



Classroom Guide for
CONFETTI:
POEMS FOR CHILDREN
 by Pat Mora
 illustrated by Enrique O. Sanchez

Reading Level

Interest Level: Grades K-4

Reading Level: Grade 3

(Reading level based on the Spache Readability Formula)

Lexile Measure®: NP

Scholastic Reading Counts!™: 2.9

Themes:

Nature, Language, Childhood Experiences, Imagination, Poetry, Latino American Interest

Synopsis

Like the title of the book, *Confetti* is a colorful collection of poems reflecting Southwestern motifs that are sure to delight children of all backgrounds. Says *School Library Journal*, the “narrative poems in free verse capture the rhythms and uniqueness of [the] Southwest and its culture as seen through the eyes of a Mexican-American girl.” The illustrations carry out the images, joy, and colors of the poems, and small pieces of confetti pictured throughout the book reinforce the title. The Spanish words embedded in the poems offer a unique way to access the child’s view of this world. Poems cover numerous topics of interest to children: the sun rising, the wind blowing, the desert, clouds, rivers, sounds, colors, animals, neighbors, and dancing, among others.

Background

Pat Mora is a renowned, award-winning poet, and *Confetti* is her first book of poetry for children. In writing the poems Mora focuses on the joy and rapport children have with nature. She also addresses the need to expand awareness of Latino culture and to link children and books. Says Mora, “One of my great frustrations has been the absence of the Latino experience in children’s books,”

and with *Confetti*, she is helping bring the Latino experience to all children. In addition to her poetry, Mora has helped to establish April 30th as Día de los niños/Día de los libros, a yearly celebration of childhood, books, languages, and cultures.

BEFORE READING

Prereading Focus Questions

Before introducing the poems in *Confetti*, you may wish to have students discuss one or more of the following questions as a motivation for reading.

1. What is confetti? When might you use confetti? What kinds of events do you relate it to?
2. What do you know about the Southwest of the United States? What is the landscape there like? What kinds of plants and animals do you find there?
3. What kinds of poetry do you like? Why? What is your favorite poem?
4. Have you ever looked at the sky and seen a picture in a cloud? What did you see?

Teaching Tips

- Choose poems from *Confetti* to use during April as part of your celebration of National Poetry Month.
- For more ideas and information about bringing poetry into your classroom, visit the POETRY POWER section of our Web site at leeandlow.com/p/teachers-sub-poetry.mhtml

BEFORE READING

Exploring the Book

Display the book cover and read aloud the title. Ask students to speculate on how confetti might relate to poetry. Write students' ideas on chart paper or a poster pad to review after students have read the book.

Discuss the cover illustration. What are some things you see in the illustration? What kind of a poem do you think might go with this picture? Point out that the cover illustration also appears inside the book with a poem called "Leaf Soup."

Review the parts of the book including the dedications, glossary of Spanish words, and brief biographies of the author and illustrator.

Read aloud the titles of the poems and remind students that the titles can help them gain meaning from the poems.

Have students browse through the illustrations in the book. Point out that the pictures also help them gain meaning from the poems.

Setting a Purpose for Reading

Review with students that poems can take different forms and that not all poetry rhymes. Ask students to look at the poetic forms in *Confetti* and make comparisons. Can they find any poems that rhyme?

Have students predict things they might learn from the poetry in the book. Record students' ideas on chart paper or a poster pad so students can check their predictions after reading the poems.

Vocabulary

Help students appreciate the poet's use of words by identifying adjectives from the book. Point out that a poet often uses words in a unique way and this includes using words that are normally other parts of speech as adjectives. Read aloud lines such as the following and emphasize the underlined adjectives.

From "Colors Crackle, Colors Roar":
Red shouts a loud, **balloon-red** sound.

From "Purple Snake":
Slowly he strokes the wood,
rough and **wrinkled**.

From "Cloud Dragons":
Oh, I see caballitos
that race the wind
high in the **shimmering** blue.

From "Abuelita's Lap":
. . . her heart and cuentos from the past,
the rhythms **honey-sweet**.

Remind students of the glossary of Spanish words on the last page of the book. Encourage students to refer to the glossary while reading the poems if they cannot figure out the meaning of a Spanish word from the context of the poem.

READING AND RESPONDING

Discussion Questions

Use these questions to help students enhance their understanding of the poems. Encourage students to identify specific lines in the poems or parts of the illustrations to support their responses.

1. In "Sun Song," who notices the sun? What is the sun's first song?
2. What do you think the title of the poem "Colors Crackle, Colors Roar" mean?
3. In the poem "Purple Snake," where is the snake? Why does Don Luis say the snake is asleep?

4. In “Cloud Dragons,” what does the girl see in the sky? What are they doing?
5. In “Mexican Magician,” what clues help you figure out what a “panadero” is? What are some things the panadero makes? Why is he a magician?
6. What is “Leaf Soup”? Who eats the leaf soup?
7. What are some things that the Tarahumaras do in “I Hear, I Hear”? How does the poet emphasize the rhythm in this poem?
8. In “Words Free As Confetti,” why do you think the poet says that words are as free as confetti? Which other poem in the book mentions confetti? What does “confetti” mean in this poem?
9. In “River Voice,” how do you think the poet feels about a river in a desert? Why?
10. How does a poem paint a picture? How is a picture that a poem paints different from a picture an artist might paint?

Literature Circles*

If you use literature circles during reading time, students might find the following suggestions helpful in developing the roles of the circle members.

- The **Questioner** might use questions similar to those in the Discussion Question section of this guide to help group members explore the poems.
- The **Passage Locator** might look for lines or phrases that reveal specific information about the Southwest.
- The **Illustrator** might draw pictures showing his or her personal interpretation of one or more of the poems.
- The **Connector** might find other poems about subjects in the book such as clouds, rivers, leaves, baked goods, and colors.
- The **Summarizer** might provide a brief summary of each poem for the group.
- The **Investigator** might find additional children’s books written or edited by Pat Mora.

*There are many resource books available with more information about organizing and implementing literature circles. Two such books you may wish to refer to are: *Literature Circles: Voice and Choice in the Student-Centered Classroom* by Harvey Daniels (Stenhouse, 1994) and *Literature Circles Resource Guide* by Bonnie Campbell Hill, Katherine L. Schlick Noe, and Nancy J. Johnson (Christopher-Gordon, 2000).

Reader's Response

Use the following questions or similar ones to help students personalize what they are reading. Students might respond in sketchbooks, reader's journals, or oral discussion, or drawings.

1. Which poem in the book is your favorite? What did you like about the poem? Why was it meaningful to you?
2. Which illustration do you like best? How does the picture help you understand the poem?
3. In "Abuelita's Lap," the girl tells about her day and listens to her grandmother's stories. Who tells stories to you? When? Do you tell someone about your day? Who? Why is that person special to you?

Other Writing Activities

You may wish to have students participate in one or more of the following writing activities.

1. Introduce similes to the class, or review them if you have worked with similes previously. Explain that a simile compares two unlike things using the words **like** or **as**. As an example give this simile from CONFETTI:
words warm as almonds.
 - Point out to students that similes are often used by poets. Then challenge students to find at least five other similes in the book, and finally to write five original similes of their own.
2. Have students write confetti poems. On slips of colored paper ("confetti") write possible poetic themes or random words that might be interesting in a poem. Be sure there are enough pieces of confetti so that each student will have at least one. Toss the papers into the air and invite students to pick up a piece at random. Have students use the words on their confetti in a poem or as the basis for a poem. Ask for volunteers to share their poems with the class.
3. In the poem "Abuelita's Lap," the girl listens to a star. Have students write about what a star might say if it could really speak, and what they might say back.

ELL (ESL) Teaching Strategies

These strategies might be helpful to use with students who are learning to speak English as a second language.

1. Assign each second language speaker to a classroom book buddy who is a strong English speaker. As partners read the poems, have the English speaker teach her or his partner simple phrases such as: I don't understand. Please repeat that line. Speak slowly. I have a question. Thank you.

2. Using the glossary of Spanish words at the back of the book, invite Spanish speakers to pronounce the words for the rest of the class. Have students make an index card for each word, giving both the Spanish and English meanings. Students can use these as flash cards to practice learning the words.
3. English speakers will need to use context to understand the Spanish words embedded in the poems. Have volunteers “think aloud” as they do this to provide modeling for English language learners who need to practice reading strategies. For example, a student reading “Sun Song” might use the word “croak” as a clue to what ranitas are. The student could also use the illustration, which shows a frog on a rock.

INTERDISCIPLINARY ACTIVITIES

To help students integrate their reading experiences with other curriculum areas, introduce some of the following activities.

Social Studies

Have students locate the southwestern part of the United States on a map. Point out that these states share a border with the country of Mexico and that many people in this region are of Mexican American descent. Have students research the climate and geography of the region. Ask them to identify features of the region that Pat Mora has included in her poems.

Science

Reread the poem “Can I, Can I Catch the Wind.” Talk about how difficult it would be to catch the wind with the items in the poem. Then point out that it is possible to harness the wind and use its power. Give as an example a sailboat or a paraglider. Have students do research to learn how farmers use windmills to provide power and other ways of harnessing the power of wind.

Language Arts

The poems in this book offer a good opportunity to teach students about different poetic devices. In addition to similes (see the first activity under “Other Writing Activities”), you may want to introduce/review and discuss the following:

Repetition Have students note the repeated lines in “Sun Song.” Then ask them to find another poem in which the poet uses repetition.

Rhyme Draw attention to the rhyming words in the first stanza of “Abuelita’s Lap.” Then ask students to find rhyming words in the poem “Castenet Clicks.”

Personification Ask students to find the lines in “Colors Crackle, Colors Roar” in which the colors make sounds like people would. Then have students identify how the river is like a human in “River Voice.”

Art

1. After reading the poem “Cloud Dragons,” suggest that students draw their own cloud pictures. Provide blue construction paper and white or pink chalk, crayons, or paint for this activity. Display the finished pictures and challenge students to use them as inspiration to write their own cloud picture poems.
2. Students might also enjoy making confetti pictures. Have them tear or cut up scraps of colored construction paper into small pieces. Students can then paste these confetti pieces onto another paper to form images.
3. Students might make “serpentinás” by cutting circles of colored paper into coils. Display these from a clothesline strung across the room or, if possible, by tacking them to the ceiling.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Pat Mora is a well-known Mexican American poet and author of books for children. She has received numerous awards and fellowships including the National Endowment for Arts, the Kellogg National Fellowship, and three Southwest Book Awards. Mora, a native of El Paso, Texas, grew up in a bilingual home where books were always important. She earned her undergraduate degree and masters at the University of Texas. In addition to writing, Mora often speaks publicly about multicultural education and leadership. She is mother to three children and currently lives in Kentucky and New Mexico. Her other books for children include *Love To Mamá: A Tribute To Mothers*, *A Library For Juana*, *Pablo's Tree*, *A Birthday Basket For Tia*, and *Tomás And The Library Lady* (other books listed below).

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Enrique O. Sanchez grew up in Santo Domingo in the Dominican Republic. He studied architecture at the Santo Domingo University. Sanchez moved to New York in the 1960s and now lives in East Burke, Vermont. Sanchez worked first in television and film and designed sets for “Sesame Street.” A full list of books he has illustrated for Lee & Low Books is listed below.

Book Information

\$6.95, PAPERBACK

ISBN 9781880000854

\$16.95, HARDCOVER

ISBN 9781880000250

32 pages, 8 1/2 x 10

Interest Level: Grades K-4

Reading Level: Grade 3

(Reading level based on the Spache Readability Formula)

Lexile Measure®: NP

Scholastic Reading Counts!™: 2.9

Themes: Poetry, Latino Culture, Nature, Southwest

Resources on the Web

Learn more about **CONFETTI: POEMS FOR CHILDREN**

http://www.leeandlow.com/books/36/hc/confetti_poems_for_children

Confetti in Spanish:

http://www.leeandlow.com/books/36/hc/confetti_poems_for_children

View other **Active Reader Classroom Guides** at:

http://www.leeandlow.com/p/teachers-latino_hispanic.mhtml

Other Books by Pat Mora

Love To Mamá: A Tribute To Mothers (edited):

http://www.leeandlow.com/books/82/hc/love_to_mama_a_tribute_to_mothers

Yum! ¡Mmmm! ¡Qué Rico! Americas' Sproutings:

http://www.leeandlow.com/books/135/hc/yum_mmmm_que_rico_americas_sproutings

BookTalk with Pat Mora

<http://www.leeandlow.com/booktalk/mora.html>

LEE & LOW Poetry Power (with Pat Mora)

<http://www.leeandlow.com/teachers/poetry.html>

Other Books illustrated by Enrique O. Sanchez

Amelia's Road at: http://www.leeandlow.com/books/10/hc/amelia_s_road

Amelia's Road in Spanish:

http://www.leeandlow.com/books/143/hc/el_camino_de_amelia

Abuela's Weave visit: http://www.leeandlow.com/books/8/pb/abuela_s_weave

Abuela's Weave in Spanish:

http://www.leeandlow.com/books/160/hc/el_tapiz_de_abuela

Confetti: Poems for Children at:

http://www.leeandlow.com/books/36/hc/confetti_poems_for_children

When this World Was New at:

http://www.leeandlow.com/books/132/hc/when_this_world_was_new

When this World is New in Spanish:

http://www.leeandlow.com/books/161/hc/un_mundo_nuevo

Estela's Swap at:

http://www.leeandlow.com/books/47/hc/estela_s_swap

Estela's Swap in Spanish:

http://www.leeandlow.com/books/150/hc/estela_en_el_mercado_de_pulgas

Order Information

On the Web:

http://www.leeandlow.com/books/36/hc/confetti_poems_for_children (secure on-line ordering)

<http://www.leeandlow.com/p/ordering.mhtml> (general order information)

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212-779-4400 ext. 25

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