

## Iona Opie, Folklorist (13 October 1923 – 23 October 2017)

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Among the most productive partnerships in folklore must be the 40 year one of Iona and Peter Opie. They produced major studies of what is now known as children's folklore. Their folkloric start began in a library where they enquired about histories of nursery rhymes and were introduced to an 1842 volume *Nursery Rhymes of England*. By 1951 they had published their own book *The Oxford Dictionary of Nursery Rhymes*.

Among the rhymes they collected some were thought too rude and rumbustious for their first publication. It was these items that proved to be important for their next and perhaps most influential book *The Lore and Language of Schoolchildren*, with its survey of five thousand students and seventy schools in Britain. Their folkloric methodology took them out of the library and into the playground and revealed a wealth of hidden lore and language, material that excited the children's parents and teachers as never before. Under the noses of authority was found a seemingly secret childhood code carried orally from one generation of children to the next. Interest in these discoveries proved to be almost worldwide, and the rapidity of this material moving across land and sea seemed nothing short of astonishing.

Peter Opie died in 1982 and Iona died on October 23rd, 2017, at the age of 94.

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### *References*

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 Opie, I. and Opie, P. (eds.), 1952. *The Oxford Dictionary of Nursery Rhymes*. Clarendon Press.  
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