Lian Hua Ji Shi Kai Hua / Lotus Flower, When Will You Bloom?

Site of Documentation

Rural Malay community, Titi Teras, Balik Pulau, Penang, Malaysia

Description

*Lotus Flower, When will you Bloom?* is a game played by children from rural Chinese communities living in the town of Balik Pulau, Penang, Malaysia. In the game, players have to hold hands and from a circle around the ‘Lotus Flower’. To ‘bloom’, the Lotus Flower must use all their strength to break apart the ring of hands and if they successfully complete this challenge, they win the game.

Who Plays?

This game requires a minimum of 4 participants. Both boys and girls aged 7 to 12 years can play.

Time and Place

On average, this game takes around 5 to 10 minutes to play. It can be played at any time of the day as long as children have free time and there are plenty of willing participants. As the players need to form a large circle, an open space either indoors or outdoors needs to be found. School yards, reception areas or gardens are ideal.
Skills, Strategies and Qualities of a Good Player

This is primarily a game of strength. All the players need to keep their hands together for as long as possible, while the Lotus Flower tries to break them apart. Team work is important if players want to form the strongest circle possible. Often players split up so that weaker players are supported by stronger players so that the ring can not be broken easily. The best players are those that are strong enough to break all the hands apart.

Popularity

*Lotus Flower, When will you Bloom?* is a popular game, played at least once a week by children living in rural Chinese communities. Children usually learn the game by watching friends at school or in the local village.

History of the game

This game was played by members of older generations when they were young, much in the same way as it’s played today, although nowadays it is played less often.

How is the Game Played?

**Step 1.** First, one player needs to volunteer to be the ‘Lotus Flower’. All the remaining players stand in a circle and hold hands. The Lotus Flower stands in the middle of the circle.
Step 2. Next, the players in the circle have to walk around in one direction, while holding hands. As they walk they chant a rhyme that goes like this,

“Lotus flower, lotus flower, when will you bloom?
Today, tomorrow, the day after tomorrow or three days later?”

Step 3. The Lotus Flower can choose from four answers, either 今天(Today) 明天(Tomorrow), 后天 (The day after tomorrow) or 大后天 (Three days later). If they choose, “Today”, the Lotus Flower must start to try to break apart the hands of each player in the circle. However, if they answer, “Tomorrow”, “The day after tomorrow” or, “Three days later”, the players resume walking around the circle and sing the song once again.
Step 4. The game continues until the Lotus Flower has successfully broken apart each of the players’ hands in the circle, which symbolises that the Lotus Flower has blossomed and won the game.

Rules

1. The Lotus Flower can only use their hands to break apart the circle of hands.

2. The Lotus Flower is not allowed to use their hands to ‘chop’ or twist the other players’ hands while attempting to break them apart.

3. The Lotus Flower is allowed to give up if they are unable to break all players’ hands. If they do this, they have lost the game.