

READING COMMUNITIES: CBP TEACHER'S GUIDES

The Magical Cycle of the Seasons Poetry Collection:

Laughing Tomatoes and Other Spring Poems/Jitomates risueños y otros poemas de primavera

From the Bellybutton of the Moon and Other Summer Poems/Del ombligo de la luna y otros poemas del verano

Angels Ride Bikes and Other Fall Poems/Los ángeles andan en bicicleta y otros poemas del otoño

Iguanas in the Snow and Other Winter Poems/Iguanas en la nieve y otros poemas de invierno

Written by **Francisco X. Alarcón**
Illustrated by **Maya Christina Gonzalez**



WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT?

Francisco X. Alarcón has collaborated with artist Maya Christina Gonzalez to create a series of four poetry books, each celebrating a different season of the year. The four books offer readers a wide-ranging yet personal exploration of the magical cycle of the seasons. Beginning with the Pura Belpré Honor Award winner *Laughing Tomatoes and Other Spring Poems / Jitomates risueños y otros poemas de primavera*, the poet approaches each season from multiple perspectives. Memories of family and community as well as moments and figures in history are interwoven with reflections on natural phenomena, such as the weather, plants, and geography. The other three books in the series are *From the Bellybutton of the Moon and Other Summer Poems / Del ombligo de la luna y otros poemas del verano*, *Angels Ride Bikes and Other Fall Poems / Los ángeles andan en bicicleta y otros poemas del otoño*, and *Iguanas in the Snow and Other Winter Poems / Iguanas en la nieve y otros poemas de invierno*.

Of the poems in *Laughing Tomatoes / Jitomates risueños*, Alarcón writes, “A collection of poetry is like a tomato plant. From a small seed it sprouts, then grows and grows.”

Poems need good soil, sunlight, water, air, and lots of care and tending. Some of these poems were written first in Spanish, others in English, and some came out in both languages almost at the same time. Poems, like tomatoes, grow in many shapes and forms. And somehow they change every time you read them. This is the magic of poetry.” And so it is with the poems in all the books in this series.

Alarcón invites his readers to take ownership of the poems by reading them and following their inspiration wherever it may lead. The materials that follow in this teacher’s guide provide ideas for ways to use the books and the poems in third grade classrooms (activities are matched to California’s state standards for third grade). However, the poetry will also be greatly enjoyed by both younger and older students. The books may be used separately or in a variety of combinations to explore poetry and the themes presented in the poems, or to serve as a creative entry point into other areas of the curriculum.

COMMUNITY: Mexican American

THEMATIC UNITS

Environment: cycles in nature; seasons; ecosystems; interdependence

Community: family; shared wisdom and knowledge; traditions; history

Transformations: growth and change; life cycles; migration

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Francisco X. Alarcón is a renowned poet and educator. Winner of numerous awards and the author of books of poetry for both children and adults, his poetry about the seasons has been celebrated by reviewers as “brilliant,” “beautiful in two languages,” and “a model for children.” He lives in Davis, California, where he teaches at the University of California.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

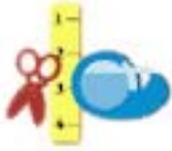


Maya Christina Gonzalez is an acclaimed artist and illustrator. Her joyous artwork for Francisco X. Alarcón’s poems has been praised by reviewers as “lively,” “innovative,” and “so bountiful it feels as if it’s spilling off the pages.” Gonzalez lives in San Francisco, California.

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GETTING THE CLASSROOM READY

Poetry Workshop



Books of poetry (including anthologies and collections by single authors) spanning a wide variety of styles (See **Resources**); butcher paper; markers; scissors; tape or glue; old magazines with images evoking the seasons

- Designate some shelf or counter space in your classroom for a poetry library. Stock it with general and theme-based poetry anthologies as well as collections of works by single poets. Be sure to include books that span a wide-variety of poetry styles. These might include rhyming poetry, free verse, and specific forms such as haiku, limericks, and shape poems.
- In addition, you might add to the library nonfiction books that provide background information related to the topics found in the poems in this series. These topics include the seasons, the water cycle, ecosystems, gardening and farming, the California Missions, Cesar Chavez, and Latino holidays and celebrations, such as those associated with *Las Posadas*, *Cinco de Mayo*, and *Día de los muertos*.
- Create a bulletin board display for the seasons on a large sheet of butcher paper. Begin by drawing lines to divide the paper into four large sections. Label each with the name of a season. At the top of each column, attach several pictures or photos cut from old magazines that are evocative of the season. As students participate in brainstorming sessions about the seasons (see Getting Ready for Reading), they can add key words, phrases, and thoughts of theirs to the display, and attach additional images that show what particular seasons mean to them.

- Show students how to make a “Family Poetry Tree.” Create a family tree display of your family to serve as an example for students to follow. Draw the outline of a large tree with a trunk and several thick roots and branches. On the roots, list your family’s country of origin and the names of known ancestors. The trunk is for elder living relatives. The branches are for parents or guardians and siblings. The leaves are places to display your own name as well as any poems that you write during this unit of study, for example in the **Language Arts: Poems for Every Season, Art: Shape Poetry, or Math: Patterns in Poetry** activities. Those displayed “leaves” can be changed as the seasons change to serve as a seasonal poetry portfolio. Have students create their own Family Poetry Tree.

GETTING READY FOR READING

Poetry Party

Students share their prior knowledge about poetry, discuss their own experiences with seasons and the transformations that accompany them, and think about family history as it relates to migration and change.



two or three 45-minute sessions



whole class

CA English-Language Arts Standards Reading—3.1: Distinguish common forms of literature (e.g., poetry, drama, fiction, nonfiction); **Listening and Speaking 1.1:** Retell, paraphrase, and explain what has been said by a speaker; **1.2:** Connect and relate prior experiences, insights, and ideas to those of a speaker; **1.4:** Identify the musical elements of literary language (e.g. rhymes, repeated sounds, instances of onomatopoeia)



Poetry books and recordings (see **Resources**)

1. Explain to students that as a class you will be reading poetry together. Ask students to share what they know about poetry and poems. Record their ideas on the board. Then read aloud or have a student read aloud several poems from a book of their choosing, or play a recording of someone reading or reciting poetry. During this exercise, you also may want to have students read or recite poems they know well. Be sure to include in this reading examples of both simple rhymed poems and free verse. Have students share additional ideas about poetry and add these to the board. Guide students to develop their understanding about some of the differences between poetry and other forms of writing, such as fiction, nonfiction, and drama.
2. Point out to students that a single poet, Francisco X. Alarcón, wrote the poems the class is going to read. In these poems, Francisco expresses his thoughts, ideas, and feelings about the four seasons. Ask students to share what comes to mind for them when they think about the different seasons. Record or have them record their thoughts on the bulletin board display you prepared in the **Getting the Classroom Ready** section of this Teacher's Guide. Ask students to think about not only the physical changes in the environment that occur during each season, but also about

how the lives of people and animals are affected by the seasons. Encourage students also to share special memories of events or traditions in their own families and community that are related to each season. After the discussion, review with students all the different things that seasons can mean to different people.

3. Tell students that some of Francisco's poems focus on the experiences of his family, who came from Mexico to live in the United States. Engage students in a discussion about family history, speaking in general terms about the types of changes that families experience when they leave one place and move to another. Guide them to look for how Francisco's poems address these experiences as they read.

EXPLORING THE BOOK

Diving In



30–45 minutes



whole class; individual

Introduce one or more of the books in the series to your students. The focus of a first reading should be on listening for pleasure. Encourage students to close their eyes and listen carefully as you read aloud one or more of the poems in both English and Spanish. Tell students to listen for the sounds of the words as well for the images that they describe. To further prepare students for their exploration of the poetry in this series, try some of the following activities:

1. Point out and read the title(s) in both English and Spanish, helping students to understand any words with which they are unfamiliar.
2. Open one of the books to a spread with more than one poem and point out the bilingual format. Help students see that sometimes the Spanish version of a poem comes first or at the top of a page and sometimes the English version comes first. Ask students to speculate as to why this might be the case. Point out that the poet is bilingual; he speaks both Spanish and English. Read his quote from the Afterword of *Laughing Tomatoes / Jitomates risueños* in which he explains that he wrote some of the poems in Spanish first, some of the poems in English first, and some of the poems “in both languages almost at the same time.”
3. Give students the opportunity to browse through the book(s), reading poem titles, looking at the illustrations, and pausing to read poems that catch their attention and interest.

FIRST TIME AROUND: VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT

Well-Seasoned Words

Students learn academic language related to poetry, begin bilingual glossaries of season words, and discuss words used to create sensory images in poetry.



two or three 45-minute sessions



whole class and pairs

CA English-Language Arts Standards Reading—1.5: Demonstrate knowledge of levels of specificity among grade-appropriate words and explain the importance of these relations (e.g., dog/mammal/animal/living things); **3.1:** Distinguish common forms of literature (e.g., poetry, drama, fiction, nonfiction)



Paper, pencils, dictionaries (English, Spanish, and bilingual English-Spanish), **Sensory Words Worksheet**

1. Before students begin to read, engage them in a discussion about the features of poetry. Expand upon students' prior knowledge as revealed during the **Getting Ready for Reading** section. Lead students through a discussion of poetry concepts, including the following:
 - **Form:** the arrangement of words in a poem; sometimes used to create a certain shape
 - **Free verse:** lines of poetry that do not rhyme or follow a patterned rhythm
 - **Pause:** punctuation or a line-break in a poem that shows when to take a breath
 - **Rhyme** (rhyme scheme): the ending sounds of words or lines of poetry that are the same and follow a repeated pattern
 - **Rhythm:** a regular pattern of sounds of particular lengths within a poem
 - **Stanza:** a division within a poem of two or more lines, usually following some type of pattern, such as a particular rhyme or number of syllables
 - **Verse:** one line of poetry

As a process for this conversation, use poems in one or more of Francisco's books as examples to help students understand the concepts. Read the poems aloud and then

have students choral-read the poems with you. Students can work in pairs to share what they notice about each poem's structure before the class reconvenes to discuss the various elements they have discovered. Be sure to guide students to discuss any concepts mentioned above that they may have missed.

2. Assign student pairs to read poems in one or more of the books in this series. If possible, include one Spanish-proficient partner and one English-proficient partner in each pair. As students read, suggest that they begin a bilingual glossary of season words. Encourage partners to refer to the information recorded in the bulletin board display about the seasons (see **Getting Ready for Reading**) for additional background about the words and concepts they may encounter while reading. Suggest that students separate the words into sections based on the seasons to which they refer. Tell them to add to their glossaries as they come across new and interesting words.
3. Point out that poets often appeal to different senses when creating the images in their work. Have partners examine the poems they are reading for words, phrases, or verses that appeal to the senses of sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch. Ask them to record their findings in the chart provided on the **Sensory Words Worksheet**.

SENSORY WORDS WORKSHEET

Sight	Hearing	Smell	Taste	Touch

SECOND TIME AROUND: READING COMPREHENSION

A Poet's Thoughts and Feelings

Students read and analyze poetry with a focus on content.



45 minutes



individual; whole class

CA English-Language Arts Standards Reading—3.1: Distinguish common forms of literature (e.g., poetry, drama, fiction, nonfiction); **3.4:** Determine the underlying theme or author's message in fiction and nonfiction text.



Paper, pencils, **Poetry Analysis Worksheet**

1. Assign each student a poem from one of the books in this series to read and analyze. You might have students select their favorites, or choose and assign poems that touch on a variety of the themes that appear in the series, such as transformations, family, community, history, and celebrations.
2. Have students each read their assigned poem several times, including at least once aloud. Then provide students with the **Poetry Analysis Worksheet** to help them analyze the poem. Have them respond to the section that focuses on the content of the poem. In this section, they are directed to answer the following questions:
 - What is the poem about?
 - How do you think the poet feels about the subject?
 - How does the poem make you feel?
 - What does the poem make you think about?
3. Ask students to respond to the poem by creating a poster in which they copy the poem and then create original artwork that shows what the poem means to them. Then have students take turns presenting their posters by reading the poems aloud, showing their artwork and giving their answers to the questions about the poem.

POETRY ANALYSIS WORKSHEET

Content

What is the poem about?

How do you think the poet feels about the subject?

How does the poem make you feel?

What does the poem make you think about?

Form

What type of poem is this?

Does it rhyme or is it free verse?

Are the words in the poem arranged in a particular shape?

What words, phrases, or images in the poem are particularly striking or memorable?

AFTERWORDS: LITERARY RESPONSE AND ANALYSIS

Variations on a Theme

Students read two poems and compare and contrast their form and content.



1 hour



individual

CA English-Language Arts Standards—Reading 3.1: Distinguish common forms of literature (e.g., poetry, drama, fiction, nonfiction); **3.5:** Recognize the similarities of sounds in words and rhythmic patterns (e.g., alliteration, onomatopoeia) in a selection; **Listening and Speaking 1.4:** Identify the musical elements of literary language (e.g., rhymes, repeated sounds, instances of onomatopoeia)

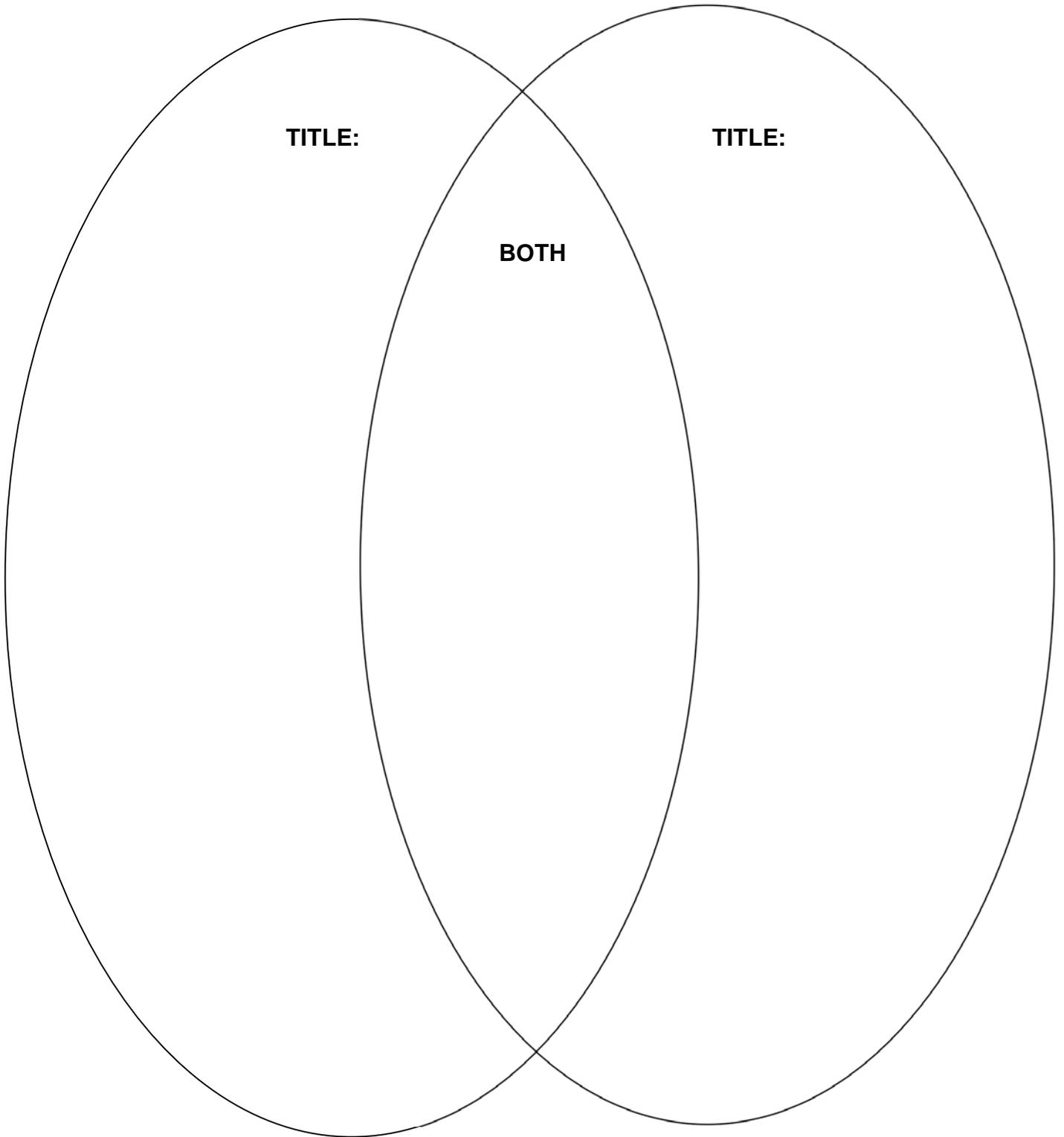


Paper, pencils, **Poetry Analysis Worksheet, Comparing Poems Worksheet**

1. Ask each student to select two poems from the books in this series to compare and contrast. Suggest that students choose poems that deal with the same topic or theme, such as the weather or family celebrations, or poems with either a very similar or a very different form. A few possible pairings include:
 - “Dew/*El rocío*” (p. 4) and “First Rain/*Primera lluvia*” (p. 10) (both in *Laughing Tomatoes / Jitomates risueños*)
 - “1. Angels Ride Bikes / 1. *Los ángeles andan en bicicleta*” (p. 24) and “2. Angels Ride Bikes / 2. *Los ángeles andan en bicicleta*” (p. 26 & 27) (**Both** in *Angels Ride Bikes / Los ángeles andan en bicicleta*)
 - “Prayer of the Fallen Tree / *Plegaria del árbol caído*” (p. 30) (in *Laughing Tomatoes / Jitomates risueños*) and “We Are Trees / *Somos árboles*” (p. 29) (in *From the Bellybutton of the Moon / Del ombligo de la luna*)
 - “Ode to Corn / *Oda al maíz*” (p. 15) (in *Laughing Tomatoes / Jitomates risueños*) and “Ode to My Shoes / *Oda a mis zapatos*” (p. 31) (in *From the Bellybutton of the Moon / Del ombligo de la luna*)
 - “Our City / *Nuestra ciudad*” (p. 2) and “Los Angeles / *Los Ángeles*” (p. 3) (both in *Angels Ride Bikes/Los ángeles andan en bicicleta*) and “City of Bridges / *Ciudad de puentes*” (p. 7) (in *Iguanas in the Snow/Iguanas en la nieve*)

2. Have the students read the poems several times, including at least once aloud, paying careful attention to the rhythm of each poem and to how the words sound. Then provide students with copies of the **Poetry Analysis Worksheet** (from the **Second Time Around: Reading Comprehension** section) to help them analyze the form and content of the poem. Questions on the worksheet direct students to think about aspects of a poem's form:
 - What type of poem is this?
 - Does it rhyme or is it free verse?
 - Does it have a particular shape?
 - What words, phrases, or images in the poem are particularly striking or memorable?
3. Once students have completed the analysis of each poem, ask them to use the **Comparing Poems Worksheet** to show the ways in which the two poems are alike and different by filling in a Venn diagram. Students can then use the completed diagram to write an essay comparing and contrasting the two poems.

COMPARING POEMS WORKSHEET—VENN DIAGRAM



LANGUAGE ARTS

Poems for Every Season

Students write a series of four poems about the seasons using four different forms of poetry.



two or three 45-minute sessions



individual; pairs

CA English-Language Arts Standard—Writing 2.2: Write descriptions that use concrete sensory details to present and support unified impressions of people, places, things, or experiences.



Paper, pencils, **Sensory Words Worksheet**, art supplies

Plan

- Review with students different forms of poetry, including simple rhymes, free verse, and structured verse, such as odes, haiku, and limericks. Provide examples of these different forms to help students become familiar with the elements of each form.
- Explain to students that they will be writing a series of four poems, one for each season of the year: winter, spring, summer, and fall.
- Have students brainstorm ideas for their poems by filling out a **Sensory Words Worksheet** (from the **First Time Around: Vocabulary Development Well-Seasoned Words** section) for each season, listing words and experiences related to the season that appeal to the senses.

Draft

- Ask students to select one poetic form for one season, and then use the ideas on the **Sensory Words Worksheet** as a reference while they write a poem about that season, using the particular poetic form they chose. Remind them that, just as Francisco X. Alarcón has done in his poetry collection, they can focus on whatever aspect of the season is meaningful to them. Have students repeat this drafting process for each of the remaining seasons.

Revise

- Suggest that students review each poem. Ask them to think about how successful they have been at conveying their impressions and feelings about the season. Suggest that they make changes in word choice to enrich the content and sharpen the rhythm as necessary.

Edit

- Have students check their poems to correct any errors in spelling and to make sure that each poem's punctuation and layout matches what they intended. Encourage students to read each poem aloud to check how it sounds.

Publish

- Ask students to copy their poems onto clean sheets of paper and to illustrate them with appropriate images. Then host a class poetry reading in which each student has the opportunity to share his or her poetic cycle of the seasons, and display the accompanying artwork.

OTHER WRITING ACTIVITIES

- **Poetry of Common Things:** Read with students odes and other poems that celebrate everyday objects, such as those by Francisco X. Alarcón, Pablo Neruda (in *Odes to Common Things*) and Shel Silverstein (in *Falling Up*) (You can find information on these titles in the **Resources** section). Discuss how some common things evoke memories and thoughts; explain to students that these associations are one reason poets write about everyday objects. Work as a class to write an ode to a common object. Then ask students to write their own odes.
- **A Poem for My School:** Read with students the poem “Ode to Buena Vista Bilingual School / Oda a la Escuela Bilingüe de Buena Vista” (In *Iguanas in the Snow / Iguanas en la nieve*, p. 7). Work together to identify the images the poet used to describe what makes that school special. Then have pairs or small groups write on a strip of paper a verse or stanza about what makes your school special. Collect the strips and arrange them to make a class poem that students can illustrate and display. Alternately, each student could create a separate poem about the school.
- **Golden Poems:** Ask students to review their favorite poems in the Alarcón series and select and copy one or two of their favorite verses. Have them read these aloud and explain why they chose them. Then ask students to work together to gather and arrange their favorite lines to create a “golden” poem for all to share and enjoy.
- **Family/Community Traditions:** Read several poems from Francisco's books that focus on family or community celebrations and traditions. Then ask students to write a poem about a celebration or tradition that is important in their own community or family.

SOCIAL STUDIES

Our City, Our Community

Students compile a community cultural profile by interviewing family members and friends and gathering information from other primary sources.

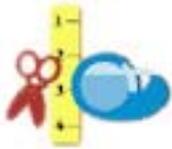


two or three 30-minute sessions



individual and small group

CA History-Social Studies Standards 3.3: Students draw from history and community resources to organize the sequence of local historical events and describe how each period of settlement left its mark on the land. **3.3.3:** Trace why their community was established, how individuals and families contributed to its founding and development, and how the community has changed over time, drawing on maps, photographs, oral histories, letters, newspapers, and other primary sources.



Paper, pencils, cassette recorder, **Interview Worksheet**, local newspapers and travel books or brochures

1. Read with students the poems in *Iguanas in the Snow / Iguanas en la nieve* related to San Francisco:
 - “City of Bridges / *Ciudad de puentes*” (p. 7)
 - “Mission Dolores / *Misión de Dolores*” (p. 8)
 - “San Francisco” (p. 10)
 - “In My Barrio / *En mi barrio*” (p. 11)
 - “Dancing in the Streets / *Bailando por las calles*” (p. 13)

And read poems in *Angels Ride Bikes / Los ángeles andan en bicicleta* related to Los Angeles:

- “Los Angeles / *Los Ángeles*” (p. 3)
- “Earthly Paradise / *Paraíso terrenal*” (p. 4-5)
- “Tasty Michoacán / *Sabroso Michoacán*” (p. 8-9)
- “*La Placita*” p. 16 & 17
- “1. Angels Ride Bikes / 1. *Los ángeles andan en bicicleta*” and “2. Angels Ride Bikes / 2. *Los ángeles andan en bicicleta*” (p. 24-27)

Discuss with students how Francisco shares through poetry both information and his feelings about those two cities.

2. Ask students to collect information about the cultural heritage of their city by interviewing elder relatives or family friends and acquaintances about how their families came to the area and what contributions their home cultures have made to the community at large. Provide them with copies of the **Interview Worksheet** to give them ideas for questions to ask. Suggest that they record the interviews, if possible, so that they can spend their time listening carefully and attentively to the person's response.
3. Provide students with other primary sources, such as local travel brochures and the arts and community calendar sections of local newspapers, so that they can gather more information about celebrations and exhibitions of culture in the local area.
4. Have students work together in small groups to combine the results of their interviews and the information they have gathered from other sources into a report about their community's cultural heritage. Have groups take turns presenting their reports to the class. See the **Community Mural** activity in the **Art** section of this teacher's guide for an alternate way to present the information.

OTHER SOCIAL STUDIES ACTIVITIES

- **California Missions:** Fourth grade students in California could incorporate the poem "Mission Dolores / *Misión de Dolores*" (in *Iguana in the Snow / Iguanas en la nieve* p. 8) into their study of the California Mission system.
- **Honoring Our Ancestors:** Have students read the poem "Day of the Dead / *El día de los muertos*" in *Angels Ride Bikes / Los Angeles Andan en bicicleta* (p. 18). Afterwards, have students write a paragraph or poem to honor an ancestor or other important person who has passed away.
- **Seasonal Celebrations:** Students can work together to create a list of seasonal celebrations with a description of each event along with information about its history and origins.

INTERVIEW WORKSHEET

Name of Interview Subject:

How You Know This Person:

Questions

When did you come to this city/community?

Why did you come to this place?

Where did you come from?

What traditions or customs did you bring with you?

How has the culture of your homeland or your ancestor's homeland become a part of the culture in this city?

Is there anything else you would like to add?

ART

Shape Poetry

Students write poems about season-related objects, written in such a way that they depict the objects both visually, as a shape, and in the words they choose.



two 45-minute sessions



whole class, small group, and individual

CA Visual Arts Standard 2.4: Create a work of art based on the observation of objects and scenes in daily life, emphasizing value changes.



Paper, pencils, colored markers, tempera paints, brushes

1. Display and read with students the poems “Flowers / *Las flores*” (in *Laughing Tomatoes / Jitomates risueños*, p. 10) and “Air Wheel / *Rueda aire*” and “Water Wheel / *Rueda agua*” (in *From the Bellybutton of the Moon / Del ombligo de la luna*, p. 18-19).
2. Engage students in a discussion about how the words in the poems have been set in an unusual way: arrayed like the petals of a flower or in a circular shape like a wheel. Have students share how they think the different ways of arranging words contribute to the message of each poem.
3. Ask students to choose a season they would like to write a poem about. Group together students who have chosen the same season. Ask each group to brainstorm a list of objects related to that season. For example, for winter students might suggest overcoats, rain, snowflakes, sleds, and a snowman.
4. Have each student select an object and write a poem about it. Then ask them to lightly draw a picture of the object on another piece of paper. Once they have finished the picture, ask them to rewrite the poem, using the outline of the object as a guide for the placement of the words. They can then use markers and paints to complete their shape poems.

5. Display students' shape poems together on a wall. Invite other classes to visit the exhibition; have students take turns playing the role of class "docent" to present and read the poems to visitors.

OTHER ART ACTIVITIES

- **Community Mural/Collage:** Have students use the information they gathered in the **Our City, Our Community** activity in the **Social Studies** section of this teacher's guide as the starting point for the creation of a mural or collage to depict the cultural heritage of their city.
- **Day of the Dead Altars:** Students create Day of the Dead altars to honor ancestors or other important people who have passed away. See the **Honoring Our Ancestors** activity in the **Social Studies** section of this teacher's guide for a companion activity.
- **Seasonal Color Palettes:** Discuss with students how each season of the year has a color palette or set of colors that are thought to be particularly evident during that season. Then have students create paintings using what they envision as the color palettes for winter, spring, summer, and fall.

MATH

Patterns in Poetry

Students examine mathematical patterns in poetry and then recreate them in their own poems.



45 minutes



whole class, individual, pairs

CA Mathematical Reasoning Standard 1.1: Analyze problems by identifying relationships, distinguishing relevant from irrelevant information, sequencing and prioritizing information, and observing patterns.



Poetry anthologies with rhyming poems and haikus (see **Resources**), paper, pencils

1. Write two rhyming poems with different rhyme schemes on the board and read them aloud to students. Read them a second time and use letters at the end of each verse (for example, *ab ab ab*) to show the rhyme scheme for each. Point out that the rhyme scheme is a pattern that shows which set of lines rhyme in each verse. Then work with students to create poems with rhyme schemes that match those of the displayed poems.
2. Follow a similar procedure with a sample haiku, showing students how the number of syllables in each verse is the controlling pattern.
3. Ask students to write poems with patterns of their own invention, either using a rhyme scheme or the number of syllables in each verse.
4. Have students exchange their poems with a partner. Partners should read the poems and try to figure out what pattern their partner used.
5. When partners have finished, ask them to share their poems with the class.

OTHER MATH ACTIVITIES

- ***Fruit Fractions:*** Use the text and artwork for the poem “Laughing Tomatoes / *Jitomates risueños*” (in *Laughing Tomatoes / Jitomates risueños*, p. 12) as the starting point for an activity involving fractions in fruit. For example, you can have students peel oranges and count the number of slices contained in their orange. They can then come up with fractions when they take away some of the slices.
- ***Seasonal Temperature Chart:*** Students use an almanac or consult the local newspaper’s weather section to develop a chart showing average, record high, and record low temperatures for each month or season in your community, and use this information to discuss mean, median, and mode.

SCIENCE

Seasons of the Sun

Students create diagrams showing how the position of the sun changes from season to season.



30–45 minutes



whole class, small group, individual

CA Science Standard 4.3: Students know the position of the sun in the sky changes during the course of the day and from season to season.



Paper, pencil, encyclopedia articles on the seasons, the sun, and the solar system

1. Engage students in a discussion of the primary characteristics of the different seasons, recording their ideas on the board. Then ask them to share what they know about why these changes occur.
2. Have students work in small groups. Have each group research how the changing position of the Earth as it revolves around the sun creates the different seasons. Ask students to make sure they understand the meanings of such terms as *summer solstice*, *winter solstice*, *vernal equinox*, *autumnal equinox*, *Northern Hemisphere*, *Southern Hemisphere*, and *equator*.
3. Ask group members to work together to create a diagram showing how the Earth's position relative to the sun changes during the four seasons. Have them include an explanation as to how this contributes to changes in the temperature and amounts of precipitation at various parts of the planet.
4. Have the groups present their diagram to the class. Ask each group to explain the climatic conditions for a different season in a different part of the world.

OTHER SCIENCE ACTIVITIES

- ***Ecosystem Study:*** Students can conduct a long-term project in which they regularly and periodically observe the ecosystem of a garden throughout the course of the school year and document changes that take place during the different seasons. To begin, students should discuss and catalogue all the elements of the ecosystem at the beginning of the observation period. They should then record changes they observe, and the dates on which they occur.
- ***Giant Sequoias Report:*** Have students read the poem “Giant Sequoias / *Secoyas gigantes*” (in *Iguanas in the Snow / Iguanas en la nieve*, p. 28 & 29) and then conduct research for a report on these unique giants of the Sierra Nevada.
- ***Classroom Weather Report:*** As part of a year-long project, have students take turns recording and then reporting the weekly weather forecast for your area and other places of interest. Discuss different weather phenomena such as thunder, lightning, different types of clouds (i.e. nimbus, cirrus, etc), and drought.

RESOURCES

Related Titles from Children's Book Press

My Diary From Here to There / Mi diario de aquí hasta allá. Written by Amada Irma Pérez and illustrated by Maya Christina Gonzalez.

My Very Own Room / Mi propio cuartito. Written by Amada Irma Pérez and illustrated by Maya Christina Gonzalez.

Prietita and the Ghost Woman / Prietita y la Llorona. Written by Gloria Anzaldúa and illustrated by Maya Christina Gonzalez.

Books from Other Publishers

Nonfiction and Fiction: Weather

Barrett, Judi. *Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs.* Aladdin, 1982.

Gibbons, Gail. *The Reasons for Seasons.* Holiday House, 1996.

Singer, Marilyn. *On the Same Day in March: A Tour of the World's Weather.* HarperCollins, 2000.

Poetry

Alarcón, Francisco X. *Poemas para soñar juntos / Poems to Dream Together.* Lee & Low Books, 2005.

Charles, Donald. *El año de gato galano (Calico Cat's Year).* Children's Press, 1985.

Lorca, Federico García. *Canciones y poemas para niños (Songs and Poems for Children).* Conaculta, 1991.

Macías, Elva. *Informe de la lenteja y otros poemas (The Lentil's Report and Other Poems).* Conaculta, 2000.

Mandaderos de la lluvia y otros poemas de América Latina (Messengers of Rain and Other Poems from Latin America). Tigrillo/Douglas & McIntyre, 2002.

Neruda, Pablo. *Odes to Common Things.* Bulfinch, 1994 (bilingual edition).

Orozco, José-Luis. *Fiestas: A Year of Latin American Songs of Celebration (Fiestas: A Year of Latin American Songs of Celebration).* Dutton Children's Books, 2002.

Paz Castillo, María Fernanda. *De plumas, pieles y escamas: Rondas, rimas y adivinanzas (Feathers, Skin and Scales: Rounds, Rhymes and Riddles).* Grupo Editorial Norma, 2003.

Plaza, José María (ed). *Alibará: La ronda de las estaciones (Alibará: Seasons' Lyrics).* Gaviota, 1999.

Silverstein, Shel. *Falling Up.* HarperCollins, 1996.

Silverstein, Shel. *Donde el camino se corta: Nuevos caminos para reírse (Where the Sidewalk Ends).* Ediciones B, 2005.

Web sites:

Poets.org

The Teacher's Guide. <http://www.theteachersguide.com/SeasonsLessonPlans.htm>

The Teacher's Corner. <http://www.theteacherscorner.net/seasonal/>

CONTRIBUTORS

Loreta Torres is a fourth grade bilingual two-way (Spanish Immersion and Spanish as a Second Language) teacher at Fairmount Elementary School in San Francisco, CA. Fairmount views all members of the community as teachers and learners, offering many programs supporting learning for families as well as students. Loreta is also a Bay Area Writing Project (BAWP) teacher consultant.

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TIPS FROM THE PROS

Please share your own ideas for how to use in the classroom the four books from *The Magical Cycle of the Seasons* series. We'll be pleased to post your work on the web site for other teachers to use. Email us your lesson plans at

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