



2026-2027

# TEJAS STAR ACTIVITY GUIDE

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

## ABOUT THIS GUIDE

Prepared by the Tejas Star Reading List committee, this activity guide was designed to support using the 2026-2027 Tejas Star Reading List titles with children ages 5-12 in classrooms and libraries.

## ABOUT THE TEJAS STAR READING LIST

The Tejas Star Reading List (TSRL) provides a recommended reading list to encourage children ages 5-12 to explore multicultural books and to discover the cognitive and economic benefits of bilingualism and multilingualism. The Tejas Star Reading List is intended for recreational reading, not to support a specific curriculum.

## ABOUT THE TEXAS LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

TLA was established in 1902 to promote, support, and improve library services in Texas. Our 6,000+ members are from all library types: academic, public, school and special. TLA provides expertly curated reading lists and programs for ages 2 - 102 - from fiction, nonfiction, and graphic novels, to picture books, bilingual and multicultural lists.

## 2026-27 TEJAS STAR READING LIST COMMITTEE:

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# ALBERTO SALAS JUEGA LA PAKA PAKA CON LA PAPA (ALBERTO SALAS PLAYS PAKA PAKA CON LA PAPA)



**Alberto Salas juega a la paka paka con la papa (Alberto Salas plays paka paka con la papa) by Sara Andrea Fajardo, illustrated by Juana Martinez-Neal, translated by Mariana Llanos (Roaring Brook Press, 2025)**

# ACTIVITY 1

## PEOPLE WHO PROTECT OUR PLANET

In this activity, you will research Alberto Salas or another person who helps protect the environment. As you research, think about: What problem are they trying to solve? How are they helping the Earth? Why does their work matter? After researching, create a presentation in your own style. You might make a one page report, a poster, a short slide show, or a “hero card” that highlights the person’s work. Try to include who they are, what they do, and why it matters. Together, your projects will show many ways people care for the planet.

People to research:

- \* Alberto Salas
- \* Jane Goodall
- \* Wangari Maathai
- \* Greta Thunberg



# ACTIVITY 2

## LEARNING WORDS IN QUECHUA

Some words in Alberto Salas juega la paka paka con la papa come from Quechua, the language of Indigenous people in Peru. First, look at words like “paka paka” (hide-and-seek) or “qacha” / “kallpa” in the book. Next, think about how you can use these words in a story, a poem, or a drawing. When you finish, share your story, poem, or drawing with a partner or the group. Notice how learning new words from another culture can help you understand the story and the world around you in a new way.

Paka Paka – Hide-and-seek

Qacha – Quickly / fast

Kallpa – Strong / full of energy

Ch’aki – Dry / lightweight

Sumaq – Beautiful / good

# BIENVENIDA A CASA, ESMERELDA (WELCOME HOME, ESMERELDA)



**Bienvenida a casa,  
Esmerelda (Welcome  
Home, Esmerelda)** by  
Daniela Ramirez,  
Illustrated by Maribel  
Lechuga  
(Charlesbridge 2025)

# ACTIVITY 1

## CREATE A WELCOME HOME BASKET

Esmerelda is feeling overwhelmed about moving and fitting in with her family she does not know. Create a basket with welcoming items or pictures of items (snacks, cozy blanket, water bottle, picture frame, art supplies or gift cards) and write a Welcome Home Card.

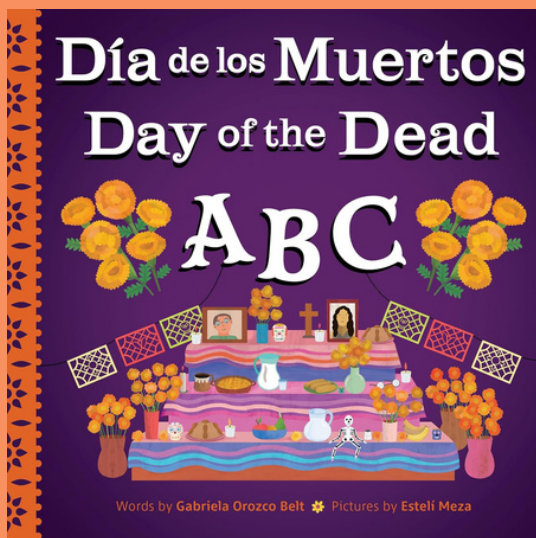


# ACTIVITY 2

## CHARACTER FEELINGS

Create a character feelings map.  
Decide on three feelings that  
Esmerelda feels throughout the story.  
Give details from the story that  
explain why she feels this way.  
Include some ideas and ways to help  
Esmerelda feel calm.

**DÍA DE LOS MUERTOS  
ABC: (DAY OF THE  
DEAD ABC: A  
BILINGUAL ALPHABET  
BOOK TO  
CELEBRATE THIS  
MAGICAL HOLIDAY)**



**Día de los Muertos  
ABC: (Day of the Dead  
ABC: A Bilingual  
Alphabet Book to  
Celebrate This  
Magical Holiday)** by  
Gabriela Orozco Belt,  
illustrated by Estelí  
Meza (Duopress,  
2025).

# **ACTIVITY 1**

## **BILINGUAL ABC ALTARS**

After reading, small groups receive a letter card and identify the matching word in both English and Spanish, then draw or select a related symbol such as marigolds, pan de muerto, or calaveras. Each group creates a mini “altar card” featuring their letter, the bilingual word, and an illustration. The finished cards are displayed together to form a colorful classroom “ABC of Día de los Muertos” gallery wall that celebrates language and culture.



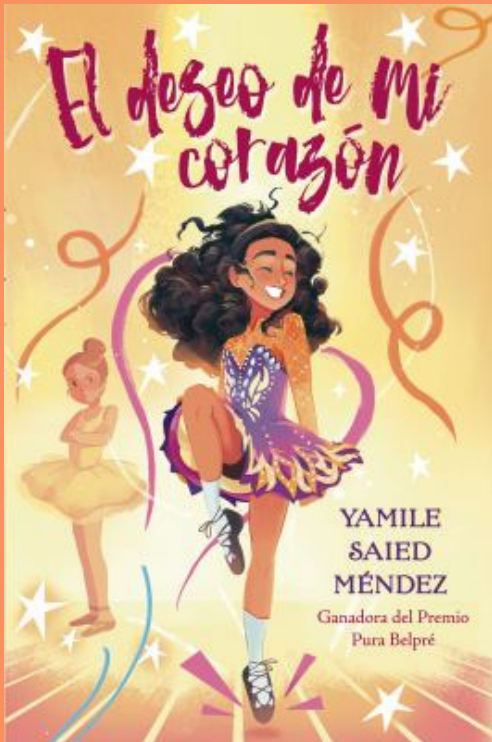
# **ACTIVITY 2**

## **MEMORY MARIGOLD GARDEN**

In this activity, students learn that marigolds, or cempasúchil, are known as the flower of remembrance in Día de los Muertos traditions.

After discussing their symbolism, each student creates a paper marigold and writes or draws on a leaf the name of someone they wish to remember or a special memory they have. The leaves are attached to the flowers, and all the marigolds are displayed together to form a class “Memory Marigold Garden,” honoring remembrance, love, and cultural tradition.

# EL DESEO DE MI CORAZÓN (THE REEL WISH)



**El deseo de mi  
corazón (The Reel  
Wish)** by Yamile Saied  
Méndez. (Tu Books,  
2025).

# ACTIVITY 1

## BALLET VS. IRISH DANCE

Watch this 2 minute video of the Nutcracker

Ballet - <https://bit.ly/3ZnxZqk>

Then watch this 2 minute video of a "Four  
Hand Reel" Irish Dance -

<https://bit.ly/45Qpc3Y>

Then create a Venn Diagram to compare  
Ballet with Irish Dance. What do you  
observe? What do you notice?

Recommended: Write 2 things about Ballet, 2  
things about Irish Dance, and 2 things that  
they have in common.



# ACTIVITY 2

## ANXIETY, CAN'T

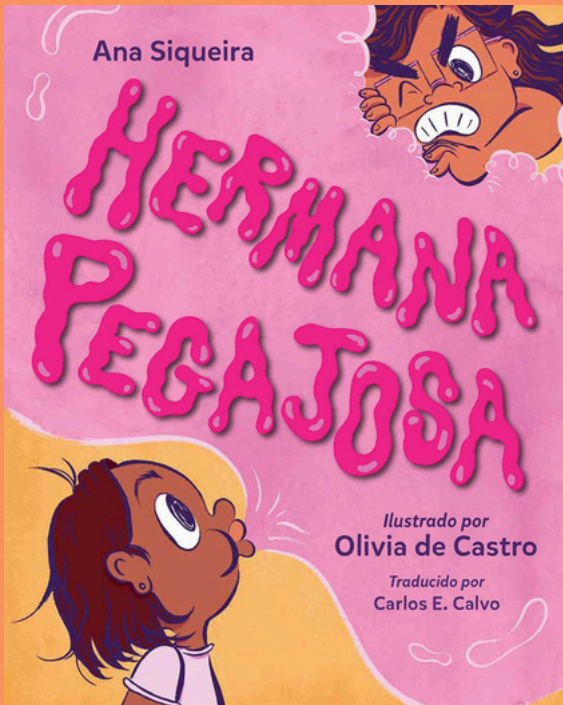
## SHAKE IT OFF OF ME

Anxiety is when we feel fear and uneasiness,  
and it is usually a "persistent worry about  
future events". What are some ways that you  
can calm anxiety, like how Florencia would  
focus on her breathing in the book?

Try one of these:

- Coloring
- Listening to music you enjoy
- Exercise
- Write or draw in a journal

## HERMANA PEGAJOSA (STICKY SISTER)



**Hermana pegajosa  
(Sticky Sister)** by Ana Siqueira, illustrated by Olivia de Castro, translated by Carlos E. Calvo (Charlesbridge, 2025).

# ACTIVITY 1

## BECOME A "BUBBLE SCIENTIST"

Get three different brands of gum and make a hypothesis of which will allow you to blow the biggest bubble! Chew each piece for two minutes to get it nice and stretchy, then blow your best bubble and have a partner measure it. After you test them all, check your measurements to see which brand is the ultimate bubble-blowing champion!



# ACTIVITY 2

## DRAW YOUR DREAM BEDROOM: TOGETHER ZONE & SOLO SPACE

Imagine you have a "Magic Room Divider" in your bedroom. On one half of a piece of paper draw yourself and a sibling (real or imagined) playing together. On the other half draw your dream "private space," where only you're allowed to go.

# LOS PANTALONES DE LUISA (LUISA'S PANTS)



**Los pantalones de Luisa  
(Luisa's Pants)** by Susana  
Isern, illustrated by  
Esther Gili (NubeOcho,  
2025).

# ACTIVITY 1

## DESIGN YOUR OWN PAIR OF PANTS

Draw an outline of a pair of pants on a large sheet of paper. Now design the coolest pair of pants you can dream up: think about what would be in the pockets, what fabric you'd use and how they'd feel, and if they have any cool hidden features. In addition to markers, use fabric scraps, buttons, sequins, or other craft supplies you have available. Write 3-5 sentences describing the pants and why you made those design choices.



# ACTIVITY 2

## BE A HUMAN AUDIOBOOK

Luisa read out loud to women working in factories who didn't know how to read, spreading the joy of learning and sharing the gift of her education. Read out loud to a friend or family member as they do a repetitive task, like coloring, watering the lawn, or chopping vegetables.

# LA COLCHA DE NUESTROS RECUERDOS (THE MEMORY QUILT)



**La colcha de nuestros recuerdos (The Memory Quilt)** by Desiree Acevedo, illustrated by Victor Jaubert (Cuento de Luz, 2025).

## ACTIVITY 1 DESIGN A FAMILY QUILT

- \*Using the given template, draw or insert a picture of your core memories.
- \*In the surrounding squares, add items, actions, or people that are important to your life memories.
- \*You can also ask family members to add their own precious items, actions, or people.
- \*Color your template with bright colors and embellish it with any details you want.

<https://bit.ly/designaquilt>



## ACTIVITY 2 MAKE A QUILTING SQUARE ON PAPER

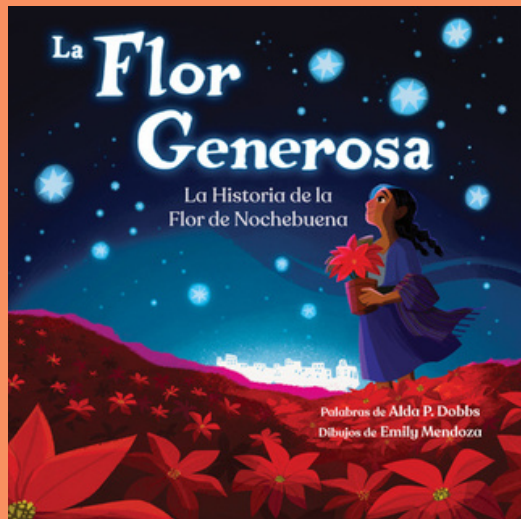
- \*Watch the following video to make your own quilting square: [Paper Quilt Squares](#)
- \*You can get step by step instructions here: <https://www.wheatonarts.org/paper-quilt-squares/>

\*Before you begin your square, you can research the significance of some basic quilt patterns here:

<https://www.nps.gov/home/planyourvisit/quilt-discovery-experience.htm>

- \*You can also create your own square using your own design.
- \*For some additional research, you can look here for a global perspective on quilting: <https://worldquilts.quiltstudy.org/>

# LA FLOR GENEROSA: LA HISTORIA DE LA FLOR DE NOCHEBUENA (THE GENEROUS FLOWER: THE HISTORY OF THE POINSETTIA FLOWER)



**La flor generosa: la historia de la flor de nochebuena (The Generous Flower: The History of the Poinsettia Flower)** by Alda P. Dobbs, illustrated by Emily Mendoza (Sourcebooks, 2025)

## ACTIVITY 1 RESEARCHING/WRITING ABOUT A FLOWER

- \*Research a flower of your choice.
- \*Write down at least seven significant dates with events about the history of the flower.
- \*Fill out the timeline on the provided sheet.
- \*Add pictures an/or images to the timeline similar to the one in the back of the book.
- \*Don't forget to include the source you used for your information.

[The Evolution of a Flower](#)

\*For an extension, write a legend about your flower, similar to the one about the nochebuena.



## ACTIVITY 2

### MAKING A PAPER POINSETTIA

Here are several resources for making or drawing your own poinsettia. In most cases, you will need: scissors, colored paper, and glue or stapler.

[Drawing a Poinsettia](#)

[Print, Cut, and Assemble a Poinsettia](#)

[Video Tutorial](#)

# ACTIVITY 1

## XOLOITZCUINTLE DOGS

Read the back matter (1/2 page, end) in the book called: The Xoloitzcuintle.

Then, take a look at [these Google Slides](#) featuring pictures of real xoloitzcuintle dogs. See how famous artist, Frida Kahlo, would have them at her home in Mexico, and feature them in her paintings as well.



# ACTIVITY 2

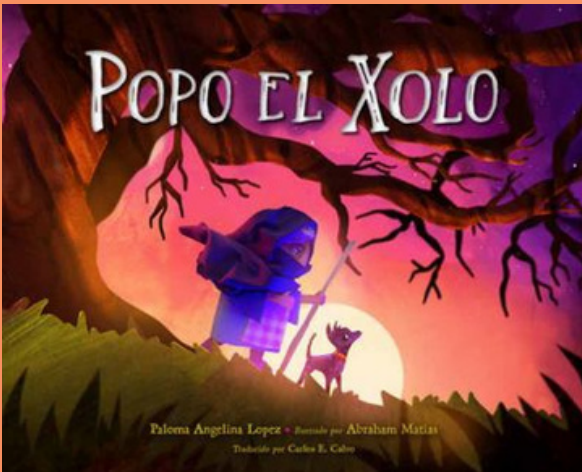
## THE NINE LEVELS OF MICTLĀN

Read the back matter (1/2 page) in the book called: The Nine levels of Mictlān.

Classroom: Ask students to form 9 different groups (2-3 students each) and illustrate their interpretation of one of the Levels of Mictlān using large paper. Post their work in the classroom to showcase the levels in order.

Individual: Choose one of the Levels of Mictlān and illustrate your interpretation of what it would look like.

## POPO EL XOLO (POPO THE XOLO)



**Popo el xolo (Popo the Xolo)** by Paloma Angelina Lopez, illustrated by Abraham Matias. (Charlesbridge, 2025).

# MARTINA FUTBOLISTA (MARTINA THE SOCCER STAR)



**Martina Futbolista  
(Martina the Soccer  
Star)** by Susanna  
Isern, illustrated by  
Marta Moreno. (Nube  
Ocho, 2024).

# ACTIVITY 1

## CREATE A CONFIDENCE POSTER

In *Martina Futbolista*, Martina believes in herself and follows her love for soccer—even when others doubt her. Now it's your turn! You will create a Confidence Poster that shows what makes you strong, brave, and proud. Draw pictures, write words, or add phrases that remind you of things you're good at, challenges you've overcome, and what helps you keep going when things feel hard. Just like Martina, your poster will celebrate believing in yourself and chasing your dreams!



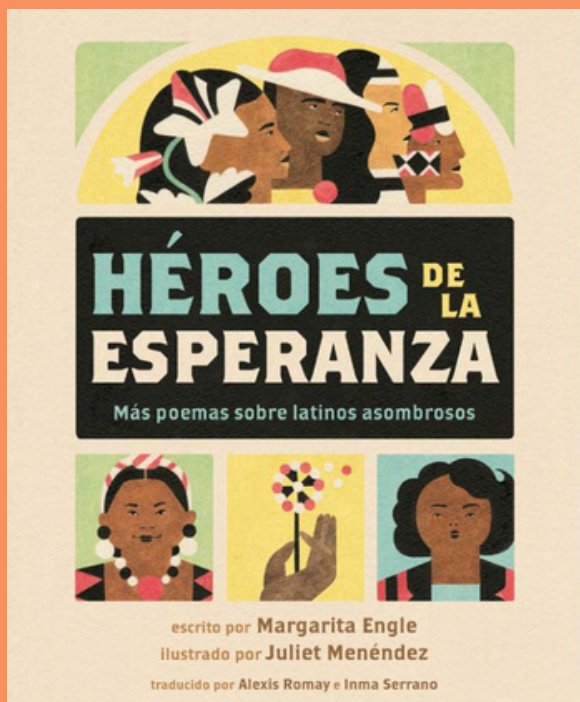
# ACTIVITY 2

## MAKERSPACE TABLETOP SOCCER PITCH

Combine makerspace engineering with soccer by having the students build a mini-soccer pitch. You can use materials like shoe boxes (or folded cardstock), craft sticks, rubber bands, and pom-poms (the soccer ball).

Challenge students to design a "flipper" or catapult using the craft sticks and rubber bands to launch the pom-pom into the goal.

**HÉROES DE LA  
ESPERANZA: MÁS  
POEMAS SOBRE  
LATINOS ASOMBROSOS  
(HOPEFUL HEROES:  
MORE POEMS ABOUT  
AMAZING LATINOS)**



**Héroes de la Esperanza:  
Más poemas sobre  
latinos asombrosos  
(Hopeful Heroes: More  
Poems About Amazing  
Latinos)** by Margarita  
Engle, illustrated by  
Juliet Menéndez.  
(Godwin Books, 2025).

# ACTIVITY 1

## MAKE YOUR OWN HERO POEM

Everyone has a hero—and now it's your turn to write about one! In this activity, you will create your own poem about a hero you admire. Your hero can be a real person, someone from a book, a community helper, or even an imaginary hero you invent yourself.

Think about what makes your hero special. What do they do? How do they help others? How do they make people feel? Use words, phrases, or even rhymes to share your ideas. Your poem can be funny, serious, short, or long—there's no one "right" way to write a poem!

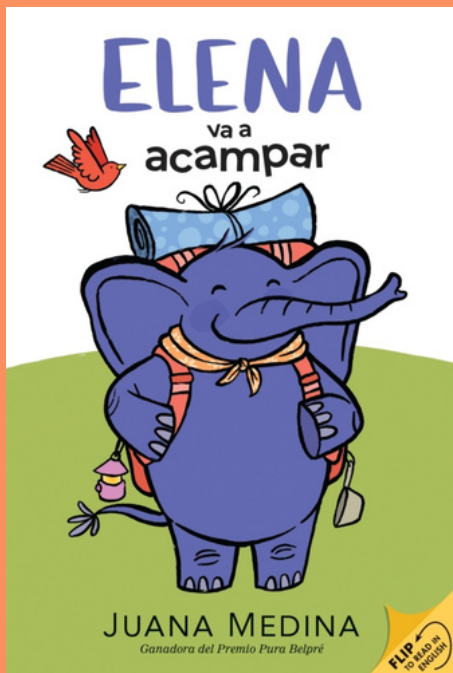


# ACTIVITY 2

## DIG IN WITH RESEARCH

In the book, there are many heroes that are described, but we just get a tiny bit of information about their lives. Use a library resource like Pebble Go or Britannica to dig deeper into the lives of one of these change makers. Present what you learn in a creative way—it could be in a presentation, a podcast, or a poster.

# ELENA VA A ACAMPAR (ELENA CAMPS)



**Elena va a acampar  
(Elena camps)** written  
and illustrated by  
Juana Medina.  
(Candlewick Press,  
2025).

# ACTIVITY 1

## WRITE YOUR OWN CAMPFIRE SONG

Imagine you're sitting around a crackling campfire with your friends. It's time to sing a song, but this one is YOURS! Use the blanks below to create a funny, silly, or spooky campfire song. There are no wrong answers, be creative and have fun! Fill in each blank with your own ideas. You can use silly words, animals, foods, actions, or anything you like. When you're done, read or sing your song out loud! Use this [template](#) to help you create your song if you need some inspiration.



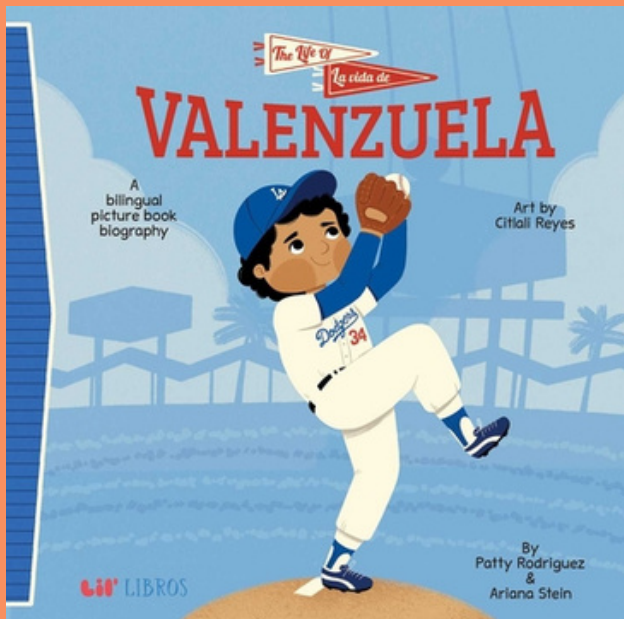
# ACTIVITY 2

## MAKE YOUR OWN TENT

Get ready to be a maker and a camper! In this makerspace activity, you will design and build your very own tent. Just like real campers, you'll think about how a tent should stand up, keep things inside, and protect campers from the weather. Use the materials at your station to plan, build, test, and improve your tent. You can work on your own or with a partner. If your tent falls over or doesn't work the first time—no problem! Makers try again and make changes.

Be creative, use your imagination, and have fun building. When you're finished, you'll share your tent and talk about what worked well and what you would change next time.

# LA VIDA DE VALENZUELA (THE LIFE OF VALENZUELA)



**La vida de Valenzuela  
(The life of  
Valenzuela)** by Patty  
Rodriguez and Ariana  
Stein, illustrated by  
Citlali Reyes. (Little  
Libros, 2025).

# ACTIVITY 1

## DESIGN YOUR OWN BASEBALL JERSEY

**Back of the Jersey:** Students write their last name in large, bold block letters across the shoulders.

**The Number:** Ask students to choose a "Legacy Number." It could be the age they are now, the number of people in their family, or the day of their birthday.

On the front and sleeves of the jersey, students will design "patches" that represent their world:

**The Home Patch:** A symbol of where their family comes from (a flag, a specific food, or a landmark).

**The Talent Patch:** A symbol of their "signature pitch" or best skill (a book for a reader, a musical note for a singer, a heart for a helper).

**The Language Patch:** A word or phrase in the language they speak at home.



# ACTIVITY 2

## MAP THE JOURNEY FROM ETCHOHUAQUILA TO LOS ANGELES

Use a map to show Fernando's journey from Etchohuaquila, Sonora to Los Angeles, California. Have students color the path Fernando took. Have students calculate the distance using the scale on the bottom of the map. Discuss the concept of "Home" and how Fernando brought his culture from Mexico to a new city, just like many families do. Discuss some of the challenges that he faced as he made this move from Sonora to California.

# EL JARRÓN DE LAS GRIETAS DORADAS (THE VASE WITH THE GOLDEN CRACKS)



**El Jarrón de las grietas doradas (The vase with the golden cracks)** by Fran Nuno, Illustrations by Zuzanna Celej (Cuentos de Luz SL, 2024).

# ACTIVITY 1

## THE "KINTSUGI" KINDNESS JAR

1. Give each student a piece of paper and have them cut it into pieces.
2. The Repair: Use gold glitter glue, metallic markers, or gold washi tape to piece the jar back together.
3. The "Golden" Words: On the back of the jar (or on slips of paper inside), have students write things that make them feel strong or happy—their own mini collection of "Golden Words."
4. The Lesson: This teaches that even when we feel "broken" (sad, frustrated, or made a mistake), we can put ourselves back together and be even stronger.



# ACTIVITY 2

## THE "GOLDEN WORD" DICTIONARY

In the story, the father has a jar of unique Japanese words. Have the class create their own "Dictionary of Feelings."

Step 1: Research 3-5 simple Japanese or international words that don't have a direct English translation (e.g., Komorebi – sunlight filtering through trees).

Step 2: Have students "invent" their own words for specific feelings.

Step 3: Decorate a "Word Jar" on a bulletin board where students can add new words throughout the week.

# ACTIVITY 1

## "THE SHADOW OF THE FEAR" (PERSPECTIVE DRAWING)

On the left side of a piece of paper, have students draw the reality (e.g., a small spider, a dark room, or a loud noise). On the right side, have them draw what their imagination sees (a giant monster, a haunted castle, a thunderstorm).

Discuss how the mole thought the thunder was a catastrophe. Ask: "How does our brain sometimes make things look bigger than they really are?" Use a yellow marker to draw a "flashlight" over the scary side to show how "shining a light" on facts makes the fear shrink.



# ACTIVITY 2

## THE COURAGE

### CATALYST (WRITING/DISCUSSION)

*"In the story, the mole didn't leave for himself; he left to save his friends. This explores the concept of Altruism."*

The Prompt: "I am bravest when..."

The Goal: Most kids feel fear when doing things for themselves, but find strength when helping others. Have them write or draw a time they helped a sibling, a pet, or a friend even though they were nervous. Discussion: Why was the mole able to ignore the "Martians" when he thought his friends were in danger?

## ¡SAL DE AHI TOPO! (COME BACK OUT, MOLE!)



**¡Sal de ahí topo!  
(Come Back Out,  
Mole!)** by Alicia  
Acosta, illustrations  
by Alessandro  
Montagnana  
(NubeOcho, 2025).

## ESTA ES UNA ESCUELA (THIS IS A SCHOOL)



**Esta es una escuela (This is a School)** by John Schu, illustrated by Veronica Miller Jamison (Candlewick Press, 2025).

# ACTIVITY 1

## "THIS IS OUR SCHOOL" COLLABORATIVE MURAL

You will need bulletin board paper, markers, and post-its. First ask students "What makes our school more than just a building?" After discussion, have students draw themselves or a small picture that represents their idea. Lastly, combine all pieces into one large mural.



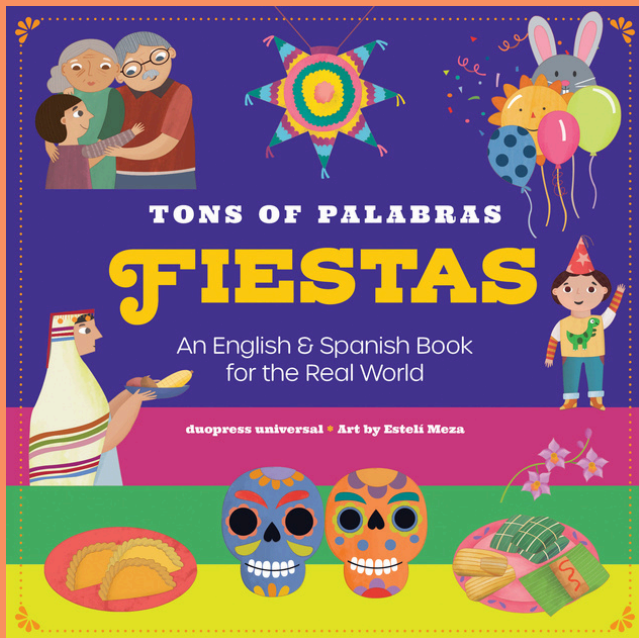
# ACTIVITY 2

## FEELINGS WALK & KINDNESS ROLE PLAY

In this activity, students connect emotions from the story to real-life school situations.

Post different scenario cards around the room, such as a new student feeling alone at lunch or a classmate who is nervous about a test. In small groups, students rotate from card to card, discussing how the person might feel and what someone could do to help. After each discussion, groups perform a quick role play to show an act of kindness.

# TONS OF PALABRAS FIESTAS: AN ENGLISH & SPANISH BOOK FOR THE REAL WORLD



**Tons of Palabras  
FIESTAS: An English &  
Spanish Book for the  
Real World** by  
Duopress Universal,  
illustrated by Estelí  
Meza (Duopress,  
2024).

# ACTIVITY 1

## BANDERA BINGO/ FLAG LOTERIA AND GUESS THE FLAG GAME

[Use this video](#) to quiz your knowledge of the flags of latin america. Then make a table with four rows and four columns to use as a Bingo card. Each player chooses a square for each flag of their choice. Shuffle all twenty of the flag cards and begin to play Flag Loteria. The first player to get four squares in a row, wins the game.



# ACTIVITY 2

## VIRTUAL FIELD TRIP - GOOGLE ARTS & CULTURE

Use the site: [Google Arts & Culture](#) to travel virtually to different places in latin america and learn more about the culture, art and traditions for each place. Use the last page in the book where you find all the flags and choose which ones you would like to visit.

# LOS VIERNES COMEMOS CHURROS (FRIDAYS ARE FOR CHURROS)



**Los Viernes Comemos Churros (Fridays are for Churros)** text and illustrations by Jenny Alvarado. (Holiday House Publishing, 2025).

# ACTIVITY 1

## I HAVE - WHO HAS - GUESS THE MAKING CHURRO STEPS GAME

Use the steps in the churro recipe from the back of the book.

I Have - Who Has Game Instructions:

1. Distribute all cards evenly to players.
2. The person with the "Start" card begins by saying I Have \_\_\_ and then guessing the next step by saying, who has\_\_\_?
3. Players continue this pattern until the game returns to the first player.
4. The game ends when all cards have been read in order.



# ACTIVITY 2

## FAMILY MENU FOR THE WEEK

Make a special menu for the week including your family's favorite foods. An example for my family would be: Mondays are for ENCHILADAS. Tuesdays are for TACOS.

Wednesdays are for QUESADILLAS.

Thursdays are for FLAUTAS. Fridays are for CHURROS. Saturdays are for PANQUEQUES and Sundays are for BARBACOA. Don't forget to add any special ingredients you like to eat.

# EL OSO POLAR Y LA BAILARINA



**El oso polar y la bailarina** by Eric Velasquez (Holiday House Publishing, 2025)

# ACTIVITY 1

## ART IS FOR EVERYONE (DISPLAY)

Art has the power to bring people together. In this activity, you will create a welcoming message inspired by the story. Think about the moment when the polar bear is not allowed into the theater. How do you think that made him feel? What would you say or do to help someone feel included? Create a drawing, poster, or short message that shows how you would welcome someone into a space like a theater, school, or library. Your message can include words, pictures, or symbols.

When you're done, share your work with a partner and display it to remind others that art—and kindness—is for everyone.



# ACTIVITY 2

## POLAR BEAR RESEARCH

Stories can make us curious about the real world. In this activity, you will research real polar bears and share what you learn in your own creative way. Start by learning about polar bears. Where do they live? What do they eat? How do they survive in cold places?

You may use library books, databases, or trusted websites your teacher or librarian shares with you. Once you've learned a few facts, choose how you want to present your research. You might create a mini poster, a short slide presentation, a fact card, or a drawing with labeled facts. Try to include at least three facts and one picture or diagram.

**WANDA OYE LAS ESTRELLAS: UNA ASTRÓNOMA CIEGO ESCUCHA AL UNIVERSO (WANDA HEARS THE STARS: A BLIND ASTRONOMER LISTENS TO THE UNIVERSE)**



**Wanda oye las estrellas: Una astrónoma ciego escucha al universo (Wanda Hears the Stars: A Blind Astronomer Listens to the Universe)** by Amy S. Hansen with Wanda Diaz Merced, illustrated by Rocio Arreola Mendoza (Charlesbridge 2025)

# ACTIVITY 1

## SONIFICATION SOUNDTRACK

Wanda's sense of hearing allows her to hear things other scientists cannot. Sonification, the process of turning data into sound, is a concept this book focuses on. Use [this website](#) with videos to listen to sonifications put together by NASA. Next, use [this website](#) to discuss and describe in detail the sonification sounds you hear. Lastly, use what you have learned about, pitch, rhythm, speed to create a Story Sonification Soundtrack to the book Wanda Hears the Stars: A Blind Astronomer Hears the Stars.



# ACTIVITY 2

## DIVERSITY IN ASTRONOMY POSTER PROJECT

Students research astronomers from diverse backgrounds, focusing on contributions and challenges overcome. Create posters that include a portrait, discovery, timeline and how their work affects us today. Lead a discussion on equity and representation on why Science matters. Lastly, create astronomer trading cards to share, include astronomer tools and historical and modern astronomers.