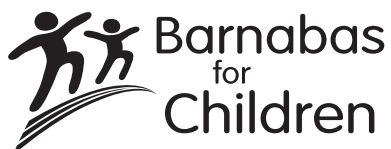


Nursery Rhyme  
NATIVITIES



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# Nursery Rhyme

# NATIVITIES

*Three easy-to-perform plays for pre-school and early years learning*



**BRIAN OGDEN**

*This book is dedicated to the children and staff of Fakenham Infant and Nursery School in thanks for their encouragement to write the plays and the enjoyment they gave in performing them.*

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# FOREWORD

In a typically generous Brian Ogden way, the very first Nursery Rhyme Nativity came to be with Brian saying to Jane—one of our Reception teachers—‘I’ll write one for you!’ Jane hadn’t asked for this, it just came from a casual remark about what the Nursery and Reception children might perform for Christmas. So that year we premièred *Old Uncle Sam* and then, the following year, *The Christmas Three*. It was thrilling to share the fun of the children’s learning of the piece and the wonderful enjoyment of the parents and families at the very special performances.

Brian has balanced the three playlets with just the right amount of religion, humour and respect. He writes with a clear understanding of good learning for children in the Foundation Stage and at Key Stage One. His able writing gives teachers the flexibility to interpret widely, something we really appreciate in Fakenham Infant and Nursery School.

This little trilogy will become a wonderful resource for teachers who want to make the Christmas performance meaningful and contemporary. The accompanying music scores and craft templates help to make the work of preparation manageable. The clever use of nursery rhyme tunes and some well-known songs give precious nursery rhymes a new lease of life. It also gives performers and audience alike an opportunity to join in easily with gusto and joy.

Brian, a special word to you—thank you, it was great to be in at the beginning.

To colleagues in Early Years settings, you have something good to look forward to. Enjoy *Uncle Sam*, *Completing the Crib* and *The Christmas Three*.

*Rosine Hunt*

# INTRODUCTION

This book contains three separate nativity plays for use with pre-school, Reception/Foundation and Year One children. In each play the stories are told through narration and song. It is assumed that the children will mime the story alongside the narration and songs.

## NARRATORS

The narration in each play is fundamental. It is essential that those chosen to narrate are very able readers with voices that are sufficiently powerful for the occasion. Working with young children, the timing of the narration is also crucial. Unless there are older children who can fulfil these requirements, it is better to use adult narrators.

## THE SONGS

The songs are all written to popular tunes, mostly nursery rhymes, which will be familiar to the children. The words of the songs will need to be made available to all attending the presentation of these plays, either on a printed word sheet or on overhead projector (OHP) acetates. For ease of photocopying, a complete set of the songs may be found in Appendix One of this book. The

participation of the audience is a vital aspect of the plays. It not only adds to the overall enjoyment but also encourages and supports the children.

Simple scores of the tunes used for the songs can be found in Appendix Two. Many of the songs are interchangeable between plays, so if one song appeals more than another, an exchange can be made.

In addition to the songs written for the plays, traditional Christmas carols may also be included. It may be appropriate, for example, for well-known carols to be sung to introduce and conclude a performance.

## THE CHILDREN

These plays are designed to involve any number of children. If there are few children, there will be no difficulty in giving acting parts to all the children. If numbers are higher, there are many characters for whom there are no set limits—for example, shepherds, angels, innkeepers, Roman soldiers, crowds, sheep and so on. If numbers are too large to involve all the children, then a choir can make a very valuable addition. It may be that the older children in the school can fulfil this role.

## STAGING

Circumstances vary enormously but provision should be made for movement on and off the acting area, together with a passageway through the audience to indicate longer distances travelled—for example, Mary and Joseph travelling from Nazareth to Bethlehem, the wise men coming from the east, and so on. Any movement by characters in the plays is indicated by the use of italics in the stage directions. There should not be any problem in staging these plays in school halls, churches or any large room.





### **COSTUME AND PROPS**

Decisions over costumes and props must be left to individual users. The most important aspect must always be the safety of the children, especially regarding the length of any garments worn. Much can be done with the use of simple masks, and suggestions for these are given in the individual plays. Props are also suggested in the plays.

### **CHILDREN'S WORK**

The introduction to the second play, 'Completing the crib', suggests ways in which the children's craft work can be incorporated within the drama, for example, making simple puppets, or a frieze. This provides an opportunity for others to see and endorse what the children have contributed themselves to the Christmas story.

### **STARTING OFF**

Although some licence has obviously been taken in writing these plays, they are intended to introduce children and adults to, or remind them of, the Christmas story. There is a great opportunity, when introducing the parts of the play to the children, to show them the origin of the story by reading a section of it from the Bible. This need be no more than a few verses. Both the Good News Bible and the Contemporary English Version are suitable translations for use with children. The passages that cover the stories in the plays are Luke 1:26–38, Luke 2:1–20 and Matthew 2:1–2, 9–12.

### **FINAL COMMENT**

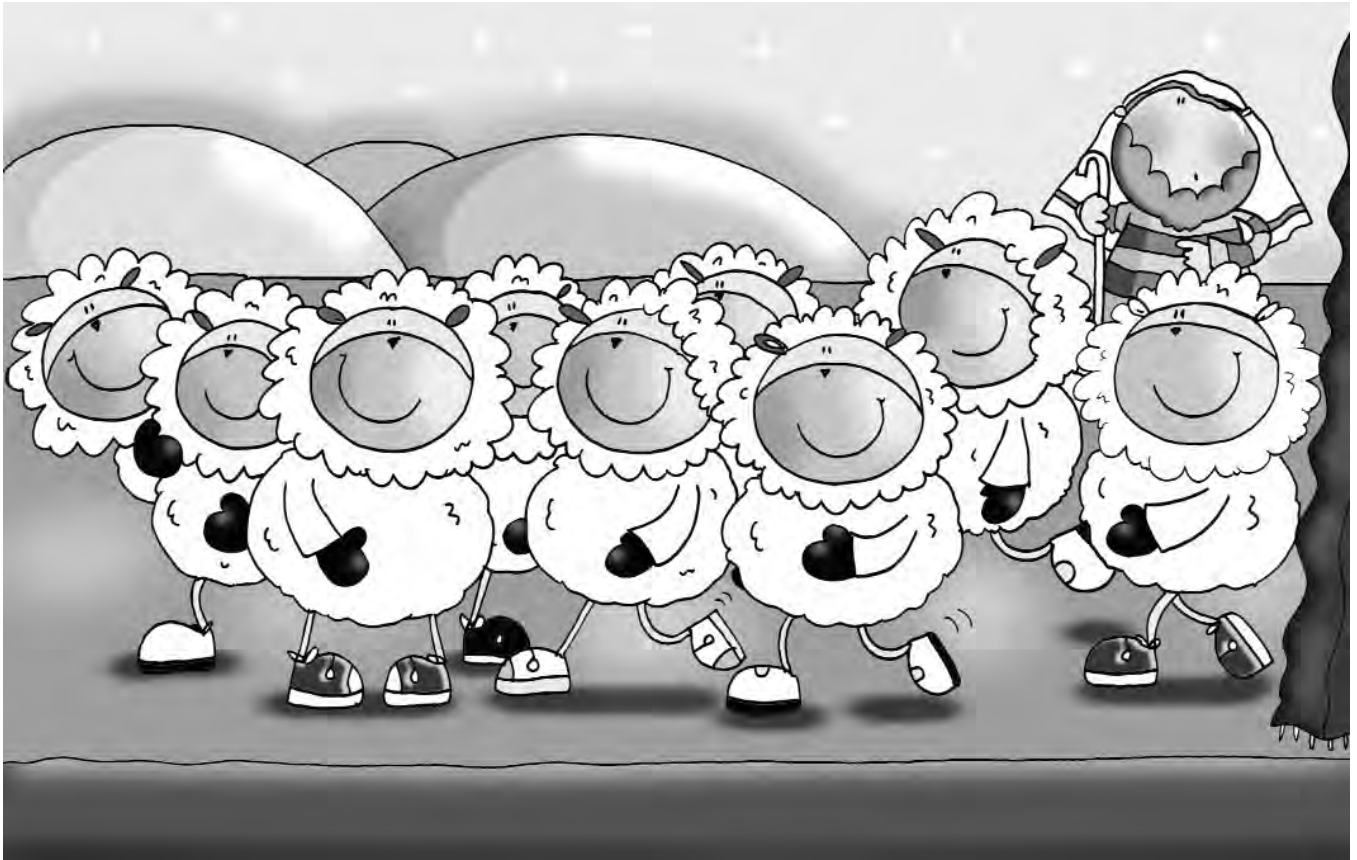
These plays are designed to be fun to perform, and this should be achieved without a huge amount of preparation. Strong adult participation in the singing will enable the children to concentrate on the acting and create a sense of involvement. Any nativity play is, in itself, an act of worship and you may wish to end the presentation with a prayer. The following may be used at the end of any of these three plays.

*Heavenly Father, thank you for sending Jesus into the world. Help us, this and every Christmas, to remember that it is the birth of your Son that brings true happiness. As we have recalled the events of his birth, so may we worship him throughout our lives. Amen.*





**OLD UNCLE  
SAM**



## CAST AND PROPS

*in order of appearance*

Narrator 1

Narrator 2

Uncle Sam, dressed as a shepherd with a crook

Bag to be packed by Uncle Sam

Ten lambs (masks and tails will be sufficient)\*

Rock for lamb to hide behind (a large painted cardboard box)

Star (child carrying a star on a stick)\*

Other shepherds, with crooks

Angels, dressed in white

Mary and Joseph

Manger and baby doll

At least three wise men

Three gifts in brightly coloured boxes

Pages, who will carry gifts for wise men

Other stars (as above, but children with stars can lead each wise man)

\* See Appendix Three for mask and star templates

Open the play with a traditional carol and welcome.

**Narrator 1** Once upon a Christmas time, many years ago, there was an old shepherd called Samuel. Samuel and his friends looked after all the sheep on the hills above the town of Bethlehem.

*Enter Uncle Sam with a shepherd's crook.*

**Narrator 2** The other shepherds called the old shepherd Uncle Sam. Uncle Sam had ten lambs that he loved dearly. Uncle Sam liked to count his lambs to make sure they were all there.

*Ten lambs walk in front of Uncle Sam as he counts them. The lambs sing 'Baa, baa, black sheep' and make counting difficult.*

**Narrator 1** He counted them in the afternoon...

*Ten lambs come back again as he counts them.*

**Narrator 2** ...and he counted them before he went to sleep.

*Ten lambs walk in front of Uncle Sam as he counts them.*

**Narrator 1** He counted them in the morning...

*The tenth lamb goes off to hide behind a rock, some distance from the acting area.*

**Uncle Sam** (*counts*) One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine... er, nine. Oh no! One is missing!

*After a pause he counts them again.*

**Uncle Sam** One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine... er, nine. Oh no! One really is missing. I must find it.

★ SONG ONE ★

**Sam's song**

(Tune: Little Bo Peep)

Old Uncle Sam has lost a lamb,  
And no one knows where to find it.  
Early today,  
It went astray,  
Wagging its tail behind it.

*Uncle Sam gets his crook and packs a bag. As the next verse starts, he sets off to look for the lamb.*

Old Uncle Sam has lost a lamb,  
And off he goes to find it,  
It fell off a rock,  
And had a bad shock,  
And hurt its poor tail behind it.

*The lost lamb is seen behind a rock.*

Old Uncle Sam has lost a lamb,  
And still he's trying to find it,  
He's travelled so far,  
When he hears a 'baa'  
From a rock—the lamb is behind it.

*Uncle Sam finds the lamb and puts his arm round it.*

Old Uncle Sam has found his lamb,  
But lost his way on the hill tops,  
Uncle Sam doesn't know  
Which way to go,  
But high in the sky a star stops.

*Child with star leads Sam and the lamb back to the flock.*

Old Uncle Sam has found his lamb,  
He carries it home delighted,  
There'll be party fun,  
When all's said and done,  
And everyone is invited.

*Uncle Sam and lamb wave to other shepherds as they enter. Other shepherds wave back and then see angels coming. They stop waving and look rather frightened.*

Old Uncle Sam, carrying his lamb,  
Follows the star very slowly.  
It leads to the flock,  
Uncle Sam has a shock,  
For there are some angels holy.

*Star stops by shepherds. Angels come on.*



★ SONG TWO ★

## The song of the sheep

(Tune: Twinkle, twinkle, little star)

To be sung twice. Sheep say loudly, 'baa, baa, baa!'

Twinkle, twinkle, little star,  
Frightened sheep go 'baa, baa, baa',  
Up above the sky so bright,  
Letting in God's heavenly light.  
Twinkle, twinkle, little star,  
Now we know just what you are.

**Narrator 2** Angels are messengers. They have come with a wonderful message for the shepherds. A very special baby has been born in Bethlehem. He is Jesus—the son of God.

Go to the town.  
Through all the dark streets,  
Far from the flock's bleats,  
There to the stable  
Shepherds rush down.

Angels and star leave. Shepherds discuss who should stay behind to look after the sheep. If there are insufficient shepherds, each may speak twice.

**Shepherd 1** I want to go...  
**Shepherd 2** So do I...  
**Shepherd 3** And me too...  
**Shepherd 4** I'm not staying here...  
**Shepherd 5** I'm coming with you...  
**Shepherd 6** So am I...  
**Shepherd 7** I'm going to Bethlehem...  
**Shepherd 8** I wouldn't miss it...  
**Shepherd 9** Let's go, then!  
**Uncle Sam** But what about the sheep? Who's going to look after the sheep?

★ SONG THREE ★

## The song of the angels

(Tune: Bunessan—'Morning has broken')

Angels are singing,  
God's message bringing,  
Down to the shepherds,  
Terrified men!  
Don't be afraid now,  
Don't even ask how,  
Jesus is coming,  
To Bethlehem.

There in a stable,  
If you are able,  
You'll find the baby  
Warm in the straw.  
Lies in a manger,  
No more a stranger,  
God's Son lies sleeping.  
Kneel and adore.

Angels are leaving,  
Shepherds, believing  
All that they told them,

All shepherds point at Uncle Sam.

**All shepherds** You are!

Shepherds leave, with Uncle Sam looking fed up, signing with his hands on his hips.

