



The Wise Old Screech Owl:

A SongPlay for Young Children

By Ann Shaner (Montana) and Marilyn Winter (Montana)

The Wise Old Screech Owl songplay was initially developed in Ann Shaner's kindergarten classroom after her students played "Old Screech Owl," which was found in a collection of finger plays called Grandma Moon's Fingerplays.¹

Ann decided to add "Little Red Wagon" as the melodic base and the words of the finger play were adapted to make the melody, language, and movement function together. Several members of the Montana Music EdVentures group took this activity into their classroom for preview. Adjustments and extensions came through those efforts.

The Wise Old Screech Owl

Formation: Seated circle with (it) the "Wise Old Owl" standing outside the circle.

Game Description: The first verse is sung as one person, the owl, moves around the outside of the circle flapping his or her wings and acting like an owl. When the words "turned his head" are sung, the owl forms his fingers into circles as if looking through binoculars, stops on "looked at me," bends low and peers at the closest child and asks, "whooooo are you?" The child at whom the owl is peering then says his or her name. "I'm Sue," or "I'm Andy." The class echoes, "She's Sue," or "He's Andy."

As the second verse is sung, the owl swoops and flaps around the circle once again, stopping on the cadence. The owl cups his or her hands around the mouth and calls, "Whoooo, whoooo, whooo." The class pretends to be the owl's neighbors and echos, with the same sound as the owl, "Whooo whooooo, whooo." Next the owl invites the closest child to be the next owl by asking, "Would you like to be the 'wise old screech owl'?" The game begins again with the class taking as many turns as time and interest permit.

Optional Idea: If the room is large enough and the class size small enough, the owl may fly anywhere in the room. At the final cadence, the owl calls, "whooo, whoo, whoo," the class answers with "Sue," the child by whom the owl previously

stopped. The Owl then comes to Sue and invites her to be the next wise old screech owl.

As the lesson draws to closure, all children who haven't had a turn are invited to fly together around the room and at the appropriate time, ask the question, "Whooo are you?" Students proceed with verse two and end the game at the final cadence.

This activity is wonderful for voice exploration as well as acting out a story by pretending to be a bird. Opportunity for giving and accepting invitations is also important in this game.

Source:

Leighton, A.O. (1976).

Grandma Moon's Fingerplays. 11837 S.W. Riverwood Rd, Portland, OR 97219.
P. 65.