

START

ARE YOU SLEEPING ARE YOU SLEEPING BROTHER JOHN BROTHER JOHN

MORNING BELLS ARE RINGING MORNING BELLS ARE RINGING

DING DONG DING DING DONG DING END

Detailed description: The image shows the lyrics of 'Frère Jacques' with musical notation. The notes are represented by colored circles: red for C, orange for D, yellow for E, green for G, purple for A, and grey for F. The lyrics are arranged in three rows. The first row contains 'ARE YOU SLEEPING' (C D E C), 'ARE YOU SLEEPING' (C D E C), 'BROTHER JOHN' (E F G), and 'BROTHER JOHN' (E F G). The second row contains 'MORNING BELLS ARE' (G A G F), 'RINGING' (E C), 'MORNING BELLS ARE' (G A G F), and 'RINGING' (E C). The third row contains 'DING DONG DING' (C G C) and 'DING DONG DING END' (C G C).

Frère Jacques, also known in English as **Brother John**, is a nursery rhyme of French origin. The rhyme is traditionally sung in a round. The song is about a friar who has overslept and is urged to wake up and sound the bell for the matins, the midnight or very early morning prayers for which a monk would be expected to wake.

Lyrics

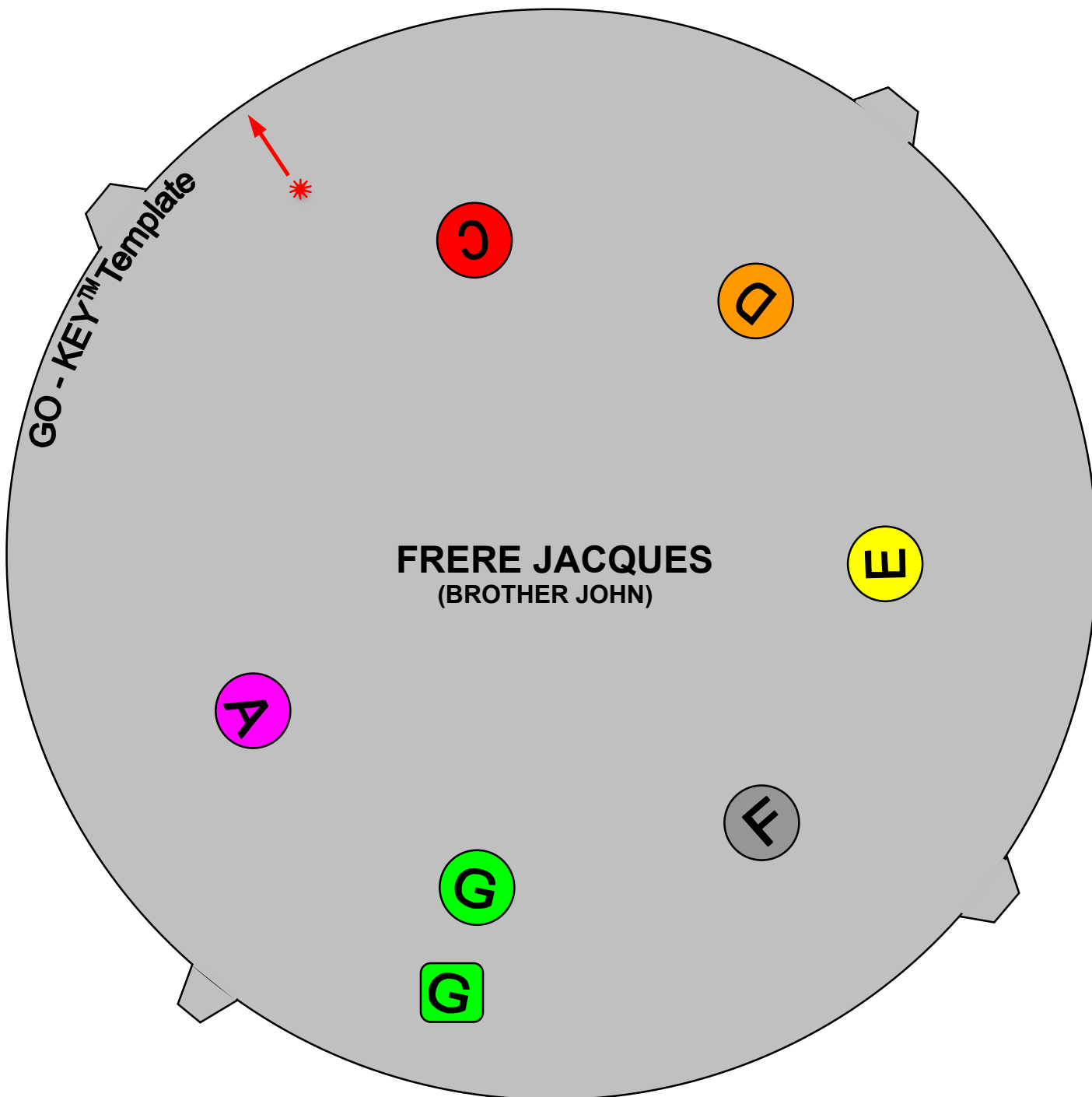
(French)

Frère Jacques, Frère Jacques,
Dormez-vous? Dormez-vous?
Sonnez les matines! Sonnez les matines!
Ding, dang, dong. Ding, dang, dong.

(Translation)

Brother Jacques, Brother Jacques,
Are you sleeping? Are you sleeping?
Ring [the bells for] the matins! Ring [the bells for] the matins!
Ding, dang, dong. Ding, dang, dong."

The popular translation shown in the notes above preserves the musicality but greatly distorts the meaning. The whole point is that the bells are not ringing, because brother John, who is supposed to ring them, is sleeping. The song concerns a monk's duty to ring the bell for matines. Frère Jacques has apparently overslept, it is time to ring the bell for matines, and we try to wake him up with this song.



History and Origin

A possible connection between Frère Jacques and the 17th century lithotomist Frère Jacques Beaulieu (also known as Frère Jacques Baulot), as claimed by Irvine Loudon and many others, was explored by J. P. Ganem and C. C. Carson without finding any evidence for a connection.

Francesca Draughon and Raymond Knapp argue that Frère Jacques was originally a song to taunt Jews or Protestants or Martin Luther.

Martine David and A. Marie Delrieu suggest that Frère Jacques might have been created to mock the Dominican friars, known in France as the Jacobin order, for their sloth and comfortable lifestyles.

In a review of a book about Kozma Prutkov, Richard Gregg notes it has been claimed that Frère Jacques Frère Jacques was derived from a Russian seminary song about a "Father Theofil".

Allmusic states that the earliest printed version of the melody is on a French manuscript circa 1780 (manuscript 300 in the manuscript collection of the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris). The manuscript is titled "Recueil de Timbres de Vaudevilles", and the Bibliothèque Nationale estimates that it was printed between 1775 and 1785. The Frère Jacques melody is labelled "Frère Blaise" in this manuscript.

Sheet music collector James Fuld (1916–2008) states that the tune was first published in 1811, and that the words and music were published together in Paris in 1869. An earlier publication in 1825 included the words together with a description of the melody in solfège, but not in musical notation. The words and music appear together in *Recreations de l'enfance: Recueil de Rondes avec Jeux et de Petites Chansons pour Faire Jouer, Danser et Chanter les Enfants avec un Accompagnement de Piano Très-Facile* by Charles Lebouc, which was first published in 1860 by Rouart, Lerolle & C. in Paris. This book was very popular and it was republished several times, so many editions exist.

French musicologist Sylvie Bouissou has found some evidence that composer Jean-Philippe Rameau had written the music. A manuscript at the French National Library contains Frère Jacques among 86 canons, with Rameau listed as author.

Besides its English and French names, "Frère Jacques" is known by a variety of names: in Afrikaans as "Vader Jakob"; in Croatian as "Bratec Martin"; in Danish as "Mester Jakob"; in Dutch as "Broeder Jacob" or "Vader Jacob"; (in Flanders) or "Vader Jacob" (in the Netherlands); in Esperanto as "Frat' Jakobo"; in Finnish as "Jaakko kulta"; in German as "Meister Jakob" or "Bruder Jakob"; in Chinese as "两只老虎" (literally means "Two Tigers"); in Hebrew as "אחינו הנהג" (romanized as "Achinu HaNehag"); in Hungarian as "János bácsi"; in Italian as "Fra' Martino"; in Polish as "Panie Janie"; in Slovenian as "Mojster Jaka"; in Spanish as either "Fray Santiago" or "Martinillo"; in Vietnamese as "Kia Con Bướm Vàng"; in Turkish as "Baş Parmağım" (literally means "My Thumb"); and in Arabic as "دق الجرس".