FACT CHECK: Ring Around the Rosie - Snopes.com May 23, 2017. The origins of a classic nursery rhyme Ring-a-Ring o Roses is a well-known nursery rhyme. But this intriguing little quatrain has attracted questions from many quarters. Is "Ring Around the Rosie" a reference to the bubonic plague that swept Europe in the 14th century? Or is it about a game children play today? Let's dive into the history of this beloved nursery rhyme.

"Ring a ring o' roses, A pocket full of posies, A-tishoo! A-tishoo! We all fall down!"

This staple of children's songs has been around for centuries, with variations and adaptations surviving through time. The nursery rhyme has been attributed to various sources, including the Great Plague of London in 1665, which killed an estimated one-third of the population. However, the exact origins of the rhyme remain shrouded in mystery.

The phrase "Ring a ring o' roses" can also be associated with the bubonic plague, as the words "roses" and "buboes" are similar. In some interpretations, the rhyme describes a bubonic pustule or "rosy rash" that appeared on the skin of those infected with the plague. The "A-tishoo! A-tishoo! All fall down!" part is thought to be a reference to the symptoms of the plague, which came on rapidly and could be fatal.

However, there is no definitive evidence linking the nursery rhyme to the plague. The rhyme has been around for centuries before the plague, and its reception and interpretation have evolved over time. It is a testament to the power of language and how it can hold multiple meanings, depending on the context in which it is heard.

In conclusion, while "Ring a ring o' roses" may have allusions to the bubonic plague, the exact origins of the rhyme remain uncertain. It is a beloved classic that continues to evoke nostalgia and curiosity in children and adults alike. Whether it's about a bubonic pustule or a child's game, the rhyme captivates and engages listeners of all ages.