

Traditional Games

HEart activity

Malaysia

Objectives

To introduce students to the similarities and differences between different cultures and their activities and heritage, using the example of a traditional game. In Malaysia, this could be a spinning top (gasing).

Activities

1. Warm up question and answer session The teacher asks the students what some of their favourite games are and lists them on the board. The teacher then asks if the students know if any of those games are particular to Malaysia or are played differently in other parts of the world than in Malaysia. This will get students thinking about the topic and taps their existing knowledge - which will help them connect to new information and inspire their interest in the topic.

2. Pictures and Games The teacher presents pictures or a video/DVD of various traditional and non-traditional games in Malaysia such as top (gasing), congkak, wau, hopscotch, five stones, tin ball and marbles. The students then discuss the various games. The teacher should point out that these games can often be played outdoors and sometimes even in national parks such as those which are listed on page 3 (World Heritage Sites).

The teacher presents games from other Southeast-Asian countries and these are compared to games in Malaysia, paying particular attention to the top (gasing) and comparing tops from other countries with tops in Malaysia.

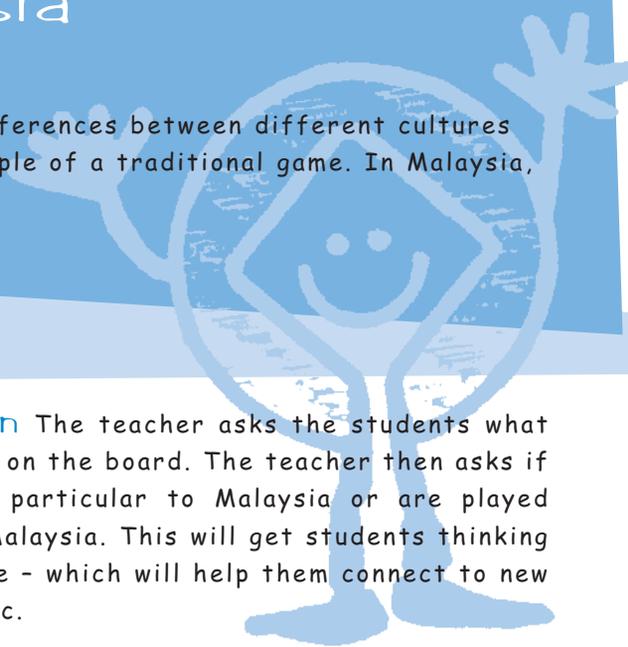
3. Decorating a top - based on examples and pictures, the students decorate wooden tops then engage in a friendly class top-spinning competition.

Synthesis

After students have decorated their tops and competed, the class should discuss the different designs and why each one is worth preserving. For older students this could then lead on to a broader discussion about the need to preserve other forms of cultural heritage.

Materials

Plain wooden tops, coloured paints, brushes.



Traditional Games in Malaysia

Gasing

Main Gasing in Bahasa Melayu means spinning of tops. It is a popular traditional game among the villages in Malaysia especially in Kelantan and Malacca after the rice-harvest when several villagers challenge each other to a test of skill.

This game of spinning tops is played by first drawing a circle on the floor to define the area within which the tops must be kept spinning. To spin the top, a string is tightly wound round the base. The player clasps the top in his hand, gripping the loose end of the string between the fingers, and throws the top into the circle. The force of the throw and the quick unloosening effect of the string make the top spin. The one whose top outspins the others within the circle wins the game. Gasing can be played individually or in teams of four. Gasing is also a traditional sport played by adults. The adult's gasing tends to be bigger and can spin for a longer period than those played by the kids.

Wau (Kite Flying)

Kites, called waus, once played by farmers on leveled ground after post-harvesting season, now attracts people from all walks of life. The wau or giant kite flown in the East Coast have intricate patterns and come in all shapes and sizes. The most popular shape is the Wau Bulan or Moon Kites, so called because it resembles the crescent moon. There is a major kite competition held annually in Kelantan which attracts participants from the region. Kite fighting is a popular sport and involves opponents attempting to bring down or cut the strings of their rivals' kites. Glass powder is used on the strings to provide the "cutting edge" and the rest involves skill in maneuvering the kite and use of wind power.

Congkak

Pronounced "chong-kak", this game is played by two participants on a wooden, boat-shaped board on which there are two rows of evenly-sized cups. These rows are called houses and each has a larger sized cup at the end called a storehouse. Cowrie shells or seeds are used in the game. The players begin simultaneously by scooping seven of the seeds or shells from any cup and distributing them, one in each house, in an effort to reach their own storehouse. The game requires concentration and speed. When a player runs out of seeds, he can pick up one from the house he is on. If there is none in that spot and he is out of shells, he loses his turn and the next player starts the sequence. Congkak ends when one player loses all his houses to his opponent or concedes defeat. The loser has to carry the playing board on top of his head and walk around. Congkak is a version of Egyptian game called "Mancala". It is a very popular traditional game in Malaysia with slight variation to very Mancala. In Malaysia, the game board of congkak comes with many designs. An authentic one will be wood crafted with bird heads at both ends while some will be wood painted on top with local motifs. The choice of beads for the game will also vary. Sea shells are authentic to the game while most popular ones are glass marbles.

World Heritage Sites in Malaysia

Kinabalu Park

Situated in Sabah, Kinabalu national park covers 754 square kilometers. Magnificent Mount Kinabalu, the showpiece of the Park, is 4,101 metres high and is the largest mountain in Southeast Asia. Inscribed on the World Heritage list in 2000, Kinabalu Park has very high biodiversity, with representatives from more than half of all the families of flowering plants. The majority of Borneo's mammals, birds, amphibians and invertebrates are found in the Park.



Gunung Mulu National Park

With both high biodiversity and important karst features, Gunung Mulu National Park was inscribed on the World Heritage list in 2000. Located on the island of Borneo, the Park is dominated by Gunung Mulu, a sandstone mountain 2,377 metres high. There are over 295 kilometres of caves, which are the habitat of birds and bats. The caves are very important for their geomorphology and they demonstrate a history of over 1.5 million years.

The Art of Top-Spinning

A top-spinning contest is a friendly game. There are two kinds of matches: "spinning contest" and "striking match".

In the "spinning contest", the one who can spin their top for the longest time wins the match. Once the top has been launched, it is carefully scooped off the ground using a thin wooden bat. It is then transferred to a little wooden post with a metal surface and left to spin for as long as possible. The trick here is to ensure that the top doesn't fall over during the transfer to the wooden post. Unbelievable as it sounds, the current record stands at two hours!

The "striking match" involves more action. Each contestant must try to hit their opponent's top with their own top so that the opponent's top will fall over.

Gasing or giant top spinning is popular both with adults and children. The tops used by adults are much bigger and can spin for a longer period of time than the ones used by children. This game is particularly popular with men as a certain amount of strength is involved.

There are two types of gasing - one is ornamental while the other is for playing. There are five shapes of gasing in Malaysia, namely the plate-shaped, heart-shaped, flat-top, egg-shaped and berembang-shaped. Berembang is a fruit of a tree. These shapes determine the material used for the making of a gasing.

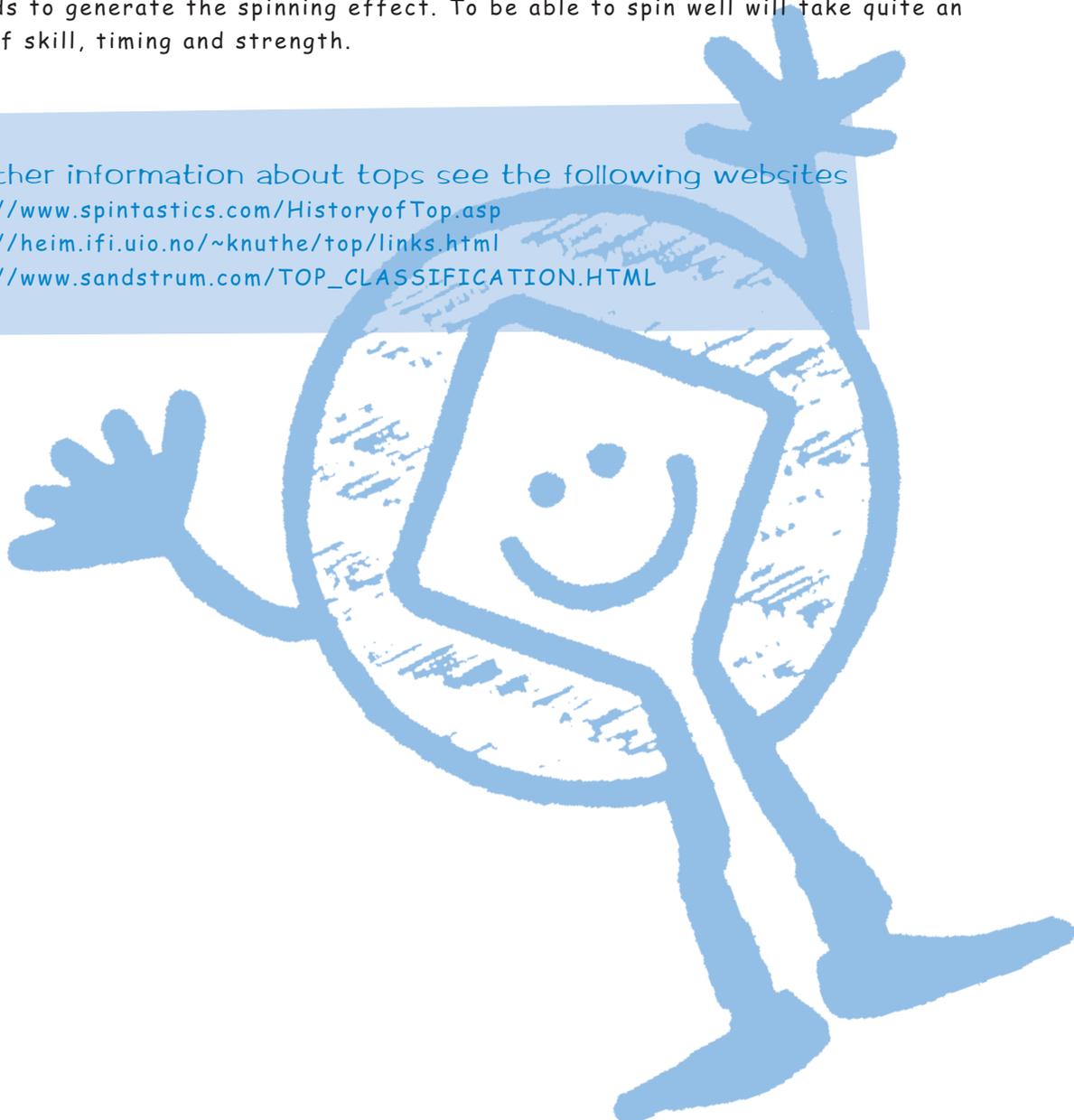
Gasing are made out of wood, iron or lead. One of those huge tops from the state of Kelantan weighs about 4 to 5 kilograms. The big tops can be as large as a dinner plate.

A gasing can be easy to make. You can make a simple one by driving a nail into the bottom of a guava fruit. It is not difficult to come up with a makeshift top but a professional one requires skill.

Learning to spin a top takes a little practice. To make a top spin, you need a string, which you coil at the top part of the gasing. Hold the gasing with one hand ensuring the string coil is facing upwards and tie the other end of the string to your wrist. Then, in a standing position, throw the gasing toward the floor. Quickly pull the string backwards to generate the spinning effect. To be able to spin well will take quite an amount of skill, timing and strength.

For further information about tops see the following websites

- <http://www.spintastics.com/HistoryofTop.asp>
- <http://heim.ifi.uio.no/~knuthe/top/links.html>
- http://www.sandstrum.com/TOP_CLASSIFICATION.HTML



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