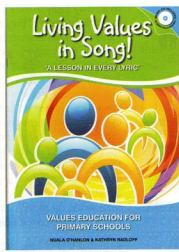
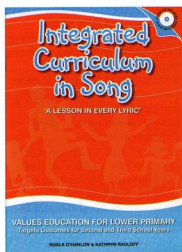


Integrated Curriculum in Song—A Lesson In Every Lyric

by Nuala O'Hanlon & Kathryn Radloff. Published by Keystone Creations. Reviewed by Brendan Hitchens



This Australian-produced series of three books promotes 'values education' for primary school students. The authors, Nuala O'Hanlon and Kathryn Radloff, have countless years of experience in teaching creative arts and producing children's entertainment. Together they have developed succinct and relevant teacher reference books that explore a previously untapped niche.

Leaving barely a stone unturned, the series covers topics ranging from transportation to the environment, healthy eating, the senses, and even swimming carnivals and graduation. While each lesson explores specific musical concepts, including dynamics, pitch and tone colour, the books lean more towards a values focus than a music focus, and as such are ideally suited to generalist classroom teachers. Music is treated as simply the medium for delivering the messages in a dynamic manner, so that learning almost becomes coincidental. Although music is the common thread of the books, the authors have successfully written in a tone and style that doesn't alienate those 'without a musical bone in their body'. To extend those who do, be they teachers or students, the books contain the musical score of each song, complete with the melody line, lyrics and chord symbols to play along to. Each book also includes an audio CD with the musical accompaniment as well as vocals for each song, allowing the opportunity for complementary singing, dancing and acting performances.

The nature of singing such songs naturally lends itself to social engagement and in this case is further strengthened by using rhyme, up-tempo rhythms, and a variety of musical styles to communicate laterally with students. Taking what are often dry and tedious topics—classroom rules and healthy eating for instance—the authors successfully break down the boredom barriers and establish a direct link to children through music. For example, the song *Our Class Rules – OK!* is the perfect means for reinforcing class rules at the beginning of a new year, as the song targets core values including cooperation, integrity, responsibility and compassion—such as: 'Never shout or roar / Sit with chair legs on the floor' and 'Scissors to the ground, / If we need to walk around'.

In terms of its application to the classroom and usability by teachers, the books rate a tick in every box. Lesson outcomes are clearly outlined at the top of each page, and the four main lesson sections cover suggestions for literacy activities, musical concepts to explore, easy-to-run learning activities, and suggested pieces to perform at assemblies.

Integration is indeed the key to these books, with each lesson being linked to key strands of the 1994 National Curriculum Statements and Profiles. For example the environment-themed *Living Things* not only teaches students to respect the planet, but seamlessly integrates with ICT, with one of the suggested activities requiring students to create a film-clip-like PowerPoint presentation to the song, using photos of their own holidays. The compassionate lyrics of *All Weather Friends* can be used for Interpersonal Development, with one activity involving students assembling in a 'friendship circle', and each one saying something positive about the student next to them, while *Workers in Our Community* can be used in Visual Arts, where students are asked to use magazine pictures to create a collage of different occupations.

Aside from targeting several subject areas, the series also focuses on different year levels—the first targets Primary Year 1, the second targets outcomes for Years 2 and 3, and the third has a broad focus on all primary years. Although they are modestly priced at around the \$50 mark for each book, it's perhaps not essential to purchase all three as often several songs double up across the books. The music is appealing enough to captivate students of all ages, and each lesson could also be adapted to suit the level being taught.

By no means is the learning from these books limited to music, and there is often more than one lesson in every lyric. From extending literacy skills, through reading lyrics, to developing social skills by working in performance teams, this series of books validates music as far more than serving its own ends, but rather as a powerful tool for learning across the curriculum.

Thanks to our reviewer, Brendan Hitchens, music teacher at Canterbury Primary School, Melbourne.

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