

# The Turnip

An Old Russian Folktale

— Shared by Rose Maynard

*One warm spring day Dedoushka planted a turnip seed.*

*This turnip grew and grew and became very large.*

*Then Dedoushka walked to the field and tried to pull the turnip.*

*He pulled and pulled and pulled.*

*“Oh! Oh! Oh! I cannot pull the turnip,” Dedoushka said.*

*“Baboushka, dear,” he called to his wife, “please come and help*

*me. I cannot pull the turnip.”*

*“You are old and weak, Dedoushka. I will help you pull the turnip.”*

*Dedoushka and Baboushka walked to the field.*

*Dedoushka pulled at the turnip.*

*Baboushka pulled at Dedoushka.*

*And they pulled and pulled and pulled.*

*“Uh, uh, uh, we cannot pull the turnip,” said Baboushka.*

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*"I will call Mashenka. She is young and strong. She will help us pull the turnip."*

*"Mashenka, Mashenka," she called to her granddaughter.*

*"Here I am! Here I am! What is it, Baboushka?"*

*"Please come and help us pull the turnip."*

*"Surely I will. That is easy, Baboushka."*

*Dedoushka pulled at the turnip.*

*Baboushka pulled at Dedoushka.*

*Mashenka pulled at Baboushka.*

*And they pulled and pulled and pulled.*

*"Ah, ah, ah," said Mashenka, "we cannot pull the turnip."*

*"We will call Geouchka. He is a good dog and he will help us.*

*"Geouchka! Geouchka! Come and help us."*

*"Bow, wow, wow," barked Geouchka as he ran to the field.*

*Dedoushka pulled at the turnip.*

*Baboushka pulled at Dedoushka.*

*Mashenka pulled at Baboushka.*

*Geouchka pulled at Mashenka.*

*And they pulled and pulled and pulled.*

*"Bow, wow, wow, we cannot pull the turnip," barked Geouchka.*

*"We will call Keska. She is a very clever cat and she will help us."*

*"Kes-kess, come and help us," called Geouchka.*

*"We cannot pull the turnip."*

*"Meou, meou, meou. I don't eat turnips but I will help you! Meou, meou, meou!"*

*Dedoushka pulled at the turnip.*

*Baboushka pulled at Dedoushka.*

*Mashenka pulled at Baboushka.*

*Geouchka pulled at Mashenka.*

*Keska pulled at Geouchka.*

*And they pulled and pulled and pulled.*

*"Meou, meou, we cannot pull the turnip," cried Keska.*

*"I will call the little field mouse. She will help us."*

*"The little field mouse?" the others said.*

*"Yes." And Keska cried,*

*"Little field mouse, little field mouse! Come and help us. We cannot pull the turnip."*

*"Ee, ee, ee," squeaked the little field mouse.*

*"I will help you pull the turnip."*

*Dedoushka pulled at the turnip.*

*Baboushka pulled at Dedoushka.*

*Mashenka pulled at Baboushka.*

*Geouchka pulled at Mashenka.*

*Keska pulled at Geouchka.*

*The little field mouse pulled at Keska.*

*And out came the turnip!*

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## The Turnip: A Circle Play

— Rose Maynard

The sounds of language can absolutely capture the attention of young children. When teachers burst into nursery rhymes with juicy consonant sounds, ears perk up and eyes light up. “Diddle Diddle Dumpling!” “Hickety Pickety!” The words are interesting, mysterious and even fun to hear and to say. What is most fascinating, however, is that children often will notice and respond in the same way to sounds of languages that are not their own. In other words, children love sounds of all languages and in my experience are truly delighted when they are presented with the challenge of wrapping their wee lips around new and exotic words. And, of course, their capacity for imitation supports them in replicating sounds exactly. This year my students learned a Portuguese song from my assistant Carolina. Through pure listening and imitating, the children sang the song as if they had all spent years traveling through Brazil.

For these reasons, in the fall when I tell “The Turnip,” I use the Russian names during storytelling and our circle play. Dedoushka, Baboushka, Mashenka, Geochka and Kes-kess carry a certain quality of character for my English-speaking students. These new names and sounds grab their attention immediately. Our first story comes nicely

together as the children are captivated by something new in a story that is usually familiar to them from preschool. Some familiarity and something new!

As we make our way through September, I will tell the story first and then move into puppetry. Around the three-week mark, I will introduce it as a circle play. Costumes are laid out before the children arrive and when all are settled I begin to sing bits of the song, highlighting characters. I quickly help them with their costume as I sing through the play. “Dedoushka goes to pull the turnip ... Baboushka hasten here to me ... Mashenka hasten here to us,” and so on. The child who is the turnip sits in a large tub with rope handles. Usually I have the turnip wear a purple gnome hat and will drape the tub with a brown cloth. Costumes are of course simple silks, vests and felt hats. When we introduce Dedoushka through the song, he moves forward and tugs on the handle of the tub. This way the line of characters is actually pulling on something. Baboushka hangs on to Dedoushka, Mashenka hangs on to Baboushka, and so on.

The following is my recreation of the circle/play “The Carrot” by Suse Keonig. I was inspired to transform it into “The Turnip—Russian style”:

*It's harvest time on Grandfather's farm. Hey Doo Da Day. . . . .* (children move around in circle.  
Turnip is in the tub)

*The crops he planted fill the barn. Hey Doo Da Day*

*Dedoushka goes to pull the turnip. Hey Doo Da day . . . . .* (circle stops)

*The turnip's rooted oh so tight. Hey Doo Da Day . . . . .* (Dedoushka moves out of the circle  
and pulls on the handle of tub)

*Heave Ho! Heave Ho! Heave Ho! The turnip does not move!*

*Baboushka hasten here to me. Hey Doo da Day. . . . .* (Dedoushka motions for  
Baboushka to help. Baboushka  
hangs on to Dedoushka and then  
they both pull, etc. The children  
combine pulling with gesture)

Now help me pull the turnip please. Hey Doo Da Day  
Heave ho! Heave Ho! Heave Ho! The turnip does not move!

Mashenka hasten here to us. Hey Doo Da Day..... (Children in the circle imitate the pulling gesture with the characters)

Now help us pull the turnip please. Hey Doo Da Day  
Heave ho! Heave Ho! Heave Ho! The turnip does not move!

Now Geochka hasten here to us. Hey Doo Da Day  
Now help us pull the turnip please. Hey Doo Da Day  
Heave Ho Heave Ho Heave Ho ... The turnip does not move!.. (children shake heads and throw up hands)

Now Kes-kess hasten here to us. Hey Doo Da Day  
Help me pull the turnip please. Hey Doo Da Day

Heave ho! Heave ho! The turnip does not move.



Heave ho! Heave ho! Heave ho! ... The turnip goes Kerplunk!!.. (Turnip jumps out of the tub!)

The following is the melody I reconfigured for the “The Turnip – Russian Style” (tune loosely based on “The Carrot” by Suze Keonig):

g c c d d e g d g e c d  
Its harvest time on Grandfather’s farm. Hey Doo Da Day

g c c d d e g d e d d c  
The crops he planted fill the barn. Hey Doo Da Day

g c c d d e g d d g e d  
Dedoushka goes to pull the turnip. Hey Doo Da day

g c c d d e g d d g e d  
The turnip’s rooted oh so tight. Hey Doo Da Day

g c g c g c g e e d c c  
Heave Ho! Heave Ho! Heave Ho! The turnip does not move!



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