

John Kanaka

Sea Shanty

I heard, I heard the old man say, John Ka - na - ka, na - ka,
too - la - ay. To - day, to - day is a hol - i - day,
John Ka - na - ka, na - ka, too - la - ay. Too - la - ay, oh,
too - la - ay, John Ka - na - ka, na - ka, too - la - ay.

LYRICS:

I heard, I heard the old man say,
John Kanaka, naka, too-la-ay.
Today, today is a holiday,
John Kanaka, naka, too-la-ay.
Too-la-ay, oh, too-la-ay.
John Kanaka, naka, too-la-ay.

SINGING

Enjoy this song as a singing game beginning in a standing circle. Let the children hear and sing the song enough times that they can do the following actions each time to the words *John Kanaka, naka too-la-ay*.

John - stamp foot Kanaka, naka- pat thighs alternating hands in the rhythm of the words
Too-la - clap twice
Ay - snap fingers

When those actions are secure, have everyone face a partner and change the last snap to a clap on the partner's hands.

Begin in partners and do-si-do passing right shoulders while singing, I heard, I heard the old man say. Back in the original position facing partners, do the John Kanaka movement. Repeat actions for the next two phrases.

While singing *Too-la-ay* in the next phrase, shake partner's right hand three times to the rhythm. Then on *Oh*, make a large arm circle to the right and return to shake partner's hand three times again on the last *Too-la-ay*. Conclude with the John Kanaka movement.

(If the *Oh* movement seems too fast, sing with a fermata [hold] on the *Oh*.)

When students are comfortable with this, try changing partners in this way. As right hands go up on the word *Oh*, spot the person kitty corner to the right and take that person's hand to complete the three handshakes. If desired, play until getting back to original partner.

PLAYING

Choose non-pitched instruments to orchestrate the rhythm of the words, *John Kanaka, naka too- la-ay* dividing into four instrumental groupings such as this:

John - drum
Kanaka-naka - wood blocks
Too-la - finger cymbals
Ay- tambourine.

Pitched instruments could play the three Do Re Mi tones (D, E, F-sharp) of that melody.

CREATING

Using the five tones of the song, D, E, F-sharp, A and high D, encourage students to improvise an original melody using the same rhythm pattern as the song. The *John Kanaka* phrases could be played as suggested in the playing section above.

LISTENING

A way from the game, have the students sing the song listening for their tone quality on the high tone *Oh*. Can the sound be improved? Have the students stand and sing again, this time making an arm circle as they did in the game as they sing that high tone. The lifting of the ribs in

the body and the open vowel sound could make an amazing improvement in the sound. Practice that tone and other high tones while lifting their arms then try to remember and re-create that sensation without the arm circles. Use this technique whenever lovely head tones need to be created.

CURRICULUM INTEGRATION

John Kanaka is the Polynesian equivalent of "John Doe" and was used as a name for children of poor Polynesian parents who let whalers in the 1700s "rent" their children as ship workers.