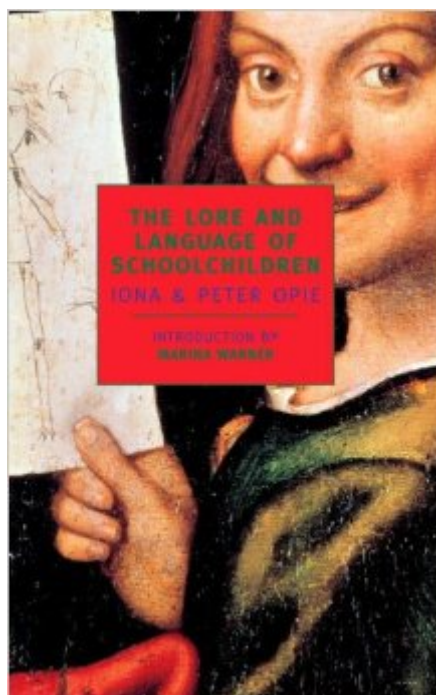


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The Lore And Language Of Schoolchildren (New York Review Books Classics)



Synopsis

First published in 1959, Iona and Peter Opie's *The Lore and Language of Schoolchildren* is a pathbreaking work of scholarship that is also a splendid and enduring work of literature. Going outside the nursery, with its assortment of parent-approved entertainments, to observe and investigate the day-to-day creative intelligence and activities of children, the Opies bring to life the rites and rhymes, jokes and jeers, laws, games, and secret spells of what has been called "the greatest of savage tribes, and the only one which shows no signs of dying out."

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Most of the material for this book was gathered fifty years ago in British schools, but I'm sure readers in all countries, for all time, will find it amusing and revealing. When I'd finished it, I felt I had a greater insight into children's minds and concerns, which they express, of course, in the games they play and the rhymes they say. I felt at the same time great respect for children. For unasked and unobserved, they have been keeping our traditions alive for us. Many of their dictums and ditties have changed little for hundreds of years. It seems that all the Barbies and Action Men and other expensive toys can't distract them from this valuable and enjoyable task of conservation.

Collected in the 50s, the Opies' *LORE AND LANGUAGE OF SCHOOLCHILDREN* is a compelling compendium of a world very similar to that of the 21st century but not quite. Americans will be

particularly fascinated by the slight differences in customs and games among children across the Atlantic, as the Opies catalogue nicknames, rhymes, games, tricks, and half-believed superstitions and spells. fascinating reading.

LORE AND LANGUAGE OF SCHOOLCHILDREN is one of two books I found about out while doing late-night Wikipedia searches on a random rhyme I remembered from when I was a kid. Being a lover of history (and also fond of childhood), I couldn't pass this up. While this was written even before my dad, I found that I recognized a good deal of the rhymes and superstitions detailed inside. My favorite parts were the first several chapters, which dealt with the kinds of juvenile rhymes I was looking for, as well as various jokes, riddles, and the like. And, despite focusing almost exclusively on British schoolchildren's customs, there were occasional references to similar American traditions. My only quibble with the book is that, as far as entertainment value goes (my primary reason for buying this in the first place), it was a bit front-loaded. Once it started getting into specific traditions/customs that I was largely unfamiliar with (and holidays I hadn't even heard of) I started skimming instead of reading thoroughly. Still, I doubt there is a more entertaining anthropological study out there, at least on this subject. Highly recommended for passive reading or research.

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