



# Books change lives

## African games

Games are a fun and exciting way for children to learn more about the African culture. Here are suggested games that you could play during assembly, lunch or P.E.

### **Banyoka**

This is a fun game played outdoors among the rocks and trees in Zambia and Zaire. The title of the game is from the African word meaning 'the snake'.

**No. of players:** Large groups (12+)

**Equipment:** an obstacle course. Create an obstacle course by using household items such as chairs, boxes, tyres, toys, etc.

**Time:** 5-10 minutes

**Aim:** To be the team to reach the finish line.

1. Find a play area that has trees or shrubs, rocks or other obstacles. Alternatively, you can make up your own obstacle course.
2. Divide the players into two groups of six or more children.
3. Each group forms itself into a snake (banyoka) by players sitting on the ground behind each other. The legs are spread apart and arms are placed around the waist of the child in front of them.
4. Each 'snake' moves together by shuffling on the ground and moving side to side. They move around their obstacle course toward the finish line. The 'snake' must stay connected so the children need to work together.
5. The winning team is the first to cross the finish line.

## **Mbube, Mbube**

(pronounced Mboo-bay Mboo-bay) is a popular game in African countries where children are helping the lion (mbube) find and capture the impala (a southern African buck).

**Age:** All ages

**No. of players:** Large groups (6+)

**Equipment:** Two blindfolds

**Time:** Two to three minutes per round

**Aim:** To help the lion catch the impala

1. To play this game everyone forms into a large circle
2. Choose two players to be the lion and the impala
3. Place a blindfold on each player and spin them around several times.
4. Staying inside the circle, the lion then moves around hunting for the impala. The impala can move around too.
5. The children who have formed the circle begin calling out to the lion, "Mbube, mbube". As the lion gets closer to the impala, the chanting gets louder and faster. However, if the lion moves away the chanting gets softer and slower.
6. If the lion doesn't catch the impala within one or two minutes, a new lion must be chosen. If the impala is caught by the lion then another child is chosen to be the impala. You might like to use a stopwatch to ensure the timing is fair.

## **Mamba**

This is a popular game played by children in African countries.

**Age:** All ages

**No. of players:** Large groups (10+)

**Equipment:** None

**Time:** 5-10 minutes per round

**Aim:** To be the last player caught by the snake

1. Mark out an area for play and set boundaries. Everyone must stay within the boundaries or they are out for the remainder of that round.
2. Choose one player to be the mamba (snake).
3. The snake runs around the marked area trying to catch others. When a player is caught he becomes part of the snake's body by joining onto its tail. He joins the snake by holding onto the shoulders or waist of the player in front of him.
4. Only the first player (the snake's head) can catch other people. However, its body (the other players joined to him) can help by not allowing players to get past. Players are not allowed to pass through the snake's body.
5. The game continues until all the players have been caught. The winner is the last player left and becomes the head of the new snake.

## **Fire on the Mountain**

This is a favourite game played by children in Tanzania.

**Age:** Adults and older children

**No. of players:** Three or more

**Equipment:** None

**Time:** 5-10 minutes

**Aim:** To be the player who stays in the game longest.

1. To start the game, first choose a player to be the leader.
2. Players think of a 'key word'. It can be any word or a name. For example, 'cheese'.
3. All players lie on their backs.
4. The leader shouts out "Fire on the mountain!" All the players respond with "Fire!" but stay lying down. Then the leader shouts out "Fire on the river!" Again the players reply with "Fire" but do not jump up. This continues on with the leader changing the last word of the phrase. He tries to think of as many different places for the fire.
5. The leader is able to shout out the key word at any time, as part of the phrases or in between them. When he shouts it out the players must all jump up. The last one to jump up is out of the game.
6. The winner is the player who stays in the game the longest.