***Kid Cyclone Fights the Devil and Other Stories /***

 ***Kid Ciclón se enfrenta a El Diablo y otras historias***

Author Xavier Garza

Translator Gabriela Baeza Ventura

 Publisher Piñata Books, an Imprint of Arte Público Press, University of Houston

Guide by Danielle Lopez, UT Rio Grande Valley, Mexican American Studies Program

**Summary:**

 Xavier Garza delivers another collection of fourteen stories about spooky characters. In the title story, cousins Maya and Vincent are thrilled to be ringside at a *lucha libre* match. Kid Cyclone, the wrestling world’s favorite and the kid’s beloved uncle, faces off against a devil-masked opponent, El Diablo. The great trouble with this opponent is he is the real Devil. In other stories, there’s a witch who takes the shape of a snake in order to poison and punish those who ignore her warnings. There are green-skinned, red-eyed creatures called *chupacabras* that crave blood, whether animal or human. And a young girl, fatally wounded by a selfish man after she rejects his advances, takes her revenge as the Donkey Lady. Each story is 4 to 7 pages long and includes the author’s striking illustrations of the scary creatures. The stories in this hair-raising collection are sure to send shivers down your spine.

**Teaching Overview / Background Knowledge**:

Author Xavier Garza cites *Stories That Must Not Die* as one inspiration for his storytelling. Although *Stories That Must Not Die* has been reprinted many times, it has recently been re-released as individual stories and freshly illustrated by Texas artists through National Educational Systems, including Xavier Garza. Reading a book by David Bowles can help you learn about many folktales of south Texas. When asked about the original legendary collection of ghost stories, librarians and language arts teachers across south Texas will tell you how quickly their copies of *Stories That Must Not Die* wear out. They’ll tell how they’re read and re-read as young people fascinated by the creepy legends and the inimitable illustrations. Sauvageau combed the border in the late 1970s to bring together this amazing collection, published in side-by-side English and Spanish. Stand-outs are “The Devil’s Lagoon,” about a haunted body of water near Rosita; “The Headless Rider,” in which that strange apparition appears near San Diego, Texas; “All or Nothing,” a tale of pirate gold near Rio Grande City; “The Cuddling Ghost,” in which a baby poltergeist is accepted by a kind family; and “The Jealous Barn Owl.”

Before students read this collection of Xavier Garza’s stories, you might have an introduction of the Rio Grande Valley to get the students familiar with the culture and area that influences the author’s book. Not only is the Rio Grande Valley the area where the author’s home town of Rio Grande City is located, but also the stories told in this collection are timeless legendary favorites of many youth who reside here. The Rio Grande Valley is an area located in the southernmost tip of Texas. It lies along the northern bank of the Rio Grande, which separates Mexico from the United States. The Rio Grande Valley is not a valley, but a delta or floodplain. Early settlers from Mexico felt that the term “Valley” sounded more inviting to tourists and northern investors than did “Delta.” The Rio Grande Valley is also called “El Valle.” This region is made up of four counties: Starr County, Hidalgo County, Willacy County, and Cameron County. Large cities include Brownsville, McAllen, Harlingen, Mission, Edinburg, and Pharr. Most of the residents of *El Valle* are bilingual. We eat frozen treats called *raspas*, not snow cones.

**Texas State Standards:**

This curriculum guide includes activities that can help students gain knowledge and skills expected for their grade level in Texas. Relevant standards for ELAR Grade 4 (b) Knowledge and skills include:

(3) Reading/Comprehension of Literary Text/Theme and Genre. Students analyze, make inferences and draw conclusions about theme and genre in different cultural, historical, and contemporary contexts and provide evidence from the text to support their understanding. Students are expected to:

(A) Summarize and explain the lesson or message of a work of fiction as its theme; and (B) compare and contrast the adventures or exploits of characters (e.g., the trickster) in traditional and classical literature.

 (6)  Reading/Comprehension of Literary Text/Fiction. Students understand, make inferences and draw conclusions about the structure and elements of fiction and provide evidence from text to support their understanding. Students are expected to:

(A)  Sequence and summarize the plot's main events and explain their influence on future events;

(B)  Describe the interaction of characters including their relationships and the changes they undergo; and

(C)  Identify whether the narrator or speaker of a story is first or third person.

(8)  Reading/Comprehension of Literary Text/Sensory Language. Students understand, make inferences and draw conclusions about how an author's sensory language creates imagery in literary text and provide evidence from text to support their understanding. Students are expected to identify the author's use of similes and metaphors to produce imagery.

(10)  Reading/Comprehension of Informational Text/Culture and History. Students analyze, make inferences and draw conclusions about the author's purpose in cultural, historical, and contemporary contexts and provide evidence from the text to support their understanding. Students are expected to explain the difference between a stated and an implied purpose for an expository text.

(11)  Reading/Comprehension of Informational Text/Expository Text. Students analyze, make inferences and draw conclusions about expository text and provide evidence from text to support their understanding. Students are expected to:

(A)  Summarize the main idea and supporting details in text in ways that maintain meaning;

(B)  Distinguish fact from opinion in a text and explain how to verify what is a fact;

(C)  Describe explicit and implicit relationships among ideas in texts organized by cause-and-effect, sequence, or comparison; and

(12)  Reading/Comprehension of Informational Text/Persuasive Text. Students analyze, make inferences and draw conclusions about persuasive text and provide evidence from text to support their analysis. Students are expected to explain how an author uses language to present information to influence what the reader thinks or does.

**Reading comprehension strategies:**

 **Before** **–** Discuss some of the ghost stories or legends, and ask your students if they are familiar with some of these stories. Do they have a different version of some stories? Let your students know how ghost stories serve as warnings of what happens when you break rules. Ask students if they believe rules always keep us safe. Give the example of how in the story of *The Mirror* the theft drove Marina crazy. Have the students give examples as to other times when stories they have heard present life lessons or rules.

**During –** Have the students write down what happens in each story. They might also brainstorm and discuss with classmates what lesson they think readers or listeners might get from each story.

**After –** Have the students re-enact one of their favorite stories in the book. Perhaps you may want to have the students practice parts of the story for a week and the next week they perform the “play” of the story. Offer an Art & Crafts afternoon to make props.

**Writing/composition prompts:**

* If the conversation about the wonderful characteristics of the Rio Grande Valley interested the students, let them have a turn at bragging about their hometown area a little bit. Perhaps let them brag about the favorite things in their home or neighborhood. No matter how small the treasure, let students know no matter how simple a home may be, it is just as special as other people’s homes or regions. Most of all, teach them that home is where their friends and loved ones are, because that is what matters most.
* Invite the students to investigate different historical haunted stories in their area. There are some famous historical areas with high-profile haunting stories. You could make this a history report type of assignment by having students look up the historical dates and events of recognition that surround a haunted spot. For example, in a school located in the Rio Grande Valley, the school district’s main office was part of an old military fort. In this sense, haunted stories can become a unique tool for history projects.
* If you and your students decide to re-enact one of their favorite stories from the book, take advantage of this creative process to make them junior script writers. Help the students re-write the story into drama format. Introducing them to scriptwriting may activate a student’s untapped imagination they never knew they had.

**Vocabulary:**

Elongated (1) – abnormally long.

Talons (7) – claws.

Jagged (8) – having rough, sharp points protruding.

Gestured (8) – signaled, made a motion, waved, indicated.

Quivering (14) - trembling or shaking with a slight rapid motion.

Humane (15) – having or showing compassion or benevolence.

Hypnotize (16) – to capture the whole attention of someone.

Elapsed (27) – time passed or gone by.

Quarrel (30) – an angry argument or disagreement.

Inexplicably (30) – incapable of being explained.

Scan (34) – to study something carefully in order to detect some feature.

Visage (48) – the face or appearance.

Impervious (85) – incapable of being injured.

Horrendous (64) – extremely unpleasant, horrifying, or terrible.

Decline (64) – to politely refuse.

Exclaimed (64) – cried out suddenly in surprise, anger or pain.

Perplexed (76) – completely puzzled.

**Discussion Questions:**

1) Ask your students to tell which story was their favorite, and why.

2) Have the students explain the lessons taught by various stories. Discuss whether stories are just for fun or need to have a meaning.

3) In “The Witch Owl,” why was the witch owl so angry?

4) Why is the story of revenge in “The Witch’s Revenge” a great warning?

5) As in the tale of “The Elmendorf Beast,” how far would you go to protect your pet?

6) Do you think the tales of “Border Watch” and “The Man with the Burlap Sack” are about the lesson of listening to when you’re told not to do something dangerous?

7) Did you prefer having the readings read aloud, listening to a video of them, or reading them.?

8) In the story “Saints,” what are Armando’s attitudes toward his grandmother’s religious devotion and toward the saints (76)? Do you think Armando will remain scared of church from what you read in the end? How does the story’s last line make you feel: “The saints are now turning their backs on him” (80)?

9) Was there a story that you wished had a different ending? How would you like it to end?

**Extensions/Activities:**

\* Art & Crafts and literary analysis: Have the students create a mixed media collage depicting their own interpretation of any of the stories in the collection. Compare how we have different creative ideas of imagination when playing the literary story out in our minds. This will give insight into how much potential we have in using our imaginations to create our own literary masterpieces. The imagination of each student will be made visual with the collage. Here are possible instructions:

1) Find images. Flip through your magazines, looking for pictures you find interesting and creative. The images you pick can have a common theme of the story you chose. Cut out plenty of images so that you have more options at your disposal.

2) For a more visually interesting collage, don't just cut the images into squares or rectangles on the page. Instead, follow the lines in the photograph. For example, if you are cutting an image that has a road in it, cut along the dotted lines of the road as opposed to including the whole road in the photograph. You can also cut on the shadows of a person's face. Don't be afraid to cut off legs, heads or arms when getting pictures for your collage.

3) Third, find a background. After you have your main images, flip through the magazines again to find pictures that would work well as a background. These background pictures can be a solid color, or they can be a pattern. Background images aren't necessary, but it hides the backing material.

4) Choose your backing material. Once you have cut out all your images, choose a material to place these images to. It could be a piece of cut cardboard, foam board, or construction paper. A canvas adds a three-dimensional look to your collage, as it will stand off of the wall.

5) Decide how you want to lay your images out. You have a few options of how to do this: you can overlap the images, you can fit the images together like a puzzle, you can space them apart for the overlapping or jigsaw style. It is helpful to have a solid background to cover. To cover a large area of the backing, use, wrapping paper, scrapbook paper or construction paper.

6) Begin to piece the images together. Lay your backing material on the ground so that you have a flat surface. Next, lay your background on your backing material. If you are using wrapping paper, lay that down. If you are using simple patterned images, lay those down first.

7) Start to arrange your main images on top of the patterned ones. Do not glue or tape down the images until after you are sure that is where you want them. Get someone else’s insights and suggestions before you glue or tape the images. Once you have covered the whole backing material with images and are sure of the placement of each image, you are ready to place them. Glue or tape the images down so they will not fall off when the board is displayed upright.

**About the Author:**

Xavier Garza is a prolific author, artist, lucha libre aficionado and storyteller whose work focuses primarily on his experiences growing up in the small border town of Rio Grande City, Texas. His book *Lucha Libre: The Man in the Silver Mask* (2005) was named an Honor Book for the Américas Award and earned a starred review from the Críticas Magazine. His books include *Creepy Creatures and Other Cucuys*, *Zulema and the Witch Owl/ Zulema y la Bruja Lechuza*, *Charro Claus and the Tejas Kid*, *Juan and the Chupacabra/ Juan y el Chupacabras*, winner of the 2007-2009 Tejas Star book Award, *Lucha Libre: the Man in the Silver Mask: A Bilingual Cuento,* winner of the 2008-2009 Tejas Star Book Award, *Maximilian and the Mystery of the Guardian Angel, a Bilingual Lucha Libre Thriller,* an Honor Book for the Pura Belpré Award, *Maximilian and the Bingo Rematch, a Lucha Libre Sequel*, winner of the NACCS-Tejas Youth Fiction Award, and *The Great and Mighty Nikko*. In addition to his ongoing literary achievements, Garza’s artwork has been exhibited in venues throughout Texas, Arizona and the state of Washington. A full time middle school art teacher and professional artist, Garza lives with his wife and their son in San Antonio, Texas.

**Related Media:**

Xavier Garza talks about the power of cuentos (stories) and how everyone is capable of writing their own stories. Also, he tells the story of “La Llorona 911” like only he can. <https://vimeo.com/95558215>

Xavier Garza talks about the power of attending book festivals and meeting favorite authors.

<http://www.ksat.com/content/pns/ksat/news/2015/03/31/xavier-garza.html>

**Further Reading:**

* *Creepy Creatures and Other Cucuys* by Xavier Garza
* *Dancing with the Devil and Other Tales from Beyond* / *Bailando con del Diablo y otros cuentos del más allá* by René Saldaña
* *The Monster in the Mattress / El monstruo en el colchón y otros cuentos* by Diane De Anda
* *The Skull Talks Back and Other Haunting Tales*, by Joyce Thomas, based on stories collected by Zora Neale Hurston
* *Creature Feature: Thirteen Frightening Folktales of the Rio Grande Valley*, by David Bowles
* *Border Lore: Folktales and Legends of South Texas*, by David Bowles
* *The Hitchhiker of Highway 281* (in the Strange Texas Tales that Must Not Die series), by David Bowles, illustrated by Xavier Garza