

“Every time I paint it serves a purpose—to bring about pride in our Mexican American culture.”

Carmen Lomas Garza



Baile En El Jardín-Dance at Jardín
Cover Illustration
Carmen Lomas Garza

In My Family/En mi familia

Carmen Lomas Garza
Children's Book Press 1996

Grade Levels

K-3

Curriculum Areas

Language Arts • Art

National Language Arts Standards

NL-ENG.K-12.7 EVALUATING DATA

Students conduct research on issues and interests by generating ideas and questions, and by posing problems.

They gather, evaluate, and synthesize data from a variety of sources [e.g., print and non-print texts, and artifacts].

NL-ENG.K-12.8

DEVELOPING RESEARCH SKILLS

Students use a variety of technological and information resources (e.g., libraries, databases, computer networks, video) to gather and synthesize information and to create and communicate knowledge.

National Art Education Standards

NA-VA.4 UNDERSTAND THE VISUAL ARTS IN RELATION TO HISTORY AND CULTURES Grades K-4

Students know that the visual arts have both a history and specific relationship to various cultures.

Students identify specific works of art as belonging to particular cultures, times, and places.

Students demonstrate how history, culture, and the visual arts can influence each other in making and studying works of art.

Objectives

Students may draw upon the ethnic, popular and folk symbols and myths of their cultural heritage for their work.

To introduce to students that celebrations draw upon the influences of other cultures.

Activity

Author's Background

Carmen Lomas Garza was born in Kingsville, Texas in 1948. Her family emigrated to the U.S. in order to escape the tribulations of the Mexican Revolution early in this century. She is the second child of five children. At a very early age she wanted to pursue her dream of becoming an artist. Her family supported her endeavors. Her mother, who inspired Lomas Garza, was also an artist. Lomas Garza received her M.A. from San Francisco State University. Much of Lomas Garza's work focuses on the traditions and daily activities in Mexican-American culture.

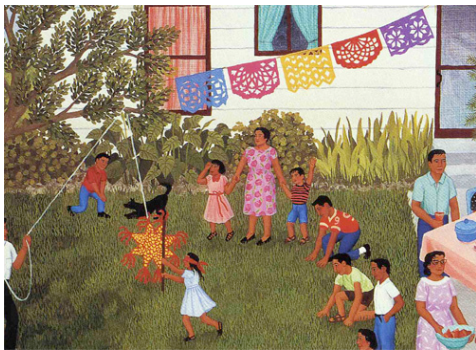
"I was thirteen years old when I decided to become an artist. I taught myself to draw by practicing every day. I drew whatever was in front of me--books, cats, my left hand, my sisters and brothers, chairs, chilies, paper bags, flowers--anything or anybody that would

stay still for a few minutes . . . I have three college degrees. When I was in high school I could hardly wait to graduate so I could go to college and study art." [Carmen Lomas Garza. 1996]

Activity

The Looking Exercise #1 will provide an introduction to celebrations in Mexico and Mexican American families. [Carmen Lomas Garza Teacher Resource Book. Pages 11-12. The San Jose Museum of Art]

LOOKING EXERCISE #1: Barbacoa para Cumpleaños Birthday Barbecue 1993 Carmen Lomas Garza Illustration and Text Pages 10-11



This is my sister Mary Jane's birthday party...

What is going on in this picture? Describe everything you see. What are the people in this painting doing? What is the central figure doing?

Where are they? How many people do you see? What words would you use to describe the colors used in this painting? Why do you think the artist chose these colors? How about the patterns? How would you describe them?

What folk arts are depicted? Have you ever made a piñata? Have you been to a birthday party where you hit a piñata?

Vocabulary

Monitos

Little figures in Spanish language. Garza also uses the term to describe her paintings of family activities.

Garza's precise and minutely detailed monitos, which act like an oral tradition in visual form, provide a glimpse into the rich and vibrant lifestyle of the largest Spanish-speaking cultural group in American society. In this work the monitos form a circle around Garza's sister, the birthday girl, who is playing a popular party game of trying to break a piñata. Each person is involved in his or her own moment of watching, cooking, or socializing. The totality of their actions gives the viewer a sense of a harmonious and festive gathering.

Garza gives us many visual clues that this is a celebration: a piñata in the center of the composition, hanging banderitas made from papel picado in the background, a birthday cake, her father and grandfather working on the barbecue and the very bright and colorful clothes of the monitos. To the clothes, she has added detailed patterns that compliment the intricate cutout designs of the banderitas.



History of the Piñata
Mexico Connect
Maria Elena 1999

About the Piñata

The piñata that usually reminds us of Mexican and Hispanic heritage actually originated from China. Shaped like farm animals and used for agricultural ceremonies, the Chinese piñatas were filled with five different kinds of seeds. The Chinese struck the piñatas with colorful sticks and then burned them. The saved ashes were considered to bring good luck for the year. It is thought that Marco Polo introduced the piñata to the Italians where it was called pignatta, and where it became very popular. This Italian custom spread throughout Europe. Along with other traditions, customs and the religion of their homeland, the Spanish Conquistadors brought the Christmas tradition of the piñata to Mexico. Mexicans adopted these traditions and the piñata soon became one of their own. Mexican artists found other ways of making piñatas using papier-mâché and cardboard.

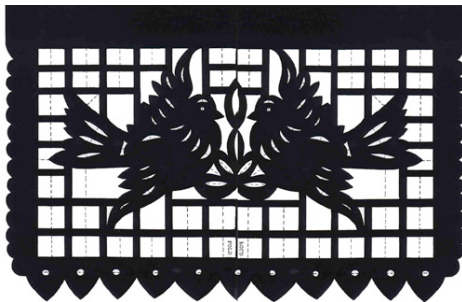
Activity

About the Papel Picado

Punched paper in Spanish language, papel picado is the traditional Mexican folk art of cut paper. Artists use a hammer and chisel to punch designs out of stacks of layered tissue paper-up to 40 layers thick. Garza's papel picados are made one at a time with scissors. Designs can portray people, animals, flowers and lettering. Individual banners are strung together to create festive and colorful decoration for the celebration.

Activity

Create a papel picado. Examples of Mexican Papercutting and techniques can be found in the book, *Mexican Paper-cutting: Simple Techniques for Creating Colorful Cut-Paper Projects* by Kathleen Trenchard.



Papel Picado

Kathleen Trenchard

Mexican Papercutting: Simple Techniques for Creating Colorful Cut-Paper Projects.
New York: Sterling Publishing. 2000

Activity

Garza's art serves as a visual narrative in an oral tradition style. Have students retell a story of a personal experience with their family or friends by creating a composition of their own *monitos* in a painting or a drawing. Have students include visual clues of the location, activity and event they are conveying in the artwork. Now have students write a narrative description about the artwork they have created. Who are the characters and what are they doing?

Activity

The Spanish Conquistadors brought over Piñatas, along with other traditions, customs and religion to Mexico. European settlers influenced much of what makes up Mexican culture today. Research the history, cultures of the people and region of Ancient Mexico and its

surrounding area before the coming of the Spanish.

Activity

The Looking Exercise #2 will provide an introduction to the foods of Mesoamerica. A number of cookbooks and recipes are on the Internet.

Ask students to ask parents about a special family recipe, preferably one made for a family celebration or holiday. Then students will write a story about the recipe, its history, when, how, and why it is made. Students can share these recipes and stories with the class. Afterwards, the class collects all the recipes and stories in an illustrated cookbook that kids take home to their families.

[Carmen Lomas Garza Teacher Resource Book. Pages 11-12. The San Jose Museum of Art]

LOOKING EXERCISE #2: Cleaning Nopalitos Carmen Lomas Garza Illustration and Text Pages 6-7



This is my grandfather, Antonio Lomas. He's shaving off the thorns from freshly cut cactus pads, called nopalitos. Nopalitos are called "the food of last resort."

Research how nopalitos are used today in menus.

Activity

People have argued for 400 years about the truth of the story of La Virgen de Guadalupe. But still there is no doubts millions of Mexicans love her and believe in her. December 12, El Dia de la Virgen de Guadalupe, has become a

national holiday in Mexico since 1859. Read more about the Virgin of Guadalupe in *Pinatas and Smiling Skeletons: Celebrating Mexican Festivals* by Zoe Harris.

**LOOKING EXERCISE #3:
Virgin of Guadalupe
Carmen Lomas Garza
Illustration and Text Page 25**



The Virgin of Guadalupe appeared to the Indian, Juan Diego, outside of Mexico City in 1531.

What is going on in this picture? Read more about the Virgin of Guadalupe.

Resources

Carmichael, Elizabeth and Chloe Sayer. *The Skeleton at the Feast: The Day of the Dead in Mexico*. Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1992.

Cisneros, Sandra. *Hairs/Pelitos*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc. 1994.

Garza, Carmen Lomas. *In my Family/ En mi Familia*. San Francisco, California: Children's Book Press, 2000.

Garza, Carmen Lomas. *Magic Windows/Ventanas Magicas*. San Francisco, California: Children's Book Press. 1999.

Garza, Carmen Lomas. *Making Magic Windows: Creating Cut Paper Projects with Carmen*

Lomas Garza. San Francisco, California: Children's Book Press. 1999.

Harris, Zoe and Suxanne Williams. *Pinatas and Smiling Skeletons: Celebrating Mexican Festivals*. Berkeley, California: Pacific View Press. 1998.

Jablonski, Ramona. *The Paper Cut-Out Design Book*. Owning Mills, Maryland: Stemmer House Publishers. 1976.

Romero, Regina. *Flora's Kitchen: Recipes from a New Mexico Family/ La Cocina de Flora: Recetas de una Familia de Nuevo Mexico*. Tucson, Arizona: Treasure Chest Publications. 1998.

Soto, Gary and Ed Martinez. *Too Many Tamales*. Paper Star. 1996.

Trenchard, Kathleen. *Mexican Paper cutting: Simple Techniques for Creating Colorful Cut-Paper Projects*. Ashville, North Carolina: Lark Books. 2000.

Internet Websites

Carmen Lomas Garza Teachers Guide
www.sjmusart.org/

Carmen Lomas Garza's Webpage
<http://www.carmenlomasgarza.com/>

Hispanic Research Center at Arizona State University
http://mati.eas.asu.edu:8421/ChicanArte/html_pages/garza17.html

Introducing Illustrators-Carmen Lomas Garza
<http://www.rif.org/art/illustrators/garza.msp>

Kemper Art Museum:
<http://www.kemperart.org/clgm.htm>

North Texas Institute for Educators on the Visual Arts
<http://www.art.unt.edu/ntieva/artcurr/latino/clgarza.htm>

North Texas Institute for Educators on the Visual Arts-Papel Picado-The Art of Mexican Cut Paper
http://www.art.unt.edu/ntieva/news/vol_7/issue3/96falp11.htm

Questions and Answers about Cascarones
http://mati.eas.asu.edu:8421/ChicanArte/html_pages/CarmenIssOutl.html

Smith College Museum of Art

<http://www.smith.edu/artmuseum/spectrum/dgarzafull.htm>

Smithsonian Archives of American Art

<http://artarchives.si.edu/oralhist/lomas97.htm>

Smithsonian Institution, National Museum of American Art

<http://nmaaryder.si.edu/webzine/carmen1.htm>

Tamalada-Making Tamales image on-line

<http://www.esperanto.com/Legacy/CLGarza.html>