



Old Makana Had A Taro Farm

By Dr. Terry Carolan

Illustrated by Joanna F. Carolan

Audio CD Performed by Barefoot Natives (Willie K and Eric Gilliom)

Banana Patch Press, 2008

It's time to head down to the farm, so put on your "slippahs"! (aka flip flops!)

Flip flops? Yes! The timeless children's song "Old MacDonald" gets a Hawaiian makeover in this lively storybook, *Old Makana Had a Taro Farm*.

This story is a great way to introduce children to aspects of traditional Hawaiian language and culture. It is sure to bring delight to all who read (and sing) it.

Old Makana (whose name translates as "gift" in the Hawaiian language) has a farm that features a whole host of animals. There are many we would expect to find on a farm, like pigs, cows, and chickens. But there are also some Hawaiian additions that we might not expect—including geckos!

In the first half of the storybook, each animal is featured with an ebullient illustration that nearly leaps off of the page, in addition to the Hawaiian language name for each animal. Old Makana's tale becomes even more compelling in the second half of the story, where we learn about the taro cultivation process, a foundational aspect of Hawaiian culture.

Old Makana demonstrates all aspects of taro farming from preparation

of the *lo'i* (pond fields), planting of the huli (taro starts), harvesting of the taro, mashing of taro roots into poi, and even eating up the poi at a *lū'au*. 'Ono (delicious)! The story ends with Old Makana drifting off to sleep (*hiamomoe*) after a long day's work in the taro fields. But children will be wide awake with the delight of the sights and sounds of this very different farm.

Old Makana Had a Taro Farm includes a CD featuring the music of Barefoot Natives (comprised of Hawaiian recording artists Willie K and Eric Gilliom). The tune of "Old MacDonald" is substantially revamped in this island version, highlighting Barefoot Natives' intricate guitar picking and smooth vocals. This companion track provides children with the wonderful opportunity to hear authentic, contemporary Hawaiian music. They also hear Willie K properly pronounce all of the Hawaiian language terms. Teachers can decide how to best use the CD: for just listening, singing along or for other uses.

At the end of the story, Dr. Carolan provides an overview of compelling facts about taro. He includes its origins as a staple food of traditional

Hawaiians and the challenges of cultivating this plant. He also describes the role of taro in Hawaiian mythology. The taro plant serves as the older brother to the Hawaiian people, caring for them and providing sustenance.

It is often daunting to incorporate world music into the classroom, but *Old Makana Had a Taro Farm* represents a fun, easy, and effective way to do so. Teachers can feel good about this resource, as it represents a culturally authentic point of view. It makes a great addition to Asian-Pacific American Heritage Month celebrations. Children enjoy it immensely, as well. Most readings of this story conclude with joyful shouts of "read it again!" ■

Dr. Sarah Watts is a specialist in early-childhood and elementary music education, holding Bachelors and Masters degrees in music education from Penn State University, University Park, PA, and a Doctor of Philosophy degree in music education from the University of Washington, Seattle, WA. She has completed Orff Levels I and II at Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh, PA. Dr. Watts is very interested in world music, particularly music and movement traditions of Hawai'i.



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