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**Miss mary mack song meaning**

Edited by Azizi Powell Update: January 21, 2019 This post provides theories about the meaning of Mary Mack (Miss Mary Mack) rhyme/song as well as early examples of that rhyme or similar rhymes and my comments about Miss Mary Mack rhymes/songs. This post also contains a common example of Miss Mary Mack and a lovely video of young children singing that song. The content of this post is presented for folkloric, cultural, entertainment, and aesthetic purposes. All content stays with its owners. Thanks to all those quoted in this post. Thanks also to the kids featured in the video and thanks to the publisher of that video included in this post. Click this link for a companion pancocojams post Various Handclap Routines for Miss Mary Mack. A commonly used version of Miss Mary MACK [1950s southern New Jersey and so far in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and elsewhere] Miss Mary Mack Mack Mack All dressed in black black with silver buttons All down back back. She asked his mother mother mother For fifty\* cent Cent To see elephant Jump over the fence He jumped so high high He touched the sky sky And he never came back to the Fourth of July ly ly -several sources, including my childhood memories of Atlantic City, New Jersey, 1950s \* I remember saying fifteen cents when I was a child, but most children now say fifty cents. This is probably because the word fifty fits the rhymed pattern better than fifteen. VIDEO of Miss Mary MACK SONG Miss Mary Mack all dressed in black.... evealikenimel: Uploaded on Jun 16, 2011 Apresentacao no Nic na escola.... 2010-2011 \*\*\*\* SOURCES AND THEORIES ABOUT THE MEANING OF MARY MACK RHYME These theories are presented in no particular order. 1. The name of a Civil War ship Mention of this theory includes: The name Mary Mack originally was the Merrimac (an early ironclad that would have been black, with silver rivets) suggesting that the first verse refers to the Battle of Hampton Roads during the American Civil War. 2. An enathing whose answer is a coffin citations for this theory include: a. A Coffin Was: Mary Mack all dressed in black Silver buttons all down her back From the 1926 novel Rainbow Round My Shoulder: The Blue Trail of Black Ulysses, page 33 [That novel is part of a trilogy about a black worker, written by Howard Washington Odum. Odum was a highly prestigious Anglo-American sociologist, scholar and folklorist who also edited the highly regarded book The Negro And His Songs from 1925. b)Source: Robert A Georges and Alan Dundes, Against a Definition of the riddle in the Journal of American Folklore, Vol. LXXVI, No. 300 (Apr 1963 (available online by JSTOR)), p. 114] listed in The Ballad Index Copyright 2014 by Robert B. Waltz and David G. Engle [henceforth given as The Ballad Index: Mary Mack] Mary Mack all dressed in black/Silver buttons all down on her back -Archer Taylor in English riddles from Oral Tradition (Berkeley, 1951); riddle #656 with the solution coffin 3. The Mary Mack rhyme is a rhyming exercise and doesn't really mean anything. 4. Similar to #3, Miss Mary Mack is composed of lines from various sources (such as a conundrum and lines from other stand alone rhymes and/or songs.) -snip- Many playground rhymes are composed by shelling together sometimes unrelated stand alone rhymes or songs, or lines from these compositions. Miss Mary Mack is not unique in that respect. Read the 1888 example of Miss Mary Mack given below for an example of how this rhyme obviously consists by combining lines from different sources. Also, Going To see the elephant jump the fence can mean going to the circus to see the trained elephants do tricks, even if elephants don't jump fences in the circus, and jump so high that they don't return down to the ground until July 4. So there's that... However, shows that The Phrase to See the Elephant is an Americanism (or American phrase) in the mid to late 19th century. Seen throughout the United States in the Mexican-American War, the Texas Santa Fe Expedition, the American Civil War, the 1849 Gold Rush, and the Westward Expansion Trails (Oregon Trail, California Trail, Mormon Trail), the mythical elephant was a very popular way to express an overwhelming feeling. In addition, there are lines from Mary Mack in an African American Spiritual: Source: The Ballad Index: Mary Mack A spiritual contains the verse Look Over There What I See, Mary and Mac, Dressed in Black. Where am I supposed to be when the first trumpet sounds? Where will it be when it sounds so loud? Goin' ter wake up de dead (source: Anna Kranz Odum, Some Negro Folk-Songs from Tennessee in The Journal of American Folklore, Vol. XXVII, No. 105 (Jul 1914 (available online by JSTOR)), #3 p. 257 Goin' ter Wake up de Dead (1 text)). Apparently not knowing about rhymes, Odum reasonably takes Mac to be a corruption of Martha, Mary of Bethany's sister (John 11:1-12:11); or maybe he's right and rhyme's hurt. -snip- In my opinion the lyrics quoted by The Ballad Index serve as a common example of a singer of religious songs including lines from a secular source, presumably to extemporaneously keep the song going. While borrowing is usually from the religious to the secular, I'm sure there are examples of the use texts in the other direction (although I can't think of anyone from the top of my head). Any care to offer any examples? The Ballad Index: Mary Mack also states that Mary Mack rhymes should not be confused with music hall song of the same title, which means what sounds to be a shotgun wedding. -snip- That music hall song is the Scottish folk song Mari Mac. Click Lyric request: Mary Mack or Mari-Mac for information about & lyrical examples of that song. EXAMPLE OF MARY MACK FROM THE SONG GAME (edited by Iona and Peter Opie, (1985) quoted by Donna Richoux, msg/alt.usage.english/u483fIGZvk8/aS6QBxNm2w8J April 7, 2011 ... Miss Mary Mack is zip code 145 [in Opie's book]. They say this song is patted today by girls all over the country, which means Uk. So it addresses the first question. They say it's a combination of an old English rhyme and an old American one. This one was documented in Boston in 1865: Mary Mack, dressed in black, Silver buttons all down her back, Walking on the railroad track. In the 1870s, Shropshire children were observed dancing to: Betsy Blue came all in black, Silver buttons down her back, Every button costs a crown, Every lady flipping, Alligoshi, alligoshee, Turn bridle over my knee. The rhyme of the elephant jumping the fence appears independently in the United States, beginning around 1915. A 1888 VERSION OF MISS MARY MACK From: The Counting-Out Rhymes of Children By Henry Carrington Bolton New York, NY: D. Appleton & Co. 1888 Pg. 117: Miss Mary Mack, dressed in black, Silver buttons on her back. I love coffee, I love tea, I love the boys, and the boys love me. I'll tell Ma when she gets home, the boys won't leave the girls alone. N. S.B., West Chester, Pa. 1888 -quoted by Donna Richoux, msg/alt.usage.english/u483fIGZvk8/aS6QBxNm2w8J April 7, 2011 -snip- Note: Commenter Cheryl wrote on April 8, 2011 that part of that version of Miss Mary Mack contains lines from the folk song Mari-Mac. -snip- Revised: January 21, 2019: Since I Love Coffee, I Love Tea is an independent rhyme, that 1888 example of Miss Mary Mack can be said to be onsaved by combining a riddle (if you think the theory that I do) : Miss Mary Mack, dressed in black/silver buttons on her back with lines from a (then) jump rhyming rope [now usually performed as a hand partner clapping rhyme: I love coffee, I love tea/I love the boys, and the boys love me and combined with lines from a Scottish folk song: I'll tell ma when she gets home. The boys won't leave the girls alone. \*\*\*\* A similar rhyme was published in 1922 An early example of Mary Mack's song/rhyme titled The Elephant included in African American Professor Thomas W. Talley's now classic 1922 book Folk Rhymes, Wise & Otherwise, although that example doesn't include the name Mark Mack, or if it's a girl or boy talking the lines, or if the person talking wore black with or without silver buttons down her or her back: My mammy gimme fifteen cent Fer to see the elephan 'jump de fence. He jump so high, I didn't see why, if she gimme a dollar he mought not cry. So I axed my mammy to gimme a dollar, Fer to sgo a hear de elephan ' holler, he shouts so loudly, he skurred the crowd. Nex' he jumps so high, he reech de sky; A' he will not git back fore de fo'th o July. [Kennikat Press edition, 1969, p 116; originally published 1922 Macmillan Press] [Warning: That book contains what is now called n word completely spelled out.] \*\*\*\* ASK MY MOTHER FOR SIXPENCE RHYMES/SONGS The British & Australian rhymes or songs include that the ask my mother for sixpence to see the giraffe lines are similar to those lines in Mary Mack rhymes. But I'm not sure when these rhymes were first documented. Did they come before or after the American Mary Mack rhyme? (assuming that the Mary Mack rhyme originated in the United States). I refer to them asking my mother for sixpence to see giraffe rhymes as profanity avoidance rhymes because these compositions act as if they avoid using profanity or taboo words when they actually use or imply those words. In these compositions the last word in each line can be considered risqué or taboo, but the first word in the next line gives reasonable deniability as to what pipe or ringer meant to say. Instead of this pattern, in some profanity avoidance rhymes or songs the last word in each line of an expletive avoidance rhyme or song can be omitted (i.e. not said or sung) because it is risqué or taboo. For example, the word was omitted in some late 19th century or early 20th century songs/rhymes. Also consider the examples of Miss Susie Had A Steamboat, a very commonly known profanity avoidance playground rhyme. WARNING: The rhymes that include asking my mother for sixpence lines can be considered bawdy (what British people call rude and what kids I know call nasty). Here's an excerpt of an expletive avoidance rhyme that shares some similarities with the subject found in Mary Mack: Ask your mother for sixpence to see the big giraffe Pimples on his whiskers and pimples on his aarr..... Aunt Mary had a canary thought it was a duck took it behind the kitchen door and taught it how f-f-f..... fried egg for dinner, fried egg for tea the more you eat, the more you drink, the more you want ppee ..... Peter had a boat, the boat begaan to cut along came a shark and bit off his c-c-c ... cock - a - doodle doing that's all I have for you - GUEST,Geoff Aunt Mary had a canary- where? -snip- Another example of the same asking your mother for sixpence to see the giraffe rhyme/singing is: Well I'm asking my mom for a sixpence to see the new giraffe With wrinkles in his body and pits in him... Ask my mom for a sixpence to see the new giraffe With wrinkles in his body and dimples in he... Ask me no questions, you will hear some lies, put down the molasses and it will catch some flies ... -snip- A long example of this rhyme can be found on posted by Jamie Renton » Fri Feb 03, 2012 9:07 am quoting a Bajan (Barbados) song titled Sixpence available on YouTube. I'm not sure when the first documented example of asking my mother for sixpence to see an animal was first documented in the UK. Can Mary Mack rhymes in the US cleaned up versions of bawdy British origins rhyme with the name Mary Mack (perhaps from the Scottish folk rhyme Mari Mac or the Civil War ship Merrimac)? PANCOCOJAMS EDITORIAL COMMENTS In her book The Games Black Girls Play: Learning the Ropes from Double-dutch to Hip-hop, African American author Kyra Danielle Gaunt wrote The game song Miss Mary Mack is the most common hand-clapping game in the English-speaking world, and the most famous in black repertoire. [Google Book, page 63] -snip- Kyra Gaunt gave no quotes for these statements, but she listed these collection dates for this rhyme in the United States & in New Zealand: Roger Abrahams (1969) found variations of this song in Kansas (1940), Missouri (1947), North Carolina (1948), Arkansas (1949), Pennsylvania (1959), Texas (1963), Indiana (1966) and New Zealand (1959). He linked the performance to the region, but did not contain any information about the ethnicity of the artists. According to Abrahams, the first lines of Mary Mack are based on an enamthe of coffin originating in English oral methods (Taylor 1951, quoted 234, quoted in Abrahams 1969, 120). Source: The Games Black Girls Play: Learning the Ropes from Double-dutch to Hip-hop [Google Book, p. 63] My personal experiences facilitating game singing groups and special game song performances in the Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania area from 1997-2005 (mostly with black children) support the notion that Miss Mary Mack was a widely known rhyme. That said, it suggested to me that Miss Mary Mack was much better known among African American children (5-12 years old) than among non-African-American children of the same ages. In fact, it seemed to me that Miss Mary Mack was the most famous (but not the most popular) playground rhyme among African-American children. (I think the most popular rhyme among that popular in the Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania area during these years may have been Mama Mom Can't You See or Twee lee lee, even like Rockin Robin). But at least in 2003, it seemed that fewer African-American children knew the words to Miss Mary Mack than had previously known that rhyme. \*\* It's likely the title of Miss Mary Mack is more common among African Americans than non-African Americans. One reason for this may be that many African-American children (especially those children in the South or raised by adults with recent Southern roots) were (are) taught to always deal with women who use the title Miss before their last name or their first name, if you were given permission to use that first name. Hence, the rhyme is usually called Miss Mary Mack and not Mary Mack. It seems to me that that rule can also be crucial in the rhymes of Miss Sue From Alabama and Miss Lucy Had A Steamboat. However, it should be noted that it seems to me that the voice that speaks the lines of Miss Mary Mack is a girl and not a woman. (After all, she asks her mother for money to see the elephants jump over the fence.) That said, White girls were also referred to by the prefix little Miss or Missy. -snip- [added January 21, 2019] Here is an excerpt that expands on my previous statements about the use of Miss in Miss Mary Mack and the other rhymes listed above: from ... Until the 19th century, most women had no prefix before their name. Mrs. and later, miss was both confined to higher social status. Women on the bottom rungs of the social scale were simply taken up by their name. Thus, in a large housekeeper may be Mrs. Green, while the scullery maid was simply Molly, and the woman who came in to do the laundry was Tom Black's wife or Betty Black. ... -snip- Pancocojams Editor's comment: Aunt and Uncle were also sometimes used as prefixes for older Black women- i.e. Aunt Jemima and Uncle Remus. -snip- Note Mary Mack verses in Rufus Thomas's 1963 hit R&Amp; B song Walking The Dog: Mary Mack, wearing black Silver buttons all down her back High hose, tipsy toes She broke the needle and she can't sew [...] I asked my mom for 15 cents See an elephant jump over the fence He jumped so high, he touched the sky didn't come back 'til on July 4th -snip- These are Mary Mack verses from that song, and not that song's complete lyrics. Online transcriptions for Rufus Thomas version of Walking The Dog which is the original version of that song have incorrect lyrics for these two verses, ie Baby back instead of Mary Mack and asked a fellow ... instead of me asking my mother. Listen to this rendition of Rufus Thomas singing Walking The Dog you can clear hear the words I've given them above—coming from Mary Mack's children's rhymes and not the incorrect words given in online lyrical pages. \*\*\*\* LINKS Click for examples & comments about Mary Mack, including examples ending with this old floating verse found in a number of American and Caribbean folks and songs from the 19th century: July can't go, go, go July can't talk, talk July can't eat, eat, eat with knife and fork, fork, fork \*\*\*\* Thank you for visitng pancocojams. Visitors comments are welcome. Welcome.

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