



JUST A MINUTE

TEACHER'S GUIDE

GRADES **K-3**





You are invited to a birthday party.
So get ready to celebrate **MEXICAN STYLE!**

1 WHAT IS THE BOOK ABOUT?

Grandma Beetle is getting ready for a birthday celebration when she hears a knock at the door. Standing in the doorway is *Señor Calavera* who has come to take Grandma Beetle with him. But she's not ready to leave, so *Señor Calavera* is made to wait and wait and wait as Grandma Beetle always has just one more thing to do, saying "just a minute" over and over again. At last, all is ready. Grandma Beetle's grandchildren arrive and so does a special guest. Can you guess who it is?

DEATH COMES TO VISIT

Señor Calavera, or death, makes an appearance at a celebration! Celebrate death? How can that be? In Mexico and in Latino communities throughout the United States honoring deceased relatives and friends is important and a celebration called Day of the Dead or *Día de los Muertos* features, among other things, a memorial altar where *ofrendas* or offerings are laid out. Death is not scary or something to be feared. It is a natural occurrence, and family and friends remember those who have died by visiting the cemetery and leaving trinkets on the gravesite. These might include pictures, books, and food. It is not at all unusual for a family to hire *mariachis* to play at the gravesite while family members remember their loved ones fondly.



BEFORE READING THE BOOK

2

- Say and repeat *Señor Calavera* (seh NYOUR caw la VER ah) several times.
- Talk about *Señor Calavera* and why a skeleton is a main character in the book. Can you think of other books you have seen or read with a skeleton as a character?
- Introduce some Mexican motifs used in the book such as *papel picado* (paw PELL pea CAW tho) and *piñatas* (pea NYAH tuz).

-*Papel picado*: tissue paper cutouts used to decorate for many celebrations in the Latino culture. These are usually strung together and hung across a room at birthday parties, baby showers, and other festive events. You can purchase these online at <http://www.latinworksco.com/papbrpapban.html> or call the Mexican Consulate or the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce in your area for information on local stores that might carry them. Instructions for making papel picado with kids are found under Activities.

-*Piñata*: a large, hollow object made of papier-mâché, and covered in tissue paper. The tissue paper edges are cut and curled. When the *piñata* has been made, a small hole is made at the top and the *piñata* is filled with candy. Children, and sometimes adults, take turns hitting the *piñata* with a stick until it is broken and the candy falls to the ground. Then, it is time to gather as many pieces of candy you can hold.

- Point out some traditional Mexican foods such as *tortillas* (tore TEA yoss) and *chiles* (CHEE less).

-*Tortillas*: this is a traditional Mexican food made with flour, water, lard and salt. It is flat, round and shaped like a pancake. A tortilla is often filled with meat, beans, or eggs and can be eaten at all meal times. Yummm!

-*Chiles or chilies*: peppers used to season Mexican foods. This makes food spicy.

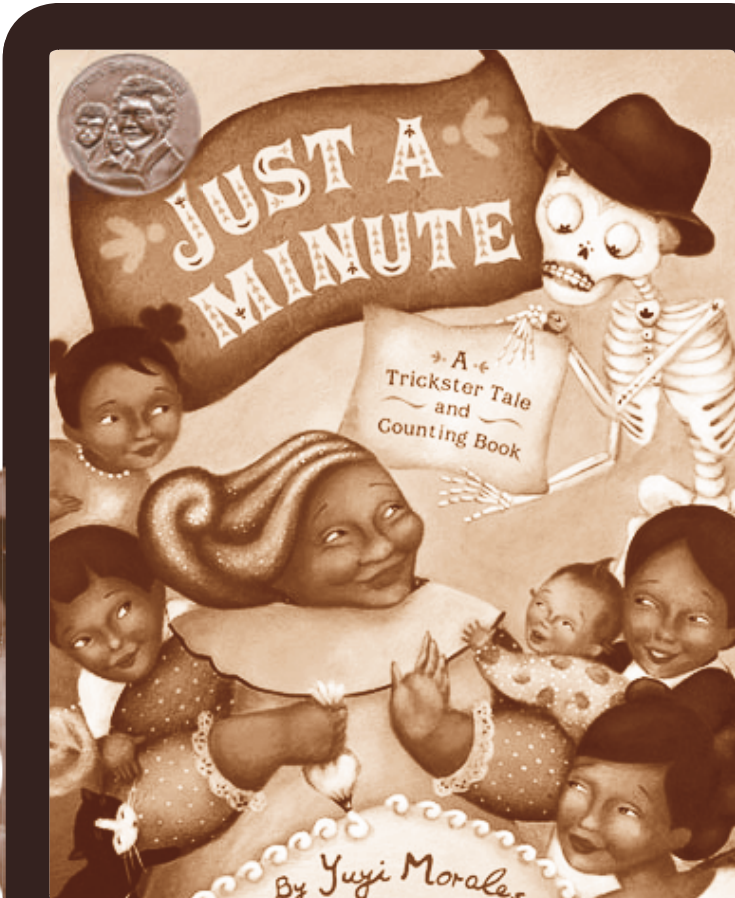


GENERAL OVERVIEW

This Teacher's Guide Contains:

FOUR MAIN SECTIONS

- 1 What Is The Book About?**
- 2 Before Reading The Book**
- 3 Reading And Discussing The Book**
- 4 Identifying Examples of Local Heritage**



3 READING AND DISCUSSING THE BOOK

This is a trickster tale and counting book. A trickster tale means that one character is able to outsmart the other. Be prepared to count together in English and in Spanish. Add drama to your reading and give character to Grandma Beetle and to *Señor Calavera* by changing your voice for each character. Questions are listed as a guide. You do not have to use them all, so feel free to pick and choose those most appropriate for your group. You might even come up with other good questions.

QUESTIONS ABOUT THE PICTURES

- How does Grandma Beetle prepare corn for *tortillas*?
- Whose party is Grandma Beetle getting ready for?
- What kinds of fruit is Grandma Beetle slicing for the fruit salad?
- What is Grandma Beetle putting into the *piñatas*?
- How many grandchildren does Grandma Beetle have?
- Look at the end papers. Why do you think there are four colorful rectangles on each? What do they mean? Can you find them in the book?
- Can you find the black cat on each page?
- What is *Señor Calavera* wearing?
- What kind of tea is Grandma Beetle making?
- Has anyone in your family used a big clay pot to boil water for tea?
- Have you ever gone to a birthday party and lined up to hit a *piñata*?
- Have you ever seen the tissue paper cutouts called *papel picado*?

IDENTIFYING SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES AMONG PEOPLE

Grandma Beetle is cooking in the kitchen. Grandmas in different countries cook different meals. In a Mexican household, you might grow up with *tortillas*, which are eaten for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. There is a Mexican sausage called *chorizo* (choh REE zoh) that is mixed with eggs and scrambled together. This is typically served with refried beans and diced fried potatoes. Add some *tortillas*, and you have a tasty Mexican breakfast. Don't forget the *salsa* or hot sauce! In England, you might be served a breakfast of scrambled eggs, baked beans, ham, and scones while in Holland, your breakfast treat would be cold cuts and bread. In France, a croissant with jam and butter will suffice for your simple breakfast. What do you usually have for breakfast in your home?

1. Do you have a grandma? If not, how about a mom or uncle or neighbor who likes to cook.
2. Does your grandma cook in the kitchen?
3. What do you like best about your grandma's cooking?
4. What kinds of food does your grandma like to cook?
5. Do you have a special name for your grandma? Nana? *Abuela*? *Abuelita*? Grammy?





IDENTIFYING FAMILY AND COMMUNITY CUSTOMS

Many families share similarities as well as differences and not all families celebrate in the same way. This does not mean that one way is better than the other, only that there are certain customs that are handed down from one generation to the other. One family might celebrate a birthday by having dinner with just the immediate family. Another family might celebrate by inviting friends for a pizza party. Many Latino families celebrate by preparing a large meal for family and friends. The *piñata* is a big part of the celebration and kids are lined up, blindfolded when it's their turn, and then given the *piñata* stick to strike at the *piñata* which is filled with candy and waiting to be broken.

1. What does your family do to celebrate a birthday?
2. Do you help with any of the preparations?
3. Do you stay at home or go out for a birthday celebration?
4. Have you ever been to a friend's birthday party where they celebrated differently than your family does?
5. Do you sing the "Happy Birthday" song? Have your group sing "Happy Birthday."

CHARACTERIZATION

Señor Calavera's facial expressions change throughout the book. If you look carefully, you might see that he looks uncertain on one page, confused on another, and frustrated on still another. Can you tell what *Señor Calavera* is feeling by looking at his expressions? Select a picture and ask your group to tell you what *Señor Calavera* is feeling. Come up with different words for his changing look.

IDENTIFYING UNFAMILIAR WORDS AND THINGS

This book is not bilingual; however, there are a few Spanish words sprinkled throughout. Count with your group in English and then count with them in Spanish. You might mention that they might have learned to count in English but that some children learn to count in another language and that there are many households where Spanish is the first language a child will learn. Point out some of the words and explain what they mean in English.

Tortilla and *piñata* are words in Spanish that are used by many in the English language. We might not even remember that they are Spanish words. Can you think of

other Spanish words that are often used and that we don't think twice about when saying them?

PREDICTING OUTCOMES

- From the first "Just a minute, *Señor Calavera*" that Grandma Beetle utters, can you predict what will happen next?
- When you find out that Grandma Beetle has one house to sweep and two pots of tea to boil, can you predict what will be counted next?
- Can you predict what *Señor Calavera* is going to do when Grandma Beetle continues with her preparations?
- What do you think will happen when Grandma Beetle's grandchildren arrive?
- Do you think that Grandma Beetle's grandchildren will be afraid of *Señor Calavera*?

DRAWING CONCLUSIONS

- Now that you have met Grandma Beetle and *Señor Calavera*, how would you describe them?
- What was *Señor Calavera's* plan when he first arrived at Grandma Beetle's house?
- Did his plan work out the way he wanted? Do you think that Grandma Beetle had a plan when she saw *Señor Calavera* standing in her doorway?
- This is a trickster tale, which means that one character is able to trick the other. Who was the trickster and who got tricked?

AFTER THE READING

You may find that many inquisitive minds want to know if *Señor Calavera* is real and if he visits different grandmas. Reassure your group that *Señor Calavera* is a made-up character in a book. Tell them that he is completely harmless and not at all scary. You may want to tell them that he is made to look like a sugar skull, which is a traditional symbol in the Mexican culture used to celebrate loved ones who are deceased. Sugar skulls are used in celebrating Day of the Dead or *Día de los Muertos*. You can introduce this celebration by sharing books from the library.

4 IDENTIFYING EXAMPLES OF LOCAL CULTURAL HERITAGE

You have now introduced customs that are traditional in Mexico and in many Latino households. Kids have learned that Grandma Beetle used three pounds of corn to make *tortillas* and that the illustration shows that she is grinding the corn. They can also see that sliced apples were added to the clay pots on the stove for the tea she is making. *Señor Calavera* helped fill the *piñatas* with candy. Are there any events that are celebrated in your community? What happens at these events? Is there food? Music? Dance? Decorations? Can you tell which heritage is being celebrated by the type of music and food available? Are there different community centers in your area? Are the signs in English or in Spanish or are they bilingual? Are there signs up in other languages?

ACTIVITIES

There are many activities you can do with your group, which will help them participate, learn about handicrafts and customs from other countries or cultures, and help with coordination.

- I. PURCHASE OR MAKE A PIÑATA. Display the *piñata* in your classroom. Then, sing or recite this *piñata* rhyme with your group.

<i>Piñata</i>	<i>Piñata</i>
<i>Dale, dale, dale,</i>	Strike it, strike it, strike it,
<i>No pierdas el tino.</i>	Don't lose your grip.
<i>Porque si lo pierdes</i>	Because if you lose it,
<i>pierdes el camino.</i>	You will lose your way.

- II. CREATE A PIÑATA WITH YOUNG CHILDREN

Materials

Small white paper bags (lunch bag size)
Crayons
Candy
Crepe paper streamers in assorted colors
Stapler
Glue
Yarn
Hole punch

Directions

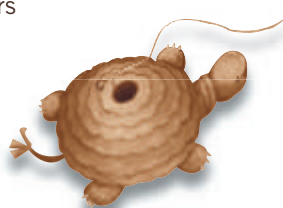
1. Distribute one bag, several crayons, and four 12-inch streamers to each child.
2. Ask each child to decorate the bag by drawing pictures on both sides
3. Glue the four streamers to the bottom of the bag.
4. Hand out the candy and have each child put the candy in the bag.
5. Fold the top of the bag and staple.
6. Punch a hole at the top and tie a piece of yarn to the top.

You can also make a simple *piñata* using two paper cups, which you fill with candy and then tape the cup openings together with masking tape. Decorate with tissue paper and paper streamers. You can also find instructions for making *piñatas* using *papier-mâché* in books you can find in your library. Or reach out to your Latino community and invite them to demonstrate this craft. You can also contact a store that sells them.

- III. SHOW PICTURES OF A SUGAR SKULL, which is used on the memorial altars during Day of the Dead celebrations. Use the skull of *Señor Calavera*, which can be found at this web site:

<http://www.chroniclebooks.com/Chronicle/excerpt/0811837580-skull.html>. Ask your group to use markers or crayons to decorate the skull. Tell them that the sugar skulls are the symbols used to represent loved ones that have passed away and to show that life continues even after death. The sugar skulls are placed on the Day of the Dead altar and the spirits of the dead are welcomed back home. Favorite foods, clothes, books, and more of the deceased loved one are also added to the altar. Look for a recipe in a library book. There is also a recipe for making the sugar skulls at this web site:

<http://www.mexicansugarskull.com/mexicansugarskull/recipe.htm>. Use your library to find out more about sugar skulls and the Day of the Dead or *Día de los Muertos* celebration. Invite questions and discussion.



IV. MAKE A DAY OF THE DEAD ALTAR

Engage your group in making a Day of the Dead or *Día de los Muertos* altar. Be sure to tell your group about the history and tradition of this celebration, and display books from the library on this subject. Involve your school principal and even some parents who might help you with the altar. Here is what you will need:

- A table and tablecloth
- A picture of a famous deceased person (President? Actor? Musician?) to be the centerpiece of the altar
- Some favorite foods of the deceased person
- One or more sugar skulls
- Incense or candles
- Grooming supplies like soap and a toothbrush
- A favorite book or CD or both
- *Papel picado* to decorate the edges of the altar

V. MAKE A PAPEL PICADO

Materials

Tissue paper
Scissors
Glue
String or yarn

Directions

1. Distribute scissors and one sheet of tissue paper about the size of a sheet of construction paper (9" x 11").
2. Begin folding the tissue paper in half.
3. Fold in half three more times.
4. Fold over about one inch from the top.
5. Use the scissors to clip geometric designs on each side of the paper.
Do not cut within that one inch from the top
6. Unfold paper and see the shapes you have cut.
7. Repeat with a second sheet of tissue paper.
8. Place a piece of yarn lengthwise to connect both sheets in that top inch you did not cut through.
9. Fold over and glue that top end.
10. You can string many of these sheets together to make a colorful banner.

VI. COOK SOME TORTILLAS

Invite someone to demonstrate how *tortillas* are made. Approach Latino families in your area or contact a local Mexican restaurant. Purchase all of the ingredients as well as a package of cooked *tortillas*, which you will want to distribute after the program. After the program, you can pretend to make *tortillas* by opening the kitchen cabinet to bring out the flour, turning on the faucet to fill your measuring cup with water, etc. When the pretend dough is ready to be put on the griddle, start clapping with one hand over the other and recite the *Tortillitas* rhyme, which follows.

Tortillitas

Tortillitas para Mamá.

Tortillitas para Papá.

Las quemaditas para Mamá.

Las bonitas para Papá.

Tortillitas

Tortillitas for Mama.

Tortillitas for Papa.

The toasted, burnt ones for Mama.

The good little tasty ones for Papa.

VII. SING A MEXICAN NUMBER SONG

Here is a traditional Mexican song that is about adding numbers up to ten.

Dos y dos son cuatro,

Cuatro y dos son seis.

Seis y dos son ocho,

Ocho y dos son diez.

Two plus two equals four,

Four plus two equals six.

Six plus two equals eight,

Eight plus two equals ten.

THAT'S ALL THERE IS?

No, not quite! You can always do more. Here's just a short list:

- Talk about the colors the illustrator has selected.
- Look at the chairs. Are they all the same?
- Bring clay pots and tell the group that many Latino families use them to cook.
- Bring Mexican tiles and talk about the designs.
- Purchase a string of chiles and show these to your group.
- Talk about tin frames and the art of making them.
- Show some hand-woven baskets to your group and ask them what these baskets might hold.
- Bring a watermelon, cantaloupe, pineapple, and papaya for your group to share. Talk about the different tastes.
- Invite your kids to pretend that they were Grandma Beetle's special guest and ask them to write a letter to her.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Yuyi Morales is an artist, a Brazilian folk dancer, a puppet maker, and the former host of a Spanish-language radio show for children. She was born and raised in Mexico and now makes her home in the San Francisco, Bay Area. She is the 2004 Pura Belpré Illustrator Award Winner for *Just A Minute: A Trickster Tale and Counting Book*, which has won numerous awards since its publication, and a 2004 Pura Belpré Illustrator Honor Award Winner for *Harvesting Hope: The Story of Cesar Chavez* written by Kathleen Krull.

OTHER BOOKS ILLUSTRATED BY YUYI MORALES

Harvesting Hope: The Story of Cesar Chavez written by Kathleen Krull. Harcourt, 2003

Sand Sister written by Amanda White. Barefoot Books, 2004

AWARDS AND HONORS FOR JUST A MINUTE!

- Américas Award for Children's and Young Adult Literature, sponsored by the national Consortium of Latin American Studies Programs (CLASP)
- Best Children's Books of the Year, Bank Street College of Education
- Best of the Best List, Chicago Public Library
- CCBC (Cooperative Children's Book Center) Choices selection
- California Book Award Silver Medal for Juvenile Fiction
- Golden Kite Honor Book, Picture Book Illustration
- Latino Literary Award for Best Children's Book
- Northern California Book Award nomination, Children's Literature Latino Book Award
- Notable Books for a Global Society
- Notable Books for Children, Younger Readers
- Parent's Choice Award Winner, Approved
- Pura Belpré Award Medal for Best Illustration
- Tomás Rivera Mexican American Children's Book Award
- *Booklist* starred review
- *Kirkus Reviews* starred review

WEB SITES TO VISIT

www.yuyimorales.com

Yuyi's homepage, which includes information about the author/illustrator, activities to do alone or with teachers and parents, and some fun information about books.

<http://www.chroniclebooks.com/site/catalog/excerpts.php?isbn=0811837580&store=books>

<http://www.chroniclebooks.com/Chronicle/excerpt/0811837580-skull.html>

You can see Señor Calavera's skull on this page and print it out as a coloring or activity sheet.

<http://www.chroniclebooks.com/Chronicle/excerpt/0811837580-limbs.html>

Continue with this link for Señor Calavera's limbs.

<http://www.chroniclebooks.com/Chronicle/excerpt/0811837580-torso.html>

Here is the torso for a complete Señor Calavera. Enjoy putting him together.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR OF THIS GUIDE

Rose Zertuche Treviño is a children's services consultant in Houston, Texas, who believes that all children should be exposed to books which celebrate and respect differences and similarities in people. Her first language was Spanish and she loves *tortillas*, birthday celebrations with candy-filled piñatas, and memories of her own *abuelitas*.

