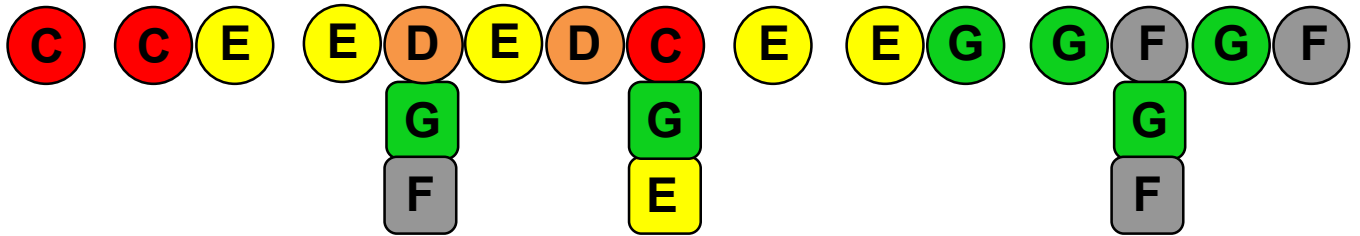
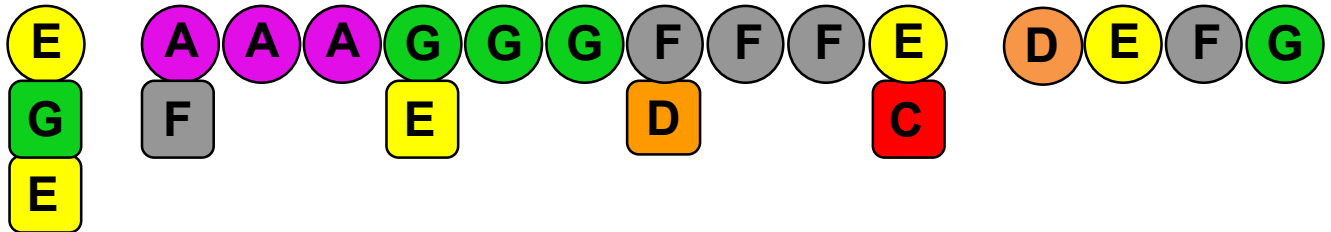


# Humpty Dumpty

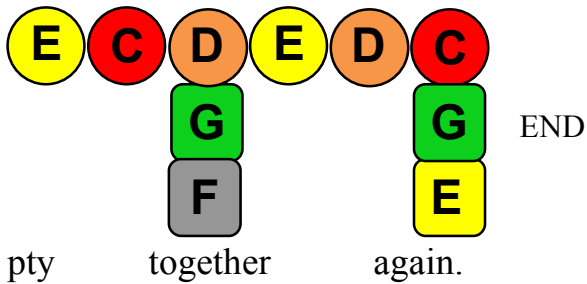
START



Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall, Humpty Dumpty had a great



fall. All the king's horses and all the king's men Couldn't put Hum-

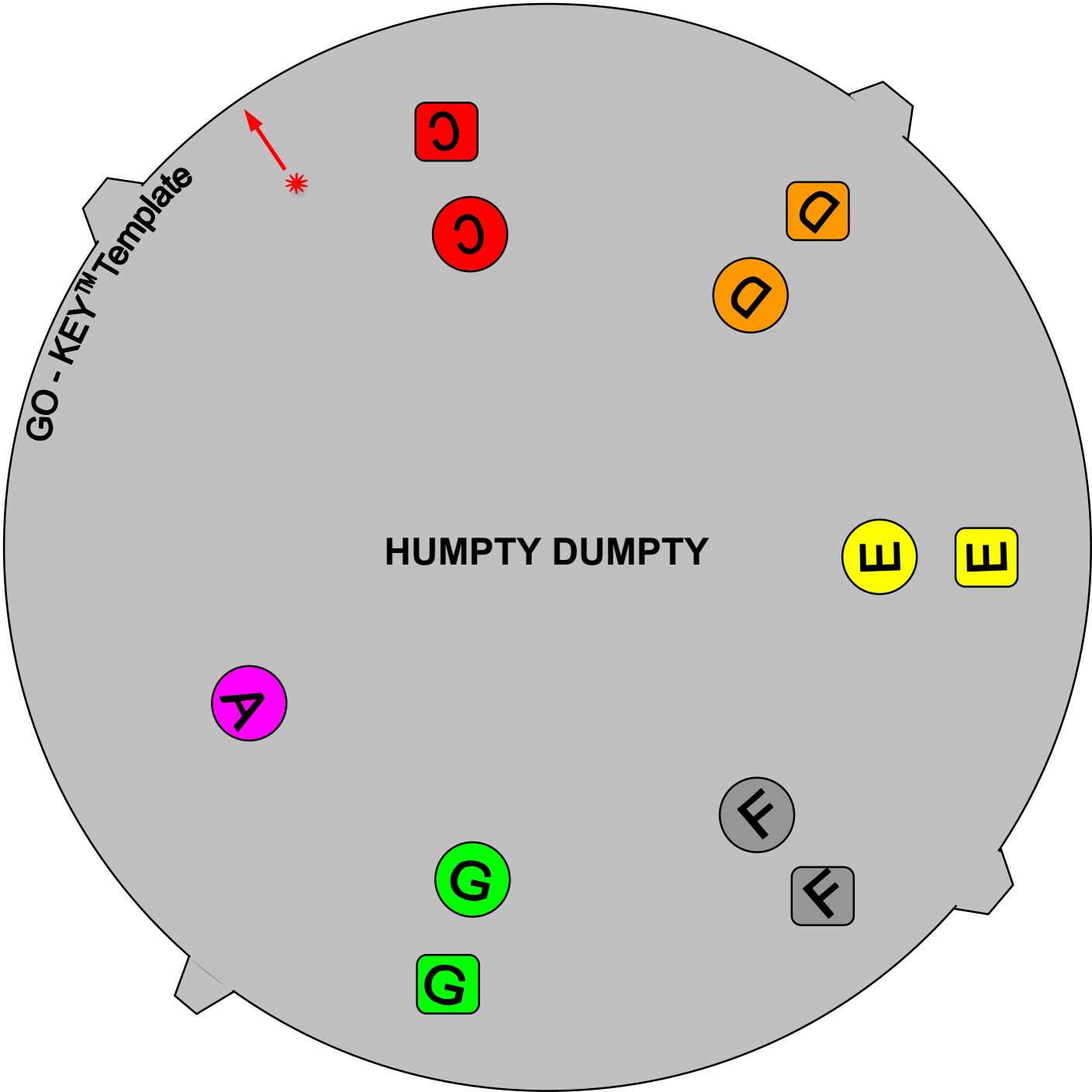


pty together again.

END

## Lyrics

Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall,  
 Humpty Dumpty had a great fall.  
 All the king's horses and all the king's men  
 Couldn't put Humpty together again.



# History and Origin

**Humpty Dumpty** is a character in an English nursery rhyme, probably originally a riddle and one of the best known in the English-speaking world. He is typically portrayed as an anthropomorphic egg, though he is not explicitly described as such. The first recorded versions of the rhyme date from late eighteenth-century England and the tune from 1870 in James William Elliott's *National Nursery Rhymes and Nursery Songs*. Its origins are obscure and several theories have been advanced to suggest original meanings. The character of Humpty Dumpty was popularised in the United States by actor George L. Fox (1825–1877). As a character and literary allusion, he has appeared or been referred to in a large number of works of literature and popular culture, particularly English author Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking-Glass* (1872), in which he was described as an egg. The rhyme is listed in the *Roud Folk Song Index* as No. 13026.

It is a single quatrain with external rhymes that follow the pattern of AABB and with a trochaic metre, which is common in nursery rhymes. The melody commonly associated with the rhyme was first recorded by composer and nursery rhyme collector James William Elliott in his *National Nursery Rhymes and Nursery Songs* (London, 1870).

An illustration from Walter Crane's *Mother Goose's Nursery Rhymes* (1877), showing Humpty Dumpty as a boy. The earliest known version was published in Samuel Arnold's *Juvenile Amusements* in 1797.

From 1996, the website of the Colchester tourist board attributed the origin of the rhyme to a cannon recorded as used from the church of St Mary-at-the-Wall by the Royalist defenders in the siege of 1648. In 1648, Colchester was a walled town with a castle and several churches and was protected by the city wall. The story given was that a large cannon, which the website claimed was colloquially called Humpty Dumpty, was strategically placed on the wall. A shot from a Parliamentary cannon succeeded in damaging the wall beneath Humpty Dumpty which caused the cannon to tumble to the ground. The Royalists (or Cavaliers, "all the King's men") attempted to raise Humpty Dumpty on to another part of the wall, but the cannon was so heavy that "All the King's horses and all the King's men couldn't put Humpty together again". Author Albert Jack claimed in his 2008 book *Pop Goes the Weasel: The Secret Meanings of Nursery Rhymes* that there were two other verses supporting this claim. Elsewhere, he claimed to have found them in an "old dusty library, [in] an even older book", but did not state what the book was or where it was found. It has been pointed out that the two additional verses are not in the style of the seventeenth century or of the existing rhyme, and that they do not fit with the earliest printed versions of the rhyme, which do not mention horses and men.

## In Popular Culture

- 1868, A poster advertising a pantomime version at the Olympic Theatre in New York, starring George L. Fox.
- 1901, *Through the Looking-Glass*, including L. Frank Baum's *Mother Goose in Prose*.
- 1925, Used in song "I'm Sitting on Top of the World", sung by Dean Martin, Doris Day and Bobby Darin.
- 1939, In James Joyce's novel *Finnegans Wake*.
- 1946, Used in Robert Penn Warren's American novel *All the King's Men*.
- 1948, In Hank Thompson's song "Humpty Dumpty Heart".
- 1949, 2006, Used in Film "All the King's Men about infamous Louisiana Senator and Governor Huey Long.
- 1966, In song by The Monkees "All the King's Horses".
- 1967, Luis d'Antin van Rooten's book *Mots d'Heures*.
- 1972, In song by Aretha Franklin "All the King's Horses".
- 1976, Echoed in film "All the President's Men" starring Robert Redford and Dustin Hoffman.
- 1985, Humpty Dumpty is referred to in Paul Auster's novel "City of Glass".
- 1992, In song by Tori Amos called "Humpty Dumpty".
- 2001, In Travis's song "The Humpty Dumpty Love Song".
- 2002, Robert Rankin used Humpty Dumpty as one victim of a fairy-tale murderer in *The Hollow Chocolate Bunnies*.
- 2003, Jasper Fforde included Humpty Dumpty in his novels *The Well of Lost Plots*.
- 2005, *The Big Over Easy*.
- 2011, Humpty Dumpty appears as a lead villain in the DreamWorks animation *Puss in Boots*.