

Ring Around The Rosy

Words & Music:
Traditional English

This song's lyrics refers to the Bubonic Plague which raged through England in 1666. The "ring around the rosy" refers to one of the first skins symptoms of the disease. "A pocketful of posy" refers to the fact that caregivers who actually dared to take care of the sick would often fill their pockets with flowers to overcome the stench of the dead and dying. "Ashes...we all fall down" is reminiscent of going back to dust when we die. Here is the version I learned as an American child:

Ring around the rosy
Pocketful of posy.
Ashes! Ashes!
We all fall down!

Correspondent Gavin Browne recalls this version from his British upbringing (as opposed to my American roots version above):

Ring around the rosy
Pocketful of posy.
A-Tishoo! A-Tishoo!
We all fall down!

Now, Gavin is right. This small change to the third line changes the meaning from "ashes to ashes" (more in line with early American Christian training of all sects) to the fact that the plague was passed along through the aerosol form in a sneeze, especially in its pneumonic form. One word. Completely different meanings. I love this stuff.

GAME:

- * All join hands in a circle and walk clockwise in time to the music.
- * On the word "down", everyone sits!