

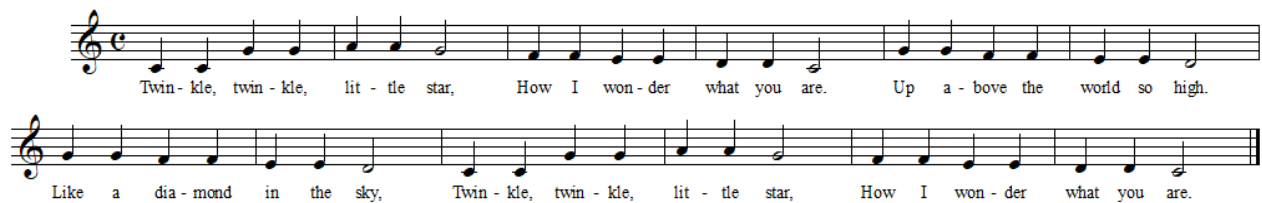
September 23rd

Memory verse

Bless the LORD, O my soul,
and forget not all his benefits:
Who forgiveth all thine iniquities;
who healeth all thy diseases;
Who redeemeth thy life from destruction;
who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies; Psalm 103: 2-4

Something to sing.¹

One of the most famous nursery rhymes of all time was written by Jane Taylor (1783-1824) who was born on 23rd September.

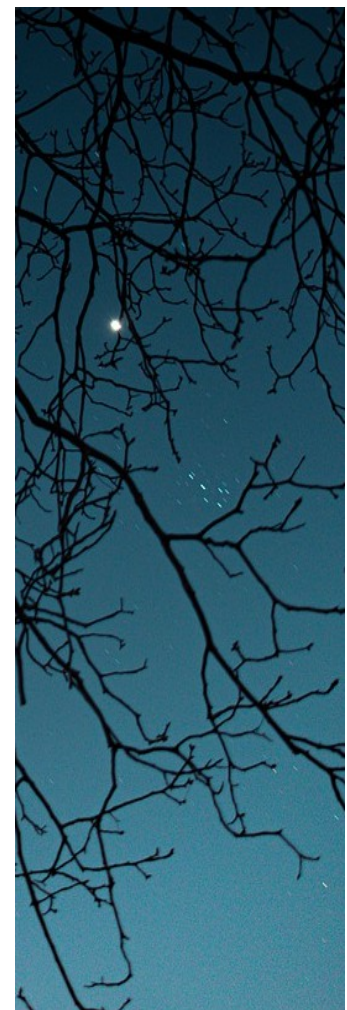


When the blazing sun is gone,
When he nothing shines upon,
Then you show your little light,
Twinkle, twinkle, all the night.
Twinkle, twinkle, little star,
How I wonder what you are!

Then the trav'ler in the dark,
Thanks you for your tiny spark,
He could not see which way to go,
If you did not twinkle so.
Twinkle, twinkle, little star,
How I wonder what you are!

In the dark blue sky you keep,
And often thro' my curtains peep,
For you never shut your eye,
Till the sun is in the sky.
Twinkle, twinkle, little star,
How I wonder what you are!

'Tis your bright and tiny spark,
Lights the trav'ler in the dark,
Tho' I know not what you are,
Twinkle, twinkle, little star.
Twinkle, twinkle, little star,
How I wonder what you are!



1 Permission requested for picture of Shilling Grange from <http://johnfullerofnewton.com/contact/> 02/02/22



Jane Taylor was particularly good at depicting the “inner life” of the mind in her writing. I think this comes out even in “Twinkle Twinkle Little Star” which despite its lowly station as a nursery rhyme **ruminates** on something quite profound about the nature of the universe around us: to what extent can we know anything about something so remote as a star? To frame such an **epistemological** concept in a way that a small child can grasp it is quite an achievement.²

Jane Taylor came from a literary family. Her father was a congregational minister and also an engraver who produced illustrations. The house where she lived as a child, Shilling Grange, is still standing. Can you see the tiny attic window on the right of the picture? People have imagined the young Jane looking through this, her bedroom window, at the stars as she thought up this poem.

Together with her sister Ann, Jane Taylor wrote many verses for children and also collaborated with her mother in writing stories and poems for the young. The work of the Taylors always includes good moral advice for young people and their books were very popular in her own day.



Something to do

Do you enjoy writing? If you do, you might like to copy something Jane Taylor and her friends did when they were young. When the family moved to Colchester the girls formed a **literary** circle known as the **Umbelliferous**³ Society, which required that the members produce an original piece of poetry or **prose** each month. If you get together with some friends who like writing you would not have to have the same rules as the Umbelliferous Society, of course, but meeting up with others to share your written work can be very enjoyable, especially if you share your ideas and discuss them. A mix of ages is good. Older ones can help younger ones and younger ones can enjoy what older ones have written for them.

Something to listen to

The tune associated with “Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star” is a French nursery rhyme. Mozart wrote a set of variations on this tune for piano, his *Twelve Variations on “Ah vous dirai-je, Maman”* K265. Try to listen to a recording.⁴

Parodies and dictionary work

Lewis Carroll in his *Alice in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking Glass* included a number of **parodies** of popular nursery rhymes and children's poems of his day. “Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star” was one of them:

² For more about stars and why they twinkle see <https://creation.com/creation-for-kids-twinkling-stars>

³ The circle was called “umbelliferous” to indicate that many buds and blossoms might flourish from the one productive stem as do the flowers of umbelliferous plants such as cow parsley. The word umbrella is related and the spokes of an umbrella have a similar shape to the flower stems of umbelliferous plants.

⁴ You can hear it played here together with a score to follow if you wish. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CTPw5BpS1Ac&t=0s>

The Hatter shook his head mournfully. “ Not I !” he replied. “ We quarrelled last March—— just before he went mad, you know——” (pointing with his teaspoon at the March Hare,) “ ——it was at the great concert given by the Queen of Hearts, and I had to sing

‘ Twinkle, twinkle, little bat !
How I wonder what you’re at !’

You know the song, perhaps ?”

“ I ’ve heard something like it,” said Alice.

“ It goes on, you know,” the Hatter continued, “ in this way :—

‘ Up above the world you fly,
Like a teatray in the sky.
Twinkle, twinkle———’ ”



Here the Dormouse shook itself, and began singing in its sleep “ Twinkle, twinkle, twinkle, twinkle——” and went on so long that they had to pinch it to make it stop.

“ Well, I ’d hardly finished the first verse,”

said the Hatter, “ when the Queen bawled out ‘ He ’s murdering the time ! Off with his head !’ ”

“ How dreadfully savage !” exclaimed Alice.

A more recent parody uses words **culled** from a Thesaurus⁵ to make a very funny effect (though I'm afraid you'd have to work hard to fit the words to the tune):

*Scintillate, scintillate, globule vivific,
Fain would I fathom thy nature specific.
Loftily poised on the ether capacious,
Strongly resembling a gem carbonaceous.*

(**Attributed** to John Raymond Carson)

I have highlighted a few *other* words in **turquoise** for you to look up in your own dictionary in the rest of today's lesson.

Something to read for older girls

Have you read any of Jane Austin's novels? If so you will enjoy Jane Taylor's novel, *Display*.⁶ It is set in the same period and milieu as Austin but with a truly Christian outlook that reminds one more of Wilberforce's circle.⁷

Something to think about

On 11th of September 2001, Islamic terrorists launched an attack on the United States of America. The Islamic group *al Qaeda* hijacked four aeroplanes: two of them were flown into the twin towers

⁵ See the lesson for April 29th.

⁶ Reprints cost between £10 and £15 but you can see it here: <https://chawtonhouse.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/DisplayJaneTaylor.pdf>.

⁷ For information on Wilberforce see the lesson for 1st August.

of the World Trade Center in New York City.⁸ The death and destruction caused had a lasting effect on America and indeed worldwide. From 23rd September onwards 2001 photographer Joel Meyerowitz was allowed to work on the site of the bombing. His job was to record in photographs things that were found as the site was being cleared. One day as he was doing this long task, a fireman called him over to look at something he had found. It was the remains of a Bible, fused by the heat into some steel from the structure. The page that was visible was open at Matthew 5:39 “Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.”

When this remarkable find was publicised, it helped many Americans to put aside vengeful feelings. “My astonishment at seeing the page that the Bible was open to made me realize that the Bible’s message survives throughout time,” said Mr Meyerowitz, “and in every era we interpret its teachings freshly, as the occasion demands.”

Mr Meyerowitz's remarks contain some truth. We can be sure that the Bible’s message will survive throughout time. The Bible itself tells us so: “the word of the Lord endureth for ever,” says 1 Peter 1:35. But the message of the Bible does *not* change over time. We are not at liberty to “interpret its teachings freshly, as the occasion demands” rather we must use the Bible itself to determine its message. How can we do this? We do it by comparing Scripture with Scripture. That means that when we come to a passage of Scripture that needs to be interpreted we look for other passages that will shed light on it.⁹ If we do this prayerfully we will not fail to arrive at the “message” of the Bible.

⁸ We learned about *al Qaeda* in the lesson for 11th September. (Still to come).

⁹ A very useful tool for older children (and adults) for this purpose is Samuel Bagster's *Treasury of Scripture Knowledge*. See the lesson for 26th December for more about this wonderful book.