

## *Learn Mandarin Chinese through Children's Songs from Around the World*

**Emma Lee**

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As part of her quest to provide accessible materials for teaching Chinese, Emma Lee has harnessed music as a teaching aid. The result is her book, *Learn Mandarin Chinese through Children's Songs from Around the World*, as well as its companion volume, *Learn Mandarin Chinese through Chinese Children's Songs*.

Recognizing that music can be a powerful link between cultures, as well as an excellent mnemonic device, Lee has compiled songs from around the world to translate into Mandarin. Volume one contains children's songs like "Happy Birthday" and "Old MacDonald," as well as those from such countries as France, Germany, Japan, and Korea. The second volume focuses on folk music, including such recognizable songs as "Turkey in the Straw" and "Silent Night." Lee has done painstaking research to credit authors and sources where possible, as well as provide information on the circumstances surrounding composition.

Accompanied by three CD's, as well as charming drawings by Lee's then eight-year-old daughter, these songs provide a fun way to approach learning the language. Songs are translated into Mandarin and English, and printed using a line-by-line comparison. Each line is repeated in the following order:

1. Mandarin Phonetic Symbols (MPS)
2. Traditional Chinese characters (a written form of a Chinese)
3. Simplified Chinese characters (another written form)
4. The Pinyin system (a "Romanizing" system that converts Chinese characters in a way that allows Western students to pronounce them)
5. Mandarin Phonetic Symbols Second Form (MPS II, another Romanizing system)
6. A word-for-word English translation
7. A full sentence English translation

Lee includes a forty-page introduction to the Mandarin language that discusses Romanizing systems, initials, finals, tones, and MPS. This introduction is of necessity brief, so students will likely wish at least a passing familiarity with the basics of Mandarin before using this book and CD set. *Learn Mandarin Chinese through Children's Songs from Around the World* is an excellent supplement to introductory texts and a lively addition to the bookshelf.

EMMA LEE, a resident of Massachusetts since 1986, has a degree in Chinese literature and a graduate degree in English. She has been teaching Mandarin Chinese since 1996 and has written three books on learning Mandarin. She is currently teaching at historic Thayer Academy near Boston and working on her next book project on Chinese characters.

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