." "I snores" is grammatically incorrect. Why do you think the authors did that? Do you like how it sounds? **[RL.2.1; SL.2.4]**

Why is the old dog's refrain sad in the poem "The Old Dog's Complaint?" What is everyone doing that he is not? What is a refrain? **[RL.2.1; L.2.4]**

Look at the illustrations on pages 18 and 19. What's on Humpty Dumpty's shirt? What is the other Humpty brother using for a cape and wearing on his feet? What is the squirrel dressed as? What does the artist's use of humor tell you about the poems on these two pages? **[RL.2.7]**

The last line in "Not Another Fall" ends with a surprise—and a laugh. Did you expect the poem to end that way? **[RL.2.1]**

In the poem "Brother Spy," think about the line "created a pie-typhoon." What do you think a "pie-typhoon" looks like? **[RL.2.1]**

"Plum Tuckered Out" is written from whose point of view? Who is "tuckered out" in this poem? What is the speaker in the poem worried about? **[RL.2.1]**

In the poem on page 24, "A Letter from Fork to His Old Friends," who are Fork's friends? Why does he write to them? **[RL.2.1]**

In "The Queen Speaks of the Knave," the Queen thinks the Knave is "hysterical," and someone "who always / had us in stitches." What do you think she means? **[L.2.4]**

The authors are playful with wording.

In "The Knave of Tarts," the Knave gets married. What does his wife like to do? What town is home to his tart shop? **[RL.2.1]**

What are some of the things the young patient would rather get from Doctor Fell in the poem "Letter from a Young Patient"? What is she expecting to get from Doctor Fell? **[RL.2.1]**

In "Another Patient Tells off Dr. Fell," how does the patient feel about the doctor in the first part of the poem? Read the last part of the poem. How do you think the patient really feels about the doctor? **[RL.2.1; RL.2.5]**

What is the rosebush complaining about in "The Rosebush Grumbles (Again)"? **[RL.2.1]**

Read "The King's Daughter Remembers." What are some of the things the daughter remembers about her father, Old King Cole? What do you know about the girl and her father from looking at the illustration on pages 32–33? **[RL.2.1; RL.2.7]**

## Post-Reading Activities

A homophone is a word that is pronounced the same as another word but has a different meaning. For example, *see* and *sea* sound the same, but the meaning of each word is different. In the first poem, "Shoe Speaks," the last line is "I have a sole, you know." Why do the authors use "sole" instead of "soul"? See if you can find another example of homophones in the book. (Hint: read the poem about the three blind mice!) **[RL.2.1]**

Some of the poems include words that may be new to you. Can you guess the meaning of words like "gossamer" and "bloke" from their context in the poems? What about "pratfall," "toddle," and "warble"? Use a dictionary to see if your guesses are correct. **[RL.2.1; L.2.4]**

What do you think "Gesundheit" means? Look up the meaning in the dictionary. Why do you think people say it to someone who sneezes? **[RL.2.1; L.2.4]**

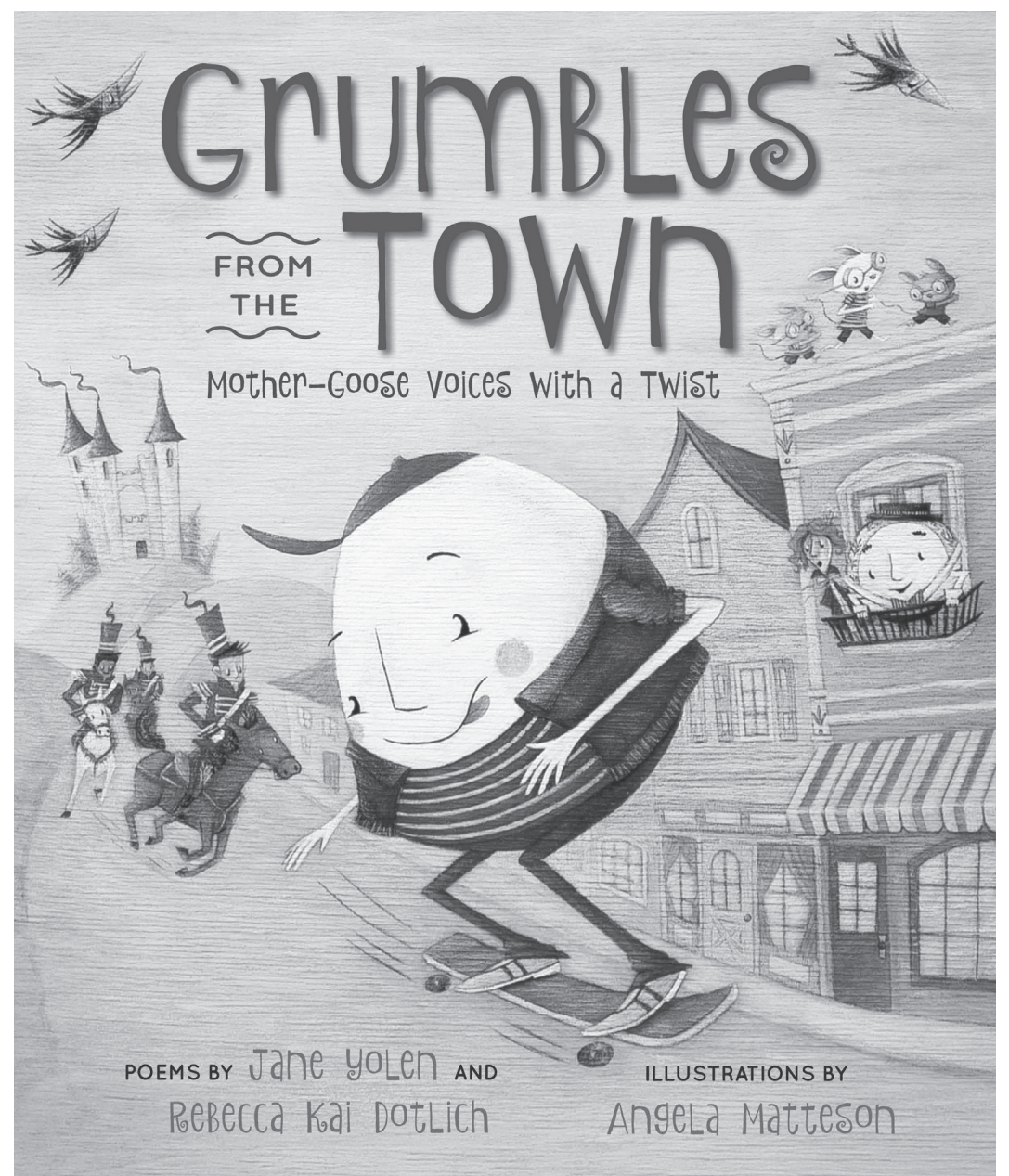
The authors use a pun in this poem title: "Plum Tuckered Out." What is a pun? What does the saying "plumb tuckered out" mean? **[L.2.4; L.2.5]**

As with all the poems, the authors play with words in "I Am the Sock." Read the poem out loud. How do the lines "awash / with brand-new friends" tie into the theme of the poem? What does the phrase "black and blue" mean in this poem? **[RL.2.4; L.2.5]**



**Common Core abbreviations used in this guide:**

**L** – Language  
**RL** – Reading: Literature  
**SL** – Speaking and Listening  
**W** – Writing



By Jane Yolen and Rebecca Kai Dotlich

Illustrated by Angela Matteson

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Grades K and up • 40 pages

## Extra Credit

In a letter from the authors, Yolen and Dotlich suggest you choose a Mother Goose rhyme and write a poem of your own (don't miss the silly illustrations at the bottom of that page!). For example, "have the hill give advice to the Noble Duke of York."

Write a poem that's silly or serious and create your own twist on an old favorite. There are many Mother Goose collections to look through to find your rhyme—two good choices are *Here Comes Mother Goose*, edited by Iona Opie and illustrated by Rosemary Wells, and *Tomie dePaola's Mother Goose*. **[W.2.1]**

Every language has expressions or sayings where the literal meaning is different from the actual meaning. For example, in the poem "The Queen Speaks of the Knave," the authors use the following expressions: "a real stand-up guy," "a card," and "had us in stitches." Also, in the introductory poem at the start of the book, the authors use the phrase, "bird-brained friend." What do all those sayings mean? Do these sayings sometimes have two meanings in these poems? Can you find any other sayings or idioms in the book? (Hint: there's one in "Spoon Says.") **[L.2.5]**

In the poem "Maid Mutters to Herself," the maid says, "It began to rain / a downpour of blackbirds." Collective nouns are special nouns that describe groups of things, like a pride of lions or a flock of seagulls. Do you think "a downpour of blackbirds" is a good description for a group of blackbirds? See if your library has any books about collective nouns—Ruth Heller's *A Cache of Jewels* is a good one. Or check out a list of collective nouns on Wikipedia. See if you can come up with any collective nouns of your own. **[L.2.1.A; RL.2.1; W.2.8]**

## Reading List

More Twists on Old Favorites

**Grumbles from the Forest** by Jane Yolen and Rebecca Kai Dotlich, illustrated by Matt Mahurin

**Follow Follow** and **Mirror Mirror** by Marilyn Singer, illustrated by Josée Masse

**Take Me out of the Bathtub and other Silly Dilly Songs** by Alan Katz, illustrated by David Catrow

Playing with Words

**Amelia Bedelia** by Peggy Parish, illustrated by Fritz Siebel

**A Chocolate Moose for Dinner** by Fred Gwynne

**How Much Can a Bare Bear Bear?: What are Homonyms and Homophones?** by Brian P. Cleary, illustrated by Brian Gable



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For the complete Common Core State Standards, visit [corestandards.org/ELA-literacy](http://corestandards.org/ELA-literacy).

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