

Book Review

Please, Can We Play Games?

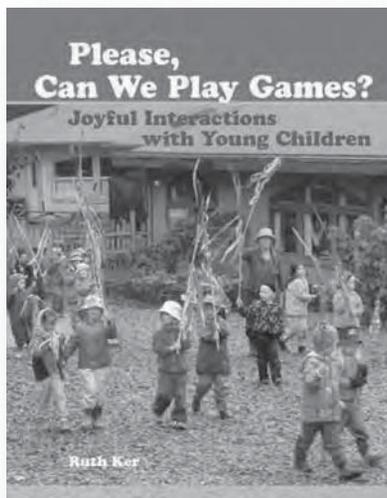
by Ruth Ker

Reviewed by Jill Tina Taplin

We gratefully acknowledge that this review first appeared in Kindling – the Journal for Steiner Waldorf Early Childhood Care and Education (Stourbridge, United Kingdom).

It is a great pleasure to find long-respected colleague, Ruth Ker, has published an anthology of traditional games intended for family, schools, and other festive gatherings. Ruth offers an eclectic collection of both familiar and new material from her many years' experience working with young children. These are introduced and annotated with pearls of wisdom that will be appreciated by both parents and educators.

In early childhood, movement, words, and music deliciously offer a feast of nutritious soul food for healthy development. There is scope for many layers of learning through these games—physical development through varied and rhythmical movement, social lessons about turn-taking, sharing and inclusivity, rich language to enhance pre-literacy skills and clear speech, musical experiences to tune the ear, counting, sequencing, rhyming, and much more.



Beginning with the songs we sing to our children before birth and culminating in the joy of bringing more complex singing and movement games to children age six and older, we instinctively feel that these activities are beneficial. In our current world, the electronic smog of poorly reproduced music and speech assaults the ears in many public places. Rhythmic games in the playground and street have practically disappeared. This

book takes positive action to keep these treasures alive and bring them to young children today.

Ruth makes the important point that games build relationships between children and between children and adults. As the games bring out our playful side, older children in the challenging transitional stage at kindergarten's end respond to our adult enthusiasm and interest in playing these games with them. Her book focuses on the value of transactional, social and traditional games. It is, as she writes, a "revelation" how powerful these can be as children practice the skills for life of self-regulation and social understanding. We know that, for children age five to eight, the fairy tales are so valuable in offering not literal pictures of

the world, but archetypal images of the journey of the soul. Ruth suggests that traditional and contemporary games can offer archetypal forms which are equally valuable in supporting healthy development.

Please, Can We Play Games? offers many useful, practical hints for engaging young children in these offerings. Ideas include how to work with mixed ages and how to include music, speech, and movement in the rhythm of the kindergarten.

The book is well laid out, with the text, music, and descriptions of games and songs clearly included. Ruth has a strong interest in meeting the needs of the older children in the kindergarten who are trying to

tame their new six-year-old capacities. To this end she includes bean bag and rope-skipping games in addition to helpful sections about tidy up time and transitions in general.

I can wholeheartedly recommend this new resource book as inspiration to adults in kindergartens, schools and homes to share music and games with young children. Ruth quotes the saviors of street and playground lore, Peter and Iona Opie: “A true game is one that frees the spirit.” This lends support to her belief that playing these games together connects us and the children to all our positive potential. ♦