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## POETRY

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### A NURSERY RHYME

Sing a song of sixpence  
 A pocket full of rye  
 Four and twenty blackbirds baked in a pie,  
 When the pie was opened the birds began to sing  
 Wasn't that a dainty dish to set before the king?

Editor's note: This nursery rhyme from the Middle Ages is based on fact. It was popular amusement at major feasts to bake a pie shell and then seal a group of songbirds inside. In this case they used the abundant Eurasian Blackbird, a black-coloured equivalent of our Robin. When the pie was cut in front of the unsuspecting guests the birds would burst forth, to the startled amusement of all. The practice was short-lived, as the novelty soon wore off.