

The Empanadas that Abuela Made/Las empanadas que hacía la abuela

Baking is always a treat, particularly when you throw family and fun into the mix. In this whimsical look at the making of empanadas, popular children's author Gonzales Bertrand serves up the festive fun of a family's effort to concoct the delicious pastries. In the tradition of popular rhymes like "The Old Lady Who Swallowed a Fly," the laughter and fun rise from page to page.

The Empanadas that Abuela Made/Las empanadas que hacía la abuela is filled with humorous cooks and family: Abuela, Abuelo, the cousins, aunts, uncles, and even the family dog join the parade of fluttering flour and swirling sugar. Alex Pardo de Lange fills the pages with offbeat illustrations of blankets of dough and dancing rolling pins.

With an easy empanada recipe in the back of the book, this will be a literary delicacy for the whole family and will give many readers their first taste of a celebrated Latino tradition.

Teaching Overview

This is a book that lends itself to acting out the story with props and costumes.

Props:

- a tray of empanadas (available at Mexican bakeries and Texas grocery stores)
- a mixing bowl and spoon
- a small pumpkin (real or an artificial one)
- a rolling pin
- a stuffed toy (dog)
- a plastic pitcher and plastic mugs or glasses

Costumes:

- Abuelo – a man's shirt, spectacles
- Abuela – colorful dress and white apron

Comprehension Strategies

Before Reading

PK- Grades3

- Ask children to look at the front cover of the book and predict the story
- Ask children to practice repeating the title in both English and the Spanish
- Ask children to examine the illustration on the rear cover and make predictions
- Open the back of the book to discuss author and illustrator for the book and their biographies. What do readers learn about the author and illustrator?
- Open front of the book and show title page, dedication page, noting again both languages

Reading Progresses

PK- Grades 3?: The story should be read together 1-2 times so children can see and talk about the sequence of events in the story in reading the story together:

- discuss the bilingual format, inviting children to repeat both the English and the Spanish words of the title.
- discuss the role of the title page
- discuss the role of the dedication page
- repeat the line “for the empanadas that Abuela made” together with each sequence to invite participation and maintain interest in the story
- describe the illustrations as part of the storytelling and discuss which are “real” and which are “funny” or “make believe”

There are text dividers, illustrations to separate the English lines from the Spanish text. The illustrator follows a sequence between the text dividers and the main picture. Pause during the storytelling to point out and discuss the connections between each pair of illustrations.

After Reading

PK- Grades 3: Perform the story. Roles can be rotated among the prop carriers, the grandchildren, visiting family, Abuela, and Abuelo, and someone pretending to be the dog. (toy) As the story is performed, children can bring in props, act as the family who visits, and act in the grandparents’ roles too.

Other Follow-Up / Extension Activities

- Paper Chains
- One Long Sentence

About the Author

DIANE GONZALES BERTRAND is the author of numerous books for children and young adults. Her picture books for children include *We Are Cousins / Somos primos* (Piñata Books, 2007) and *The Empanadas that Abuela Made / Las empanadas que hacía la abuela* (Piñata Books, 2003), and her books for intermediate readers include *The Ruiz Street Kids / Los muchachos de la calle Ruiz* (Piñata Books, 2006) and *Upside Down and Backwards / De cabeza y al revés* (Piñata Books, 2005). A native of San Antonio, Texas, she teaches writing at St. Mary’s University where she is Writer in Residence.