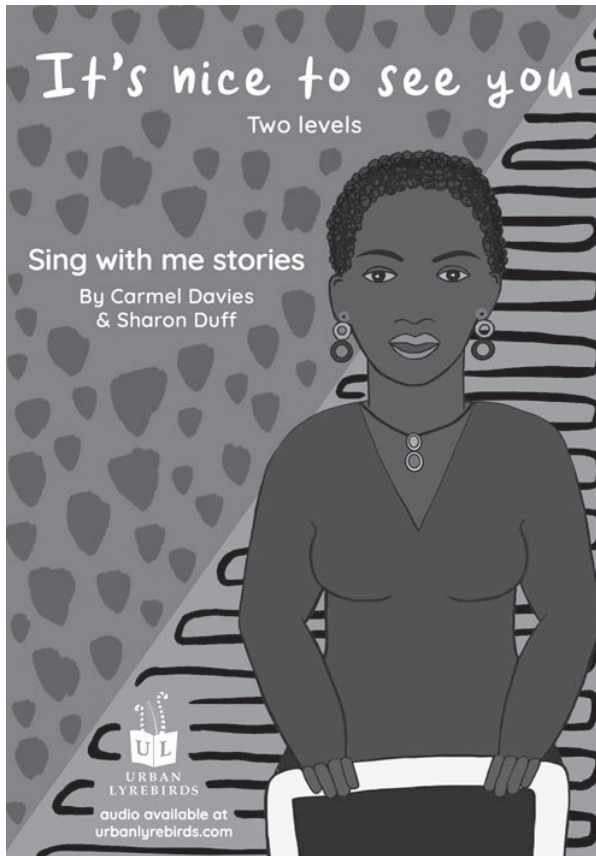


Sing with Me Stories by Carmel Davies and Sharon Duff

Reviewed by Manjit Bhamral



“Hot off the press!!! Sing with Me Stories” – when I read this on the Urban Lyrebirds Facebook Page in March, I was very excited. I couldn’t wait till I could leaf through them at the VALBEC Conference in May this year. What a delight! Ten colourful readers to match the *Sing with Me! Book 1* songs and workbooks by Carmel Davies and Sharon Duff and published by Urban Lyrebirds, one of Australia’s top independent EAL publishers.

Singing is a great educational tool and I have always integrated songs in my language classes. The Sing with Me! series is in three parts: beginner, post beginner and intermediate. Each book has fifteen songs with vocabulary and grammar practice exercises. More

information is available at <https://www.urbanlyrebirds.com/sing-with-me-songbooks>

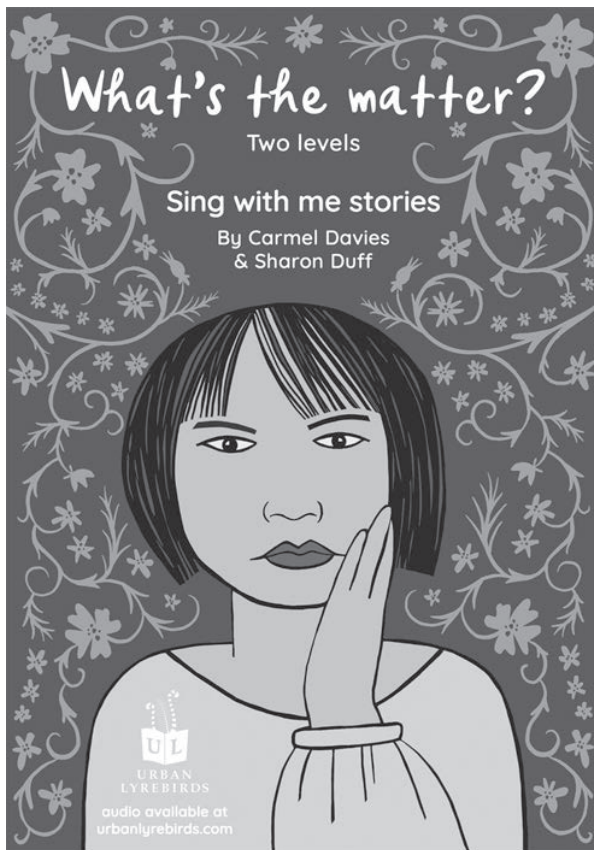
I have mostly used the beginner book, Sing with Me Book 1, as it has songs that my newly arrived migrant learners can relate to. Not that I can sing but I use the recordings as a model. The songs are easy and catchy as they have simple rhymes and great rhythms. So, when I saw the readers to match the *Sing with Me! Book 1* songs and workbooks, I was thrilled.

When you see the readers what strikes you first is the bright and colourful book cover design with wonderful patterns. The readers share the same titles as the *Sing with Me! Book 1* songs and workbooks, and the vocabulary and

the settlement themes of the *Sing with Me! Book 1* songs and workbooks underpin the readers. This is great because the learners are practising the same language – first in the songs and then in the readers – building their confidence.

The other important feature taken from the *Sing with Me! Book 1* songs and workbooks is marking the syllable stress and sentence stress – word stress is bold and syllable stress is underlined. This helps the learners when they are reading aloud. Learners also enjoy role playing the characters as the stories are presented in dialogue form.

The readers include characters from different cultural backgrounds, representing our multicultural society. The main characters also use some expressions from their first language. My Arabic speaking learners felt a sense of affiliation when they realised that Hiba, in the reader, *It's Nice to See You*, uses the word “Habibi” and the other learners who spoke another language got to learn a new word. The Arabic speaking learners started explaining what it meant, and the other learners gave the equivalent word in their language. What a great lesson we had when we attempted to understand each other’s language and culture.

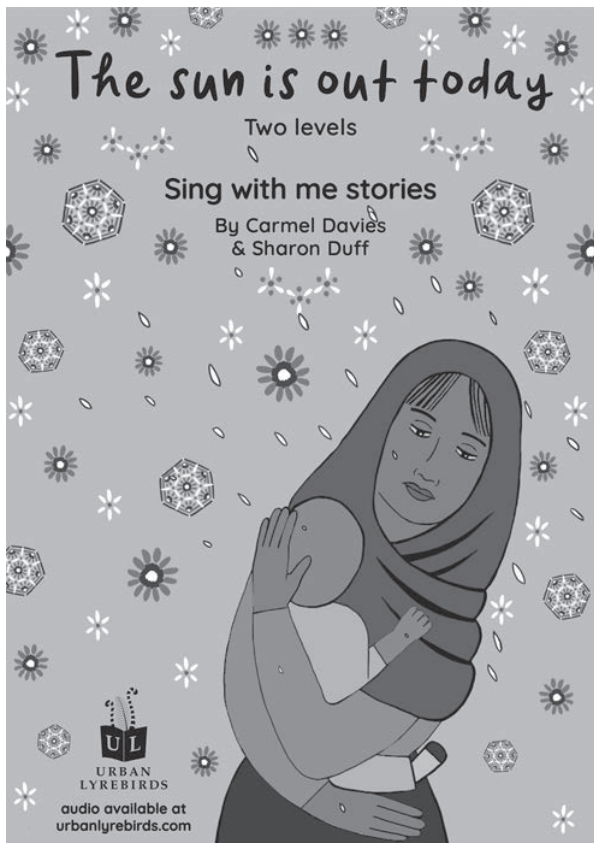


Some readers also have some Australian slang – like “probs” and “no worries” – which can lead us to discuss some more Aussie slang words.

The thing I like best about these readers is that they are available in paperback and PDF formats, with free audio online at slow speed and medium speed available from the Urban Lyrebirds website (see link below).

Each story is in two levels – beginner and post beginner. The beginner level readers are shorter in length with simple sentences using simple present or simple continuous tense. There are three to four sentences on each page and the illustrations support the meaning. The post beginner level stories are usually of 400 to 500 words in length and they use simple and compound sentences with simple past and the future tense.

Having two levels is great because we all have learners at different levels in each class. So, all the learners can start at the beginner level and some learners can proceed to the post beginner reader if they would like to be challenged.



He looks **happy** because he is **eating** some **bread**.

Maria: I think he's **hungry**!

Fareed smiles and he looks up at me.

Fareed: Nice to see you **mummy**!

Hiba: **Habibi!** **Darling!** It's nice to see you too!

*Habibi means darling in Arabic

The PDF format beginner level story can be projected onto the whiteboard, the story can be read together as a class, followed by some exercises and answers! The answer sheets can be downloaded from the link below.

Sophia: Can you **help** me with the **coffee** machine?

Lia: Sure.
We've got the **same** machine at home.
You **switch** it on **here** Miss.
Then press **here**.

Sophia: **Brava!*** Well done **Lia**.
You were **so helpful**!

Lia: No **worries** Miss!

*Brava means well done in Greek

Sing with Me Stories are very interesting, presented at appropriate levels, are well organised and have a great potential for language work. I love them!

Sing with Me Stories are available as PDFs at <https://www.urbanlyrebirds.com/singwithmestories> where you can also download audio tracks and answer sheets. Physical books are available through Bookery: <https://www.bookery.com.au>

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