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STATE COLLEGE OF VICTORIA
Institute of Early Childhood Development
4 Madden Grove, Kew, 3101

AV CENTRE

MULTICULTURAL CASSETTE SERIES

STORIES, SONGS AND RHYMES FOR YOUNG CHILDREN

- ITALIAN
- GREEK
- SPANISH/SOUTH AMERICAN
- TURKISH
- SERBO-CROATIAN
- MACEDONIAN
- ARABIC (LEBANESE & EGYPTIAN)
- ENGLISH

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TO TEACHERS, LIBRARIANS AND OTHER USERS OF THE
MULTICULTURAL CASSETTE SERIES

This manual contains English synopses of every item included in the Multicultural Cassette Series, as there is no English on the cassettes themselves.

Each cassette contains a number of stories, poems, rhymes and songs in the standard form of the language concerned. All items were chosen in the belief that they would appeal to children between 3 and 8 years of age; it has been found that children both younger and older often enjoy them too.

Some of the stories used are translations of English language material, both traditional and contemporary. All other material has been supplied by members of the language community represented, many of whose voices are heard on the cassettes. All music used is also from the ethnic group concerned, as either local ethnic musicians or authentic recorded music has been used.

Each side of the cassette tape contains a complete programme of approximately 15 minutes duration. The cassettes can be used either with earphones or a normal cassette player. Some teachers have found that many children are intrigued to listen to languages other than their own, and believe that increased tolerance and sensitivity can result from informal experiences with other languages such as these cassettes can provide.

The main aims of this material are to enrich the informal language environment of young children in their family language, and to encourage cultural interchange between children of all nationalities. The project was originally funded by the Australian Government Children's Commission, and is now administered by the S.C.V. - I.E.C.D. on a non-profit making basis, as a service to Australian children.

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SUGGESTIONS FOR USE OF THE MULTICULTURAL CASSETTE SERIES IN CLASSROOM, PRE-SCHOOL OR LIBRARY

The cassettes in the Multicultural Cassette Series can be used to serve many purposes :

With children of one nationality -- listening separately

1. To enrich their experience of hearing their mother tongue;
2. To provide a respite from 'bombardment with English';
3. To enable children to hear their own traditional songs, rhymes and stories which they can discuss with their families and peers;
4. To stimulate children's learning further traditional material from their families and peers.

With children of all nationalities -- listening together

1. Sensitivity training -- to expose all children to the experience of listening to a language other than their own;
2. Sharing -- to enable children to learn something of the traditional stories and folklore of other nationalities;
3. Turning the tables -- to enable children of non-English origin to become 'teachers' and leaders in discussions about their stories and folklore;
4. Empathy -- to allow children to realise the common humanity of all nationalities as expressed in children's songs, rhymes and games;

In order to achieve all or some of these objectives, it is suggested that listening be followed by discussion in every case. The monolingual English teacher or librarian can follow the content of each cassette by using the Manual, and experience has shown that individual items can soon be identified.



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It has been found that children of one particular nationality obtain great pleasure from teaching THEIR rhymes, songs etc. to other pupils. Sometimes this can be done in the original language; a song such as the Italian 'Per far' un tavola' can easily be learned in Italian by non-Italian speaking teachers and pupils alike. In other cases, an adaptation can be made, enlisting the aid of native speakers, whether parents or children. I can't speak a word of Macedonian, but here is my adaptation of the Macedonian song Dechina :

Literal English Translation (by a parent)

*We are small children
We play like small bears
With our little hands we make 'pless pless'
And with our little feet we make 'trap trap trap'*

Free adaptation

*We are the hunters, hunting bears
Stamp our feet and climb the stairs.
With our hands we clap clap clap,
Dig a great big trap trap trap.*

My adaptation fits in with the music, and I tried to retain a few characteristic sounds from the original. I'm sure that others can do likewise -- or better.

A great deal of the material in the Multicultural Cassette Series can also be used for extension activities in art, drama or creative writing. Improvised drama could follow from listening and discussion of most of the stories, and songs such as the Spanish La Rana Cantanda (the Singing Frog) can be dramatised. Older primary school children could write compositions, poetry or scripts for plays based on many of the stories, rhymes and songs or new themes could be created using traditional motifs as a guide.

The goal of inducing empathy or understanding of the common humanity in all nationalities can be achieved by collecting within a class examples of (say) finger games. In the Multicultural Cassette Series there are Arabic, Spanish and Greek finger plays, and examples can be found in many other languages. Lullabies, bouncing and counting rhymes are fruitful sources of beauty and humour, which demonstrate that all people are brothers and sisters under the skin.



Similarly, if all children can learn the stories of folk-characters such as the loveable Nasreddin Hodja, it is hoped that a greater sense of identification and understanding of other cultures will result.

It was found during the evaluation of the cassette series that parents were overwhelmingly pleased with the use of their own culture and language. Families were often pleased to play the cassettes at home, in some cases to refresh their memories about traditional rhymes and songs remembered from their own childhood. Jogging the memory can produce more material, which children can bring to share with others.

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