

Let Me Help/¡Quiero ayudar!

written by Alma Flor Ada

illustrated by Angela Domínguez

About the Book

Genre: Fiction

Format: Paperback, \$10.95
32 pages

ISBN: 9780892392391

Reading Level: Grade 2

Interest Level: Grades K–5

Guided Reading Level: L

Spanish Guided Reading Level: M

Accelerated Reader® Level/Points:
3.1/0.5

Lexile™ Measure: AD560L

*Reading level based on the ATOS Readability Formula

Themes: Sharing and Giving, Independence, Identity, Self Esteem and Confidence, Responsibility, Overcoming Obstacles, Neighbors, Immigration, Home, Holidays and Traditions (Cinco de Mayo), Friendship, Food, Families, Dreams and Aspirations, Animals (Birds/Parrots), Empathy and Compassion, Optimism and Enthusiasm, Pride, Latino/Hispanic/Mexican Interest

Resources on the web:

leeandlow.com/books/let-me-help-quiero-ayudar

SYNOPSIS

"Let me help!"

Perico learns this phrase from little Martita, who's been saying it a lot lately. When the whole family scrambles to prepare for Cinco de Mayo, Perico knows there must be some way he can help—even if he is just a parrot.

Perico tries to help abuela make delicious tamales. He tries to help craft beautiful paper flowers for the barge his family will take down the San Antonio River. He tries to help the boys practice their mariachi number on the porch. But at every turn Perico is shooed away, until he finally figures out how he can add something special to the Cinco de Mayo fun.

Acclaimed author Alma Flor Ada's tale is the story of every young reader who has been told he or she is too little or too young to help. Angela Domínguez's vibrantly hued paintings glow with the rich colors of the southwest. *Let Me Help! / ¡Quiero ayudar!* is a joyful read-aloud even the littlest helpers can celebrate year-round.

All guided reading level placements may vary and are subject to revision. Teachers may adjust the assigned levels in accordance with their own evaluations.

BACKGROUND

Cinco de Mayo and San Antonio, TX, from the Author's Introduction

Celebrations are part of every culture. Families celebrate birthdays and weddings, and society celebrates historical dates and accomplished people. Latinos love to celebrate, to eat with family and friends, to play music, to dance, to share joy. Any occasion is good for a fiesta. The city of San Antonio, Texas, especially loves fiestas. Twice a year, during Fiesta Week in April and again right before the Christmas holidays, the city puts on extravagant river parades of beautifully decorated barges.

On Cinco de Mayo, huge crowds come to Market Square to eat delicious food, listen to mariachi bands, and enjoy traditional arts and crafts from different parts of Mexico. There isn't an official river parade, but some families rent barges and cruise down the river while listening to the lively music that envelopes the city. Some fiestas develop greater meaning over time. For example, Cinco de Mayo commemorates the Battle of Puebla, when on May 5, 1861, the Mexican army defeated the French, who had invaded Mexico. Today, in the United States, Cinco de Mayo celebrates the contributions of all Latinos to life in our society.

Additional Information and Resources

Cinco de Mayo is different than Mexican Independence Day, which occurs on September 16. Cinco de Mayo is not a federal holiday in Mexico, but rather a minor holiday celebrated most extensively in the state of Puebla, where the battle the day commemorates took place. However, in the United States, the holiday gained recognition during the Chicano movement of the 1960s, when activists pushed for it to be acknowledged as a broader celebration of Mexican culture and heritage.

Today Cinco de Mayo is most widely celebrated in areas and cities of the U.S. with larger concentrations of people of Mexican descent. Festivities often include parades, parties, and traditional Mexican food. For more information about the history and current celebration of Cinco de Mayo, see <https://www.history.com/topics/holidays/cinco-de-mayo>. Music and dance are integral parts of Cinco de Mayo celebrations. For more information about different types of Mexican folk dance (folklorico), see <https://researchersgateway.com/celebrating-cinco-de-mayo-music-and-dance/>.

BEFORE READING

Prereading Focus Questions

(Reading Standards, Craft & Structure, Strand 5 and Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 7)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1 and 2)

Before introducing this book to students, you may wish to develop background knowledge and promote anticipation by posing questions such as the following:

- Imagine a holiday or other celebration your family enjoys. What does everyone do to get ready? How do you help? How does everyone feel?
- What are some possible responses and feelings if someone asks to help with a task and is told no?
- What do you know about the holiday of Cinco de Mayo?

Exploring the Book

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strand 1; Craft & Structure, Strand 5; and Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 7)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1 and 2)

- **Book Title Exploration:** Talk about the title of the book, *Let Me Help!;/¡Quiero ayudar!*. Then ask students what they think this book will most likely be about and whom the book might be about. What do they think might happen? What information do they think they might learn? What makes them think that?
- Read Alma Flor Ada and Angela Domínguez's biographies.
- Encourage students to stop and jot in their reading notebooks during the read-aloud when they: learn new information, see a powerful image, have an emotional reaction or an idea, have a question, or hear new words.
- Have students quickly write a feeling in their notebooks during reading. After reading, ask students why they wrote that feeling down and have them write a journal entry about it.

Setting a Purpose for Reading

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1–3)

Have students read to find out:

- how the family in the book celebrates Cinco de Mayo in San Antonio, TX
- how Perico the parrot feels during the story and what he does as a result
- how Martita's family members and neighbors feel during the story and how their feelings change
- the messages the author shares about helping

Encourage students to consider why the author, Alma Flor Ada, would want to share this story with young people.

VOCABULARY

(Reading Standards, Craft & Structure, Strand 4)

(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 4–6)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1 and 2)

The story contains several content-specific and academic words and phrases that may be unfamiliar to students. Based on students' prior knowledge, review some or all of the vocabulary below.

Encourage a variety of strategies to support students' vocabulary acquisition: look up and record word definitions from a dictionary, write the meaning of the word or phrase in their own words, draw a picture of the meaning of the word, create a specific action for each word, list synonyms and antonyms, and write a meaningful sentence that demonstrates the definition of the word. (Many of the Spanish words can be found in the book glossary, but there are also some that are not included. Students could be encouraged to create a log of these words—they will not be listed here.)

Content Specific

Cinco de Mayo, barge, San Antonio River, paper flowers, parrot, tamales, multicolored, tissue paper, rainforest, folklórico, ribbons, braiding, jungle, butterflies, trumpets, mariachi, toucans, pan dulce, topmost

Academic

celebration, particularly, rented, wonderful, inviting, rhythm, scattered, surprising, fascinated, sentence, recently, allowed, wildly, festive, certainly, colorful, agree, performance, concentrate, reminded, practice, replied, impatiently, batches, floated, decorated, fascinated, decided, perch, gracefully, shame, crowned, gaily, cheered, swaying, self

AFTER READING

Discussion Questions

After students have read the book, use these or similar questions to generate discussion, enhance comprehension, and develop appreciation for the content. Encourage students to refer to passages and/or illustrations in the book to support their responses. **To build skills in close reading of a text, students should cite textual evidence with their answers.**

Literal Comprehension

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1–3)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 4)

1. What's happening in Martita's family's house when the story begins? How would you describe the mood?
2. How does Perico the parrot get out of his cage? How does he respond to being out in the house?
3. What does Perico notice? What does he say? How does he know those words?
4. How do Abuela and Tia Lupe react when Perico asks to help make tamales?

5. What does Perico want to help Elena and her mother do? What do they say?
6. What does Perico want to help Lupita, Carmen, and Tia Alicia do? What do they say?
7. What does Perico want to help Antonio and Francisco do? What do they say?
8. Where does Perico go when he leaves the house? What is Don Martin doing? What does he say when Perico asks to help? Why?
9. What does Perico see when he flies over the city? Why is it interesting to him? What does he do?
10. What happens when Perico's family's barge comes down the river? What does Perico do?
11. How does the family react when they see Perico on the barge?
12. How does the story end?

Extension/Higher Level Thinking

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 2 and 3 and Craft & Structure, Strands 4 and 6)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1-3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 4)

1. Is there a pattern to the way all the family members react to Perico asking to help? Why do you think they respond that way?
2. Why do you think the family members are so focused on getting ready for the celebration? What are some feelings that go along with being busy getting ready for something?
3. Why do you think the author chose the examples she did for each person's Cinco de Mayo preparations? What can you learn about celebrating Cinco de Mayo from this story?
4. What makes the things each person is doing so interesting to Perico? Why do you think he so badly wants to help?
5. How would you describe Perico as a character? What are some words to describe someone who doesn't give up, even if they are told "no" again and again?
6. Perico learned to say, "Let me help!" from Martita. How do you think his experiences might be similar to Martita's?
7. Do you think anyone Perico asked should have let him help? Why or why not?
8. How do you think the family members felt when they saw their barge? What about when the decoration fell? What about when Perico sat on top of the barge?
9. What do the last lines of the book mean to you? What message do you think the author wants to give readers?

Reader's Response

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3 and Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4–6)

Use the following questions and writing activities to help students practice active reading and personalize their responses to the book. **Suggest that students respond in reader's response journals, essays, or oral discussion.** You may also want to set aside time for students to share and discuss their written work.

1. Write about a time you really wanted to help with something. Who and with what did you want to help? Why? Were you able to help? Why or why not? Either way, how did it feel?
2. Make a two-column list. What are things you could help someone with, by being yourself? What are things you probably couldn't help someone with?
3. Write about a time when someone asked if they could help you with something. How did you respond? How do you think your response made that person feel?
4. Imagine a continuation of the story. Write, or draw a comic strip of, a conversation that may have happened after the celebration when Perico and the family members get home.

ELL Teaching Activities

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 4–6)

(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 4–6)

These strategies might be helpful to use with students who are English Language Learners.

1. Assign ELL students to partner-read the story with strong English readers/speakers. Students can alternate reading between pages, repeat passages after one another, or listen to the more fluent reader.
2. Have each student write three questions about the story. Then let students pair up and discuss the answers to the questions.
3. Depending on students' level of English proficiency, after the first reading:
 - Review the illustrations in order and have students summarize what is happening on each page, first orally, then in writing.
 - Have students work in pairs to retell either the plot of the story or key details. Then ask students to write a short summary, synopsis, or opinion about what they have read.
4. Have students give a short talk about a celebration they enjoy or a time they helped someone or received help.
5. The book contains several content-specific and academic words that may be unfamiliar to students. Based on students' prior knowledge, review some or all of the vocabulary. Expose English Language Learners to multiple vocabulary strategies. Have students make predictions about word meanings, look up and record word definitions from a dictionary, write the meaning of the word or phrase in their own words, draw a picture of the meaning of the word, list synonyms and antonyms, create an action for each word, and write a meaningful sentence that demonstrates the definition of the word.
6. Practice the conversations and vocabulary related to asking to help from the book using simple role play and/or picture card support. ("Let me help!" followed by, "No, let us work," or

"No, let us practice," "No, I need to concentrate," etc.)

Social and Emotional Learning

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1-3 and Craft & Structure, Strands 4-6)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1-3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 4)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1-2 and Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4-6)

(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 6)

Social and emotional learning involves being aware of and regulating emotions for healthy development. In addition to understanding one's own feelings, strong socio-emotional development allows individuals to develop empathy for others and to establish and maintain relationships.

Use the following prompts to help students study the socio-emotional aspects of this book.

1. Flip through the pages of the book to notice the characters' faces on each page. Describe how their faces look and name the emotions they convey. (You might also notice their body language.) Use sticky notes to label various emotions.
2. Explore responding empathetically to others' requests. Have students re-write the family members' responses to Perico's requests to help to be more empathetic, such as "I know you love tamales, but you need fingers to fold up the corn husks. Thanks for offering!"
3. Practice listening to others to build relationships and connections. Have students talk in pairs about their personal strengths with questions like, "What do you love to do? What are you really good at?" Have partners share each other's responses and related ways they may ask their partners for help one day.

INTERDISCIPLINARY ACTIVITIES

(Introduction to the Standards, page 7: Students who are college and career ready must be able to build strong content knowledge, value evidence, and use technology and digital media strategically and capably)

Use some of the following activities to help students integrate their reading experiences with other curriculum areas. These can also be used for extension activities, for advanced readers, and for building a home-school connection.

English/Language Arts

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas and Details, Strands 1–3, Craft and Structure, Strands 4–6, Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 7–9, Range of Reading of Text Complexity, Strand 10)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4 and 6, Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7–9, Range of Writing, Strand 10)

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1–3, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4–6)

- **Read other books related to helping such as *Cora Cooks Pancit*** (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/cora-cooks-pancit>) **or *Grandma and Me at the Flea/Los meros meros remateros*** (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/grandma-and-me-at-the-flea-los-meros-meros-remateros>). Make connections between texts. How do the main characters help in the book? Who do they help? Why do they have to help?
- **Listen to this interview with the author, Alma Flor Ada:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hpjXWdknLdo>. List the ideas she mentions that inspired the story. Talk about how they can help students get ideas for their own writing (e.g., an idea that is important to them, a place they love, a memory).
- **Revisit sections of the book that include rich descriptions.** Re-read them and ask students to share what the text makes them imagine. What makes those descriptions powerful? What kind of language does the author use to describe the scene? Students can then write an essay using detailed language that the author uses in the text.
- **Have a small group create their own version of the story and give a short performance using some of the vocabulary from the text.** For instance, have one student use a parrot puppet to fly around asking to help, and others be busy doing things and saying no.
- **Plan a class celebration or event.** List tasks that need to be done on a chart. Write down how each person can help.

Social Studies & Geography

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas and Details, Strands 1–3, Craft and Structure, Strands 4–6, Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 7–9, Range of Reading of Text Complexity, Strand 10)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4 and 6, and Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7–9, Range of Writing, Strand 10)

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1–3, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4–6)

- **Use the website <https://www.sanantonioriver.org> to learn more about the San Antonio river from the story.** Download the map and find the different sections of the river within the city.

- **Reflect on what the author may have meant in her introduction about Cinco de Mayo that “Some fiestas develop greater meaning over time.”** Use books and online resources to learn more about the origins of the Cinco de Mayo holiday and how its observance has evolved in both Mexico and the United States.
- **Read *Celebrate! Connections Among Cultures* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/celebrate-connections-among-cultures>), an informational text about the common elements of celebrations in different cultures.** Connect the information in this book to the different aspects of the Cinco de Mayo celebration described in *Let Me Help! / ¡Quiero ayudar!* as well as students' own experiences with celebrations.
- **Challenge students to design and build a mock “river barge” in your classroom from simple materials like cardboard boxes, chairs, and tables.** Emphasize collaboration, helping, and giving others ways to help. Use a stuffed animal or homemade puppet to serve as Perico sitting atop the barge.
- **Brainstorm questions about parrots and read or view nonfiction resources to gather more information.** Based on your findings, talk about what aspects of the author's portrayal of Perico are realistic, and which are fictional.
- **Use Perico's observations as a springboard to learn more about his native rainforest.** Make a chart of all the mentions of rainforest details and use them to brainstorm categories for research (e.g., animals, plants).

Art, Media & Music

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas and Details, Strands 1–3, Craft and Structure, Strands 4–6, Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 7–9, Range of Reading of Text Complexity, Strand 10)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4 and 6, Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7–9, and Range of Writing, Strand 10)

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1–3, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4–6)

- **Watch this video of the illustrator, Angela Domínguez, talking about what inspired the pictures in the book:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F7bOzqxHtCU>. Study the illustrations to notice the details they include about the setting, people, and situation. Have students create a drawing or painting of preparations for a celebration they enjoy in the same style.
- **Try making paper flowers, as referenced in the book.** Use them to decorate for a class celebration. Simple directions can be found at <https://www.firstpalette.com/craft/tissue-paper-pompom-flowers.html>.
- **At <https://researchersgateway.com/celebrating-cinco-de-mayo-music-and-dance/> or another site, watch a videos of traditional folklórico dancing, as described in the book.** Ask students to notice the clothing, music, movements, and overall mood of the dancing. Why is this type of dancing appropriate for a celebratory holiday?
- **Listen to a sample of mariachi music, as described in the story.** Ask students to listen for the trumpets, as described in the story. Talk about how mariachi music could add to a Cinco de Mayo celebration.

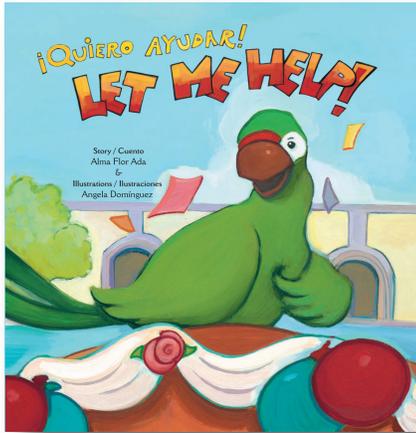
School-Home Connection

(Reading Standards, Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 7 and 9)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1-3, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strand 4, and Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7-9, Range of Writing, Strand 10)

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1-3, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4-6)

- **Brainstorm questions together as a class for children to ask adults or older siblings in their families about their experiences wanting to help as children, such as:** “How did you help in the kitchen?” “Who was your favorite person to help?” and “What’s something you wanted to help with but weren’t allowed to?”
- **Challenge students to offer to help with something at home—and challenge adults to let them!** Share experiences at school via drawing, writing, or photos.



Ordering Information

🌐 General Order Information:

leeandlow.com/contact/ordering

🔒 Secure Online Ordering:

leeandlow.com/books/let-me-help-quiero-ayudar

☎ **By Phone:** 212-779-4400 ext. 25

📠 **By Fax:** 212-683-1894

✉ **By Mail:**

Lee & Low Books, 95 Madison Avenue,
New York, NY 10016

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Alma Flor Ada is an award-winning children's book author, a gifted translator, and one of the leaders in the field of bilingual education in the United States. Born in Cuba, Alma Flor received her PhD at the Pontifical Catholic University of Lima, Perú, did her post-doctoral research at Harvard University as a Fellow of the Radcliffe Institute, and is a Fulbright Research Scholar. A Professor Emerita at the University of San Francisco, Alma Flor currently lives in Northern California's Marin County. Find out more about her online at <http://almaflorada.com>.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Angela Domínguez is the author and illustrator of several books for children, including the Children's Book Press title *Let Me Help! / Quiero ayudar!*, *Marta Big and Small*, and *Maria Had a Little Llama*, which received the Pura Belpré Illustration Honor. In 2016, she received her second Pura Belpré Honor for her illustrations in *Mango, Abuela, and Me* by Meg Medina. When Angela is not in her studio, she teaches at the Academy of Art University, which honored her with their Distinguished Alumni Award. She lives in Virginia. Visit her online at angeladominguezstudio.com.

REVIEWS

"The vibrant and festive colors used throughout invite readers into the celebration, and the images are true to the people they portray. The bilingual text is fluid in both Spanish and English, and the subject is sure to spark interest in the holiday." —*School Library Journal*

"A delightful bilingual story for young children that raises the broad question of how one can help. . . The book provides a simple way to launch into important discussions with children about helping." —*Rethinking Schools*

"Domínguez's vigorous paint strokes in bold aquas, greens and blues that stand out against the dusty backdrop vibrantly complement this bilingually told story about the Latino fiesta." —*Kirkus Reviews*

ABOUT LEE & LOW BOOKS

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