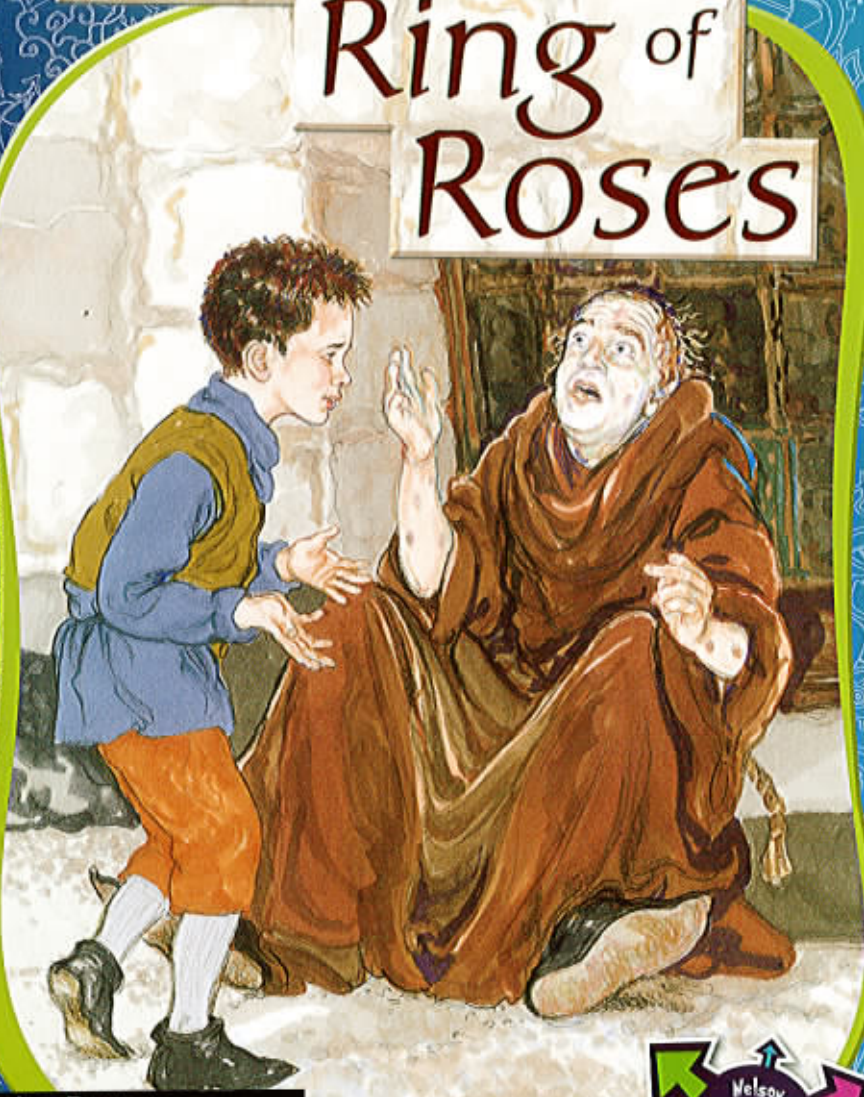
The Fearsome Ring of Roses



John Parsons

Margaret Power

Nelson Literacy Directions

Meet the Characters



Marmaduke

The carpenter's son, aged 10.



Isobel

The shoemaker's daughter, aged 11.



Ezekiel

The baker's son, aged 9.



Hannah

An orphan, aged 6 or 7.



Father Xavier

The village priest.

For teachers' Inspection Only

POST CARD

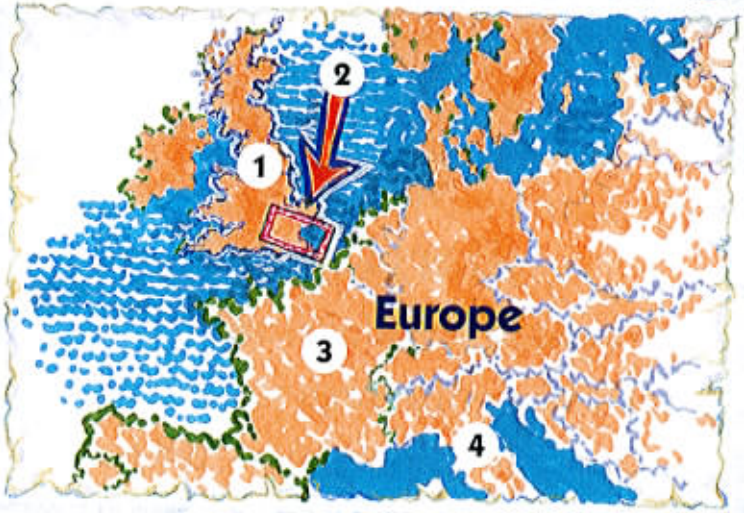
Dear Reader

Some people think that the nursery rhyme Ring o' Roses was made up back in the terrible days of the Black Plague. Everywhere, people fell ill and whole villages and towns were deserted.

Here's a sad story, as it might have been told by the children of that time.

John Parsons
Author

The Village



1. England
2. The village of Avon
3. France
4. Italy





For teachers' Inspection Only

Marmaduke

My name is Marmaduke, and I am a carpenter's son. I am ten years old.

It is the start of September 1664. My mother and father whisper about a dreadful sickness, called the plague. So do my friends' parents. Some say it

came from Italy, others from Arabia. But to us children of Avon, it matters not from where it came. What matters is that it is about to change our lives.

When we are not working at jobs and chores, we children spend our time playing in the streets of Avon. And it is there I see the events I shall describe.

For teachers' Inspection Only

Isobel

I am Isobel, the shoemaker's daughter. I am eleven.

From the street corner where we play, we see people come and go, whisper to each other, and shudder. We wonder what news can be so bad. When the truth is finally spoken at church, alarm spreads through the congregation. The old remember the last terrible plague. All of us can see the fear in their faces, and know something bad is coming. We must be brave.



Ezekiel

I am Ezekiel. My father is our village baker and I am nine.

In these days, it is hard to learn news of the outside world, although there are rumours and reports. It is only from the stories of travellers and pilgrims that we learn more about the sickness spreading across our quiet land.



For teachers' Inspection Only

Hannah

I am Hannah. I have no parents, so the church is my home. Our priest, Father Xavier, says I am probably six or seven.

Travellers say that the plague is in the cities, and that many people have died. Few from Avon now want to go to the city, unless they have tasks they simply have to do.

We children skip, and roll our hoops, and listen to the talk in the street. And we sing our favourite song.



Marmaduke, Isobel, Ezekiel, Hannah

Ring-a-ring o' roses
A pocketful of posies,
A-tishoo, a-tishoo,
We all fall down.

Marmaduke

Now, since we last spoke, it is almost winter – late November – and the leaves have fallen. The days are growing cold. One night, a stranger rides into Avon, a Frenchman called De Longue. He is friendly and young.