

PC FOR PRE-SCHOOLERS

by Marilyn Ackerman

Multicultural Folktales: Stories to Tell Young Children by Judy Sierra and Robert Kaminski with selected translations by Adela Artole Allen (Phoenix: Oryx Press, 1991).

Within the past few years, the subjects of multiculturalism and bilingual education have been debated in the mainstream and alternative media. Professional library associations and journals have discussed multiculturalism and the importance of including multicultural literature in collections to reflect the cultural diversity of the communities being served.

Judy Sierra and Robert Kaminski have now brought together in one collection twenty-five multicultural folktales for public and school librarians to use as a resource for storytelling programs for children ranging in age from 2 1/2 to 7 years old.

Sierra, Kaminski, and Allen, who has translated three of the stories, all have extensive backgrounds in children's literature and storytelling. Sierra has a master's degree in library science, is a doctoral candidate in folklore, and is a leader of storytelling workshops. An assistant professor in the division of library and information science at San Jose State University, she is the author of *The Flannel Board Storytelling Book* (New York: H.W. Wilson, 1987) and co-author with Kaminski of *Twice Upon a Time: Stories to Tell, Retell, Act Out and Write About* (New York: H.W. Wilson, 1989). Kaminski, with a master's degree in theater, teaches English as a second language, has experience working as an artist in schools, and is a storyteller and puppeteer. Allen, associate dean of the Graduate College of the University of Arizona, has taught classes in children's literature and bilingual reading. Her research areas include multiethnic children's literature, storytelling, and library services for Hispanic children.

Sierra and Kaminski discuss in the introduction of the book the importance of folktales for children and what children can learn from listening to stories from different cultures. They do caution readers:

Although the study of folktales has a place in the social studies curriculum, it would be unwise to draw hasty or generalized conclusions about a culture or a country on the basis of its folktales — and particularly not on the basis of the select few that have made their way into North American children's literature. Folktales often portray a way of life that is centuries old, or that is pure fantasy. However, we do like to let our listeners know the source of the tales we tell them, and we stress that people everywhere enjoy stories and that the fact that we can appreciate one another's stories show how much we are alike. As we enjoy another culture's stories, we extend our knowledge and sensitivity of the global community.

The countries and areas of origin of the stories include West Africa, Spain, Mexico, Tibet, China, Korea, Japan, Denmark, Norway, Italy, Greece, France, Belgium, England, and, from the United States, stories from the traditions of African-Americans, Hispanics, and Anglo-Americans. Three of the stories ("The Elegant Rooster"/"El gallo elegante," Spain; "The Goat in the Chile Patch"/"El cabrito en la hortaliza de los chiles," Hispanic-American; and "The Little Ant"/"La Hormiguita," Mexico) include English and Spanish texts.

The stories in this collection have been grouped into two sections. The first section for children 2 1/2 to 5 years old includes fourteen stories, most of which are accompanied by traceable patterns for flannel board figures. The second section for children 5 to 7 years old with eleven stories encourages the use of puppets and storytelling props, and describes how to make hand and stick puppets. Each story includes background information, suggestions for storytelling and children's participation, and listings of picture book versions of the story and similar tales to connect storytelling with children's reading.

Sierra and Kaminski offer basic information on choosing and learning stories, storytelling techniques, selecting and preparing a storytelling space, introducing a story, discussing a story with children, and audience participation. They also describe in detail how to create and use flannel boards and flannel board figures and puppets in storytelling and how children

can make their own flannel boards and stage puppet plays.

Sierra and Kaminski strongly recommend the use of flannel boards and puppets: "Through the use of puppets and flannel boards, storytellers can better keep children's attention and help them develop their ability to concentrate."

They also comment that flannel boards can be used with students learning English and older and mixed-age groups.

In addition to providing twenty-five stories for public and school librarians to use in storytelling, Sierra and Kaminski have compiled resource lists of multicultural folktales, in picture book format and collections, and indexes and bibliographic sources for folktales from different cultures.

Sierra and Kaminski present their material in a very enthusiastic and encouraging style. The 8 1/2" by 11" workbook-style format is easy to use. Public and school librarians who are looking for multicultural collections of folktales should consider adding this book to their professional shelves. Librarians should be aware, however, that this book has a how-to orientation and does not go into detail about the importance of multiculturalism. Also, while Sierra and Kaminski have included a wide spectrum of stories from different countries and areas of origin, there are some omissions — Native American, Arab, and Jewish stories, for instance.

Anne Pellowski and Margaret Read MacDonald both have wonderful collections of folktales that involve audience participation and use objects, music, and visual devices. Sierra and Kaminski's *Multicultural Folktales*, as well as their other titles, complement the work of Pellowski and MacDonald.

READER'S FORUM:

LIBERATION TECHNOLOGY

by Al Kagan

In the August 7, 1991 PLG mailing, members were asked to submit short informal comments on the pros and cons of using new information technologies (on-line, CD-ROMs, fax machines, electronic mail, etc.) in regard to advancing a progressive agenda. We were asked to address whether this technology can be used to promote social change, or whether the technology carries with it intrinsic counter political implications. Furthermore, will computer technology in libraries challenge the democratizing influence of print culture?

I will argue that information technology has already been used to promote social change, that it can be a democratizing influence, and that it also carries intrinsic political implications. Furthermore, information technology is here whether we like it or not. We cannot reverse history, so we might as well use what we have for the best purpose. Those with political power are sure to use every means, including electronic, at their disposal. We would be in error not to do the same to advance a progressive agenda.

Let us look at some examples. The leaders of the recent Chinese democracy movement used fax machines to communicate with each other and connect with allies in other countries. Although the movement was suppressed, Chinese society was shaken, and technology helped shake it. During the attempted coup in the Soviet Union, most of the media was shut down, but electronic mail filled part of the void. The new Soviet electronic network, GlasNet, was so overloaded with messages, that the network managers had to ask that frivolous messages from foreigners (like us) be curtailed. The African National Congress of South Africa used computers and CD-ROM technology to help train its students in exile at the Solomon Mahlangu Freedom School in Tanzania. This was raining for empowerment to help create a future democratic South Africa. The Pan American Health Organization has cre-