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Yankee Doodle, Baba Yaga, and Politic: Nursery Rhymes during the Cold War

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Nursery rhymes have been a cornerstone of children's cultures for at least twelve thousand years. For centuries, nursery rhymes have been helping children navigate the everyday world and find meaning in behavioral norms. Some of these rhymes are sung on schoolyards today and are still greatly loved by children. Over the period of the Cold War, however, cultural understandings of parenting have changed, and centuries-old folklore heritage of childhood had to grapple with modern understandings of what being a good parent means. My research explores the function of nursery rhymes during the 1950s in the two competing superpowers – the USA and the USSR. The same songs are still being transmitted, but often they are employed by parents as a tool of inculturation. The way in which the transmission occurs and how it relates to prominent ideological values, provides us yet with another glimpse into the so called "age of anxiety."