

Lesson Plan:  
***Growing Up with Tamales / Los tamales de Ana***  
**by Gwendolyn Zepeda**

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**TEACHING OVERVIEW**

*Growing Up with Tamales / Los tamales de Ana* is a bilingual picture book that captures the interests of young readers as they become intrigued by a very optimistic little girl named Ana. This story, presented with bold, colorful illustrations, offers an opportunity to promote skills in oral language, reading and writing, as well as mathematics. Specifically, educators can use this book to teach comparing / contrasting, vocabulary, and simple sequencing. The story inspires students to consider their own futures and what they would like to achieve as they grow older.

**SUGGESTED VISUALS**

Cornmeal  
A box of lard  
Cornhusks  
An ear of corn with green husks  
Tamales already prepared and heated for children to sample

**COMPREHENSION STRATEGIES**

**BEFORE READING**

- Hold up a small bag containing cornmeal and ask the students to guess the contents. Possible responses might be “sand,” “powder,” “sugar” and “flour.” Use this opportunity to compare / contrast while incorporating terms related to color, texture and taste.
- Show the students the box of lard and explain that it is mixed with the cornmeal to make the tamale dough or "*la masa*."
- Explain to the students that the outer layer of a tamale is called the cornhusk. Use an ear of corn to illustrate where cornhusks come from. Pass around a green husk and a dried husk, and invite the children to compare / contrast.
- Provide a brief overview of the story. Mention that making tamales at Christmas time is a tradition among many Hispanic families. Prompt the students to talk about their own family traditions.

**AS READING PROGRESSES**

- Discuss counting by twos. Write the numbers on the board as the main character, Ana, talks about what she will do once she turns 6 years old, 8, 10, 12 and so forth.
- Point out opposites such as thick / thin, too much / too little, and older / younger.
- Take the opportunity to talk about *safety* when reading about Ana being old enough to use a knife.
- Ask the students to define words such as steam and factory.

- Questions to ask to assist students in making personal connections with the main character while reading:
  - Can you ride your bike without training wheels?
  - Do you know all fifty states?
  - Are you sometimes afraid of bees or dogs?
  - Can you drive a car? (You'll be surprised at how many will say yes!)

### **AFTER READING**

- Work on immediate story recall. Ask the following questions:
  - Who was the main character?
  - What were the settings in the stories?
  - What happens in the beginning of the story?
  - What happens in the middle?
  - What happens in the end?
- Discuss sequencing and terms associated with sequencing (i.e., first, then, next, finally) as the class reviews the steps for making tamales. Encourage the students to use hand movements to illustrate the actions of spreading, chopping, filling, and rolling.
- Give each student a corn husk and tell them to pretend they are making tamales.
- Create a list of words. Select target sounds / letters such as k, g, sh, r, l, s, and th. Write the letters on the board and go back through the story, encouraging the students to pick out words containing the targeted sounds / letters. Once the words are on the board, review vocabulary such as “steam,” “factory” and “shadows.” Incorporate phonemic awareness skills (i.e., segment sounds and syllables in words; identify sounds found in the beginning, middle and ends of words). Encourage students to work on sentence construction by making up sentences with select words.
- Review counting by twos.
- Discuss the terms “older than” versus “younger than.” Lead the class in figuring out who is the oldest and who is the youngest.

### **ORAL and / or WRITTEN LANGUAGE ASSIGNMENT**

Use the following prompts to develop public speaking and writing skills. Encourage students to draw a picture to illustrate their answers.

- Many times our parents won't allow us to do certain things because they say we are too little. Tell or write about some of those things (One day, I will be old enough to...).
- Have you ever envied an older brother, sister or cousin? Tell or write about it.
- Ana desires to own and operate her own tamale business. What do you want to be when you grow up?
- Write a letter to the author.