

WHISTLE WHILE YOU WORK

Songs and Rhymes for Victory

During hard times, people used to sing songs to keep their spirits up. This was certainly true in World War II. Some songs were about brave Americans in battle. Some were about romance or parting with loved ones. Others made fun of the enemy. If you were alive during World War II, here are some songs and rhymes you might have heard.

Here, a boy who gets poor marks in school grows up to be a hero. As a fighter pilot, he shoots down Zeros, which were Japanese fighter planes.

“Johnny Zero”

by Mack David & Vee Lawnhurst

**The kids all called him Johnny Zero,
At school, they always used to say,**

(chorus)

**Johnny got a zero,
Johnny got a zero,
Johnny got a zero today.**



**The kids all laughed at Johnny Zero
And they would tease him when they'd play,
(chorus)**

**He couldn't concentrate on studies,
His mind was always on the sky,
When he grew up, he left his buddies,
And Johnny learned how to fly.**

**Now they still call him Johnny Zero,
and all the pilots proudly say —
(chorus)**

In a 1940s version of the old children's counting rhyme, kids get to make Hideki Tojo, the powerful war leader of Japan, surrender.

**Eeeney meeney miney moe,
Catch old Tojo by the toe,
If he hollars make him say,
“I surrender, U.S.A.”
My mother says to pick this one
And out goes Y—O—U—!**

In 1937, Walt Disney came out with the cartoon movie *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. In it was the song “Whistle While You Work.” This wartime version is from British children, whose slang for crazy is “barmy.” When the Germans bombed Great Britain, some British kids were sent to the United States for safety. Possibly, they brought this verse with them. This song was also popular in wartime factories.

**Whistle while you work,
Hitler is a jerk,
He's half barmy,
And his army,
Whistle while you work.**