Early years

Oh What A Monster!

Song and session plan for Early Years.

Introduction

Oh What A Monster! is a Counting Song. Counting Songs are used as a classic early years device to facilitate early numeracy.

This song is based on Act II Scene ii of *The Tempest,* in which Trinculo creeps under the cloth with Caliban, leading Stephano to proclaim: *This is some monster of the isle with four legs!*

The song contains some elements of Shakespearean language, in particular, 'gaberdine.' The song repeats 'under the shade of the old pine tree' as a reference to Prospero's Act 1 Scene ii speech describing how Ariel has been bound with *'a cloven pine'* by Sycorax. In the last verse, the refrain 'Oh What a Monster' becomes 'Oh What a Wonder' to echo Miranda's exclamation *'O wonder!'* in Act V Scene i.



The song tries to challenge the idea of 'evil' monsters and then introduce light-touch empathy with Caliban through the refrain 'Oh how I wish he could be friends with me!'

The song is sung to the tune of *Waltzing Matilda,* which went out of copyright in 1991. A model recording of this version of the song is available.

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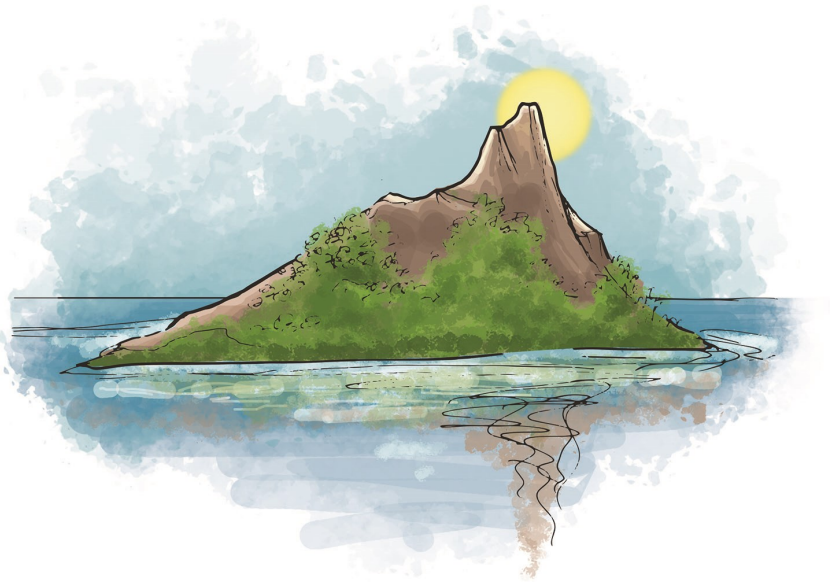
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Resources and Interaction

For this song, you will need a 'gaberdine' – a large piece of cloth, and a range of toys. Ideally, you will have a 'Caliban' toy. Before the song starts, the session leader can give each participant a toy to hold. The Caliban toy is placed under the gaberdine, and the participants count the number of legs.

In each subsequent verse, the session leaders will include one of the toys to add to the gaberdine. The participant with the relevant toy can put it under the cloth, with just the legs sticking out, that the participants can count the number of legs each time. They can even put themselves under the cloth, or their parents!

In order to demonstrate inclusivity and prevent ableism, try to incorporate toys with differing numbers of legs rather than 2 each time – for example a cat (4 legs), a snake (1 'leg'), an octopus (8 legs).



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Lyrics **(sung to the tune of *Waltzing Matilda*).**	**Interactions**
	Set up preparation: Lay out a 'gaberdine' (large piece of cloth) in front of the participants. Introduce a Caliban puppet, walk him along, shaking hands with the participants. Then make him go under the 'gaberdine' with just his legs sticking out at the bottom.
Caliban is sleeping underneath the gaberdine under the shade of the old pine tree And his legs stick out from the bottom of the gaberdine A monster with – how many legs can you see?	
	Count the number of legs – 1, 2
Oh What a Monster! Oh What a Monster! A Monster with 2 legs is here next to me! And he's sleeping so quietly underneath the gaberdine Oh how I wish he could be friends with me!	
	Introduce a new character puppet. Walk the character along and put him under the 'gaberdine' with just his legs sticking out as before.
A man comes along and he goes beneath the gaber-dine under the shade of the old pine tree And his legs stick out from the bottom of the gaberdine A monster with – how many legs can you see?	
	Count the number of legs – 1, 2, 3, 4
Oh What a Monster! Oh What a Monster! A Monster with 4 legs is here next to me! And he's sleeping so quietly underneath the gaberdine Oh how I wish he could be friends with me!	
	Repeat the verses introducing new characters each time. These don't have to be two-legged men each time – ask the participants for their favourite people, or animals, or use the toys you have. A snake could come along (1 leg), a lion could come along (4 legs), an octopus could come comes along (8 legs). Each time, count the number of legs that are sticking out from under the sheet. Repeat as many times as you like! A snake and an octo-pus included here as examples.
A snake comes along and he goes beneath the gaberdine under the shade of the old pine tree And his legs stick out from the bottom of the gaberdine A monster with – how many legs can you see?	
	Count the number of legs – 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

Oh What a Monster! Oh What a Monster! A Monster with 5 legs is here next to me! And he's sleeping so quietly underneath the gaberdine Oh how I wish he could be friends with me! An octopus comes along and he goes beneath the gaberdine under the shade of the old pine tree And his legs stick out from the bottom of the gaberdine A monster with – how many legs can you see?	
	Count the number of legs – 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13
Oh What a Monster! Oh What a Monster! A Monster with 13 legs is here next to me! And he's sleeping so quietly underneath the gaberdine Oh how I wish he could be friends with me!	
	Once you have exhausted the number of toys underneath the gaberdine, sing the last verse.
Last verse: Let's meet the monster underneath the gaberdine under the shade of the old pine tree, So let's join together and lift up the gaberdine, Is everyone ready? 1, 2, 3….	Every participant holds onto the cloth. All together, everyone lifts up the cloth to reveal all the toys.
Oh what a Wonder! Oh what a Wonder! There is no monster but lots of friends for me!	
	(How many friends? Let's count: 1, 2, 3, 4)
Oh what a Wonder! Oh what a Wonder! There is no monster but 4 friends for me! And we'll all play together no matter what the weather Under the shade of the old pine tree!	