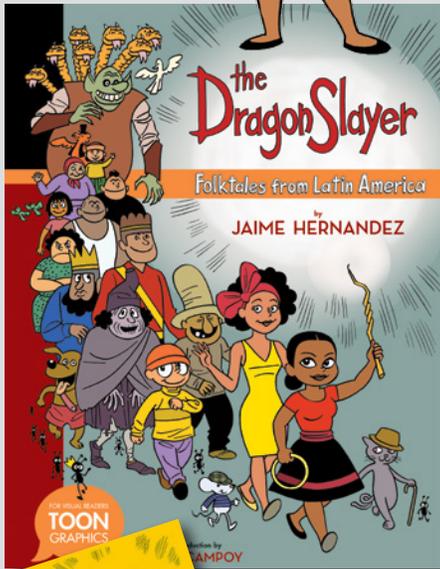




THE DRAGON SLAYER

Folktales from Latin America

CCSS-aligned Lesson Plan & Teacher's Guide



The Dragon Slayer:

Folktales from Latin America

by Jaime Hernandez

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Iru Ba is a long-time TOON Books designer. She believes that stories passed down through generations contain eternal truths that transcend cultures.

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TOON GRAPHICS FOR VISUAL READERS

TOON Graphics are comics and visual narratives that bring the text to life in a way that captures young readers' imaginations and makes them want to read on—and read more. In addition to providing students with the tools to master verbal literacy, each TOON Graphic offers a unique focus on visual learning. The 21st Century has seen a shift where literacy has been redefined to include visual literacy. Our unique lesson plans and teachers' guides help instructors and students alike develop the vocabulary and framework necessary to discuss visual expression, structure, and meaning in the classroom.

For schools that follow the ELA Common Core, TOON Graphics lesson plans offer examples of how to best utilize our books to satisfy a full range of state standards. The Common Core's learning goals outline what a student should know and be able to do at the end of each grade and were created to ensure that all students graduate from high school with the skills and knowledge necessary to succeed in college, career, and life, regardless of where they live. Though this book can be used in any grade, we focused this lesson plan on state standards for grades 4 and 5. Questions included in this guide fulfill the following standards:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY

Reading: Literature (RL).4-5.1-10

Students build skills in reading and comprehending literature independently and proficiently.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY

Reading: Informational Text (RI).4-5.4, 9

Students determine the meaning of general academic and domain-specific words or phrases in a text. Students integrate information from several texts in order to speak knowledgeably on a subject.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY

Speaking and Listening (SL).4-5.1

Students engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher led) with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY

Speaking and Listening (SL).4-5.2

Students summarize a text read aloud or information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY

Speaking and Listening (SL).4-5.4

Students report on a topic or present an opinion, sequencing ideas logically and using appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details to support main ideas or themes.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY

Writing (W).4-5.1

Students write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons and information.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY

Writing (W).4-5.2

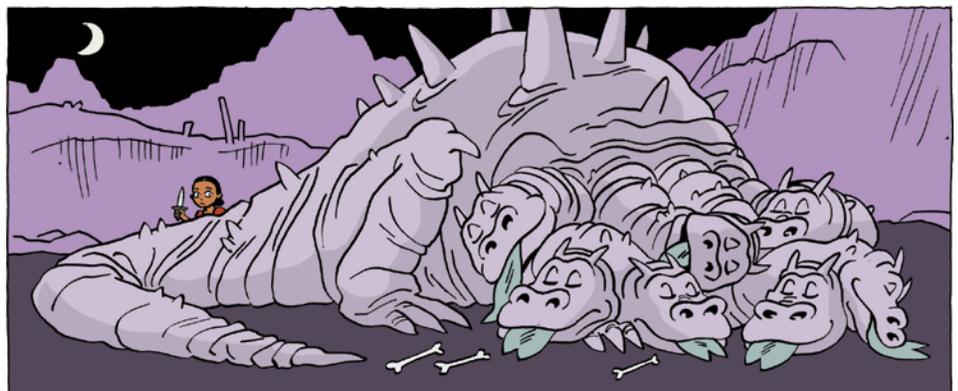
Students write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY

Writing (W).4-5.7

Students conduct short research projects that build knowledge through investigation of different aspects of a topic.

LITERACY IN THE 21ST CENTURY

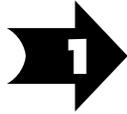




The Dragon Slayer: Folktales from Latin America

Story 1: The Dragon Slayer

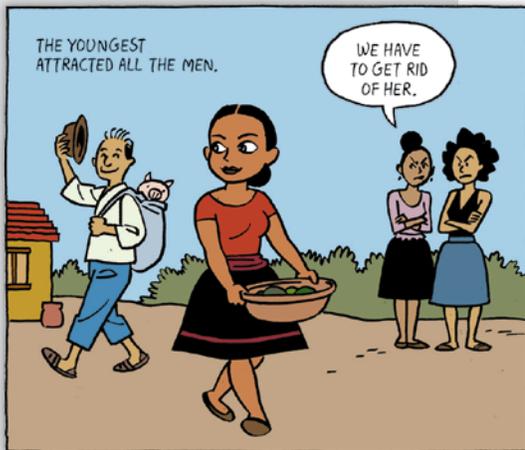
The subject of this lesson plan is the value of empathy and of a good character.



Verbal Expression

- Black = potential questions for lesson plans
- Gray = feedback for teachers.

Themes & Characters



RL.4.1 Refer to details and example in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

RL.4.2 Determine a theme of a story from details in the text; summarize the text.

RL.4.3 Describe in depth a character, setting or event in a story, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., a character's thoughts, words, or actions).

RL.5.1 Quote accurately from a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

RL.5.2 Determine a theme of a story from details in the text, including how the characters in a story or drama respond to challenges; summarize the text.

5.3 Compare and contrast two or more characters, settings, or events in a story, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., how characters interact).

RL.5.7 Analyze how visual and multimedia elements contribute to the meaning, tone, or beauty of a text.

In a comic/graphic novel, the reader gets many clues about the characters from visuals, including body language and the facial expressions. Encourage students to pay attention to the information they're given by the images.

◆ On page 5, panel 2, we learn that the Dragon Slayer's two older sisters are jealous of her because "she attracted all the men." Why do you think she has this power?

The title character wears a happy face (unlike her sisters) and she looks confident in the way she's carrying herself. Examine the differences in body language between her and her sisters. The sisters' arms are crossed (a defensive posture as well as one that shows hostility); their eyebrows are furrowed in disapproval as they scheme.

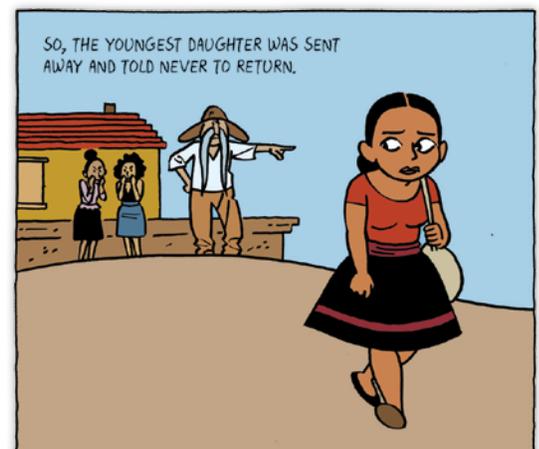
◆ On page 5, panel 5, was the father's decision of sending her away fair? Why? No. He never asked the Dragon Slayer for her side of the story. Even if she had stolen money, family members could forgive each other as acts of love and compassion.

◆ On page 5, panel 6, the Dragon Slayer leaves. Why do you think she did not say anything to defend herself? Is she weak?

No, the Dragon Slayer's choice not to defend herself doesn't come across as weakness as we have seen that she looks confident in the way she carries herself. She may have thought it was not worth it; she may not have wanted to discredit her father. It's also possible she wanted to go away and see the world.

◆ On page 6, panel 6, why did the old woman give her a magic wand? Do you think there is more to this interaction than meets the eye?

The old woman is grateful that the Dragon Slayer shared her food. Therefore, the old woman rewards her for her kindness. Maybe she also thinks that such a young girl needs help to better face the challenges ahead. As mentioned in the book's back





matter, in some versions of this story the old woman is none other than the Virgin Mary, mother of Jesus Christ.

◆ On page 8, panel 6, we learn that the girl and the prince are mutually attracted. Why do you think that happens? What do you think they like about each other?

◆ On page 9, panel 1, how did the Dragon Slayer notice that the King was feeling gloomy and sad? By the expression on his face.

◆ A recurring theme in the *Latino* experience is the celebration of strong women who are independent mothers, sisters, and daughters. They have the inner strength to rise above obstacles and overcome adversity. Does the Dragon Slayer fit into this tradition? Does she have to prove herself?

Yes, she does fit in the tradition, and yes, she has to prove herself. There are multiple examples such as:

Page 5: She doesn't waste her energy on anger when betrayed and journeys into the world on her own.

Page 8, panel 3: She immediately finds work to support herself.

Page 9: When she learns the prince may be eaten by a dragon, she takes the initiative to save him on her own.

Page 11, panel 2: When a man tries to take credit for killing the dragon, she stands up for herself and declares the truth.

Page 11, panel 6: When she says, "Kings don't go back on their words," she's clearly not afraid to speak her mind and be critical of even very powerful people.

Page 12: When she realizes the prince has gone to war despite not having battle training, she again takes the initiative to save the prince.

◆ What other themes apart from the celebration of women's strength are presented in this folktale?

Having faith in oneself versus giving into fear. Lying versus being truthful. Choosing a life partner based on love versus social class.

◆ Summarize the character of the Dragon Slayer.

She is determined, strong, and not afraid to take risks.

She is smart and resourceful.

She is brave.

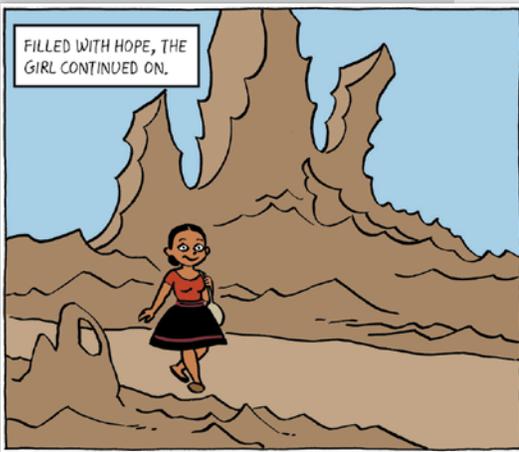
She is kind and generous.

◆ Would you describe the Dragon Slayer as a traditional or typical female character? Why or why not? Is she different from other female characters in the story? Is the prince different from other male characters in the story?

◆ What do you think the moral of "The Dragon Slayer" folktale is? Generosity and kindness are rewarded. You have to be willing to fight for what you believe in.

◆ How much of her success is due to the power of the wand and how much is due to the quality of her character?

The magic wand helps her along in her life, but it just a tool. The real factor here is the Dragon Slayer's courage, kindness, and strong will.





Visual Expression

RL.4.5 Explain major differences between poems, drama, prose, etc. Refer to the structural elements when writing or speaking about a text.

RL.4.7 Make connections between the text of a story or drama and a visual or oral presentation of the text, identifying where each version reflects specific descriptions and directions in the text.

RL.5.7 Analyze how visual and multimedia elements contribute to the meaning, tone, or beauty of a text.

RI.5.5 Explain how a series of chapters, scenes, stanzas, etc., fits together to provide the overall structure of a story.

RI.4.4 Determine the meaning of general academic and domain-specific words or phrases in a text. (Here, art and comics vocabulary)

RI.5.4 Determine the meaning of general academic and domain-specific words or phrases in a text. (Here, art and comics vocabulary)



Color & Drawing

◆ Most of the story is colored in calm hues of brown, green and blue. However, there are some sudden changes to purple and red. How do the color changes emphasize what is happening, and what effect do they have on the reader?

(Blue and green are considered cool colors whereas yellow, orange, and red are warm.) The cool and neutral color palette is the baseline for the story. The shifts to warm colors mark major events. Each color scheme conveys a mood, quiet or violent. (You might want to point out that the colorist, Ala Lee, is credited on page 2. Sometimes many people work on a comic.)

◆ Why does the facial expression of the characters, specially their eyes, change through the tale?

To express the different moods of the characters. Also, the author uses the characters' eyes to guide the reader throughout: readers will follow what the characters are looking at.

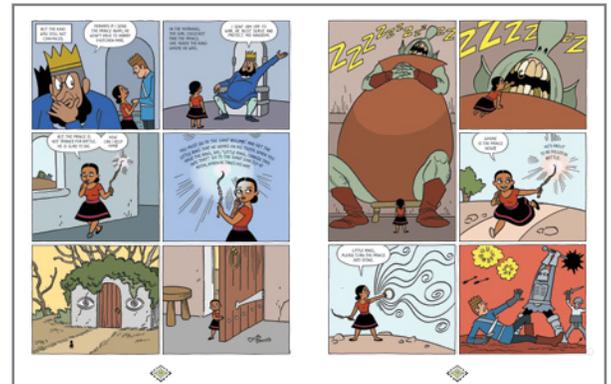
Point out that in comics, the cartoonist has to make the character recognizable and also able to convey many different emotions. One way the author makes characters instantly recognizable is to dress them the same way most of the time. Have students describe each character's "trademark" outfit.

A masterful cartoonist like Jaime Hernandez is able to convey a wealth of emotion with just a few lines. Give students the attached activity sheet, in which they are asked to find panels with different facial expressions of the Dragon Slayer and to write adjectives describing the feelings each one conveys.

Page Layout & Panels

◆ By looking at the overall layout of the pages, we can see that they are mostly divided into six-panel grids, with the exception of two with larger panels. What is the effect of the six-panel grids? What is the effect of the two larger panels?

The six-panel grids lend uniformity and manage pacing of the story. The two larger panels add excitement by emphasizing the tremendous scale of the story's two major foes. By using this narrative device sparingly, the effect is more dramatic.



THE DRAGON SLAYER: FOLKTALES FROM LATIN AMERICA • ACTIVITY SHEET: **FACIAL EXPRESSIONS**

Find the part of the story where each of these panels comes from. Write an adjective on the line below each one to describe the emotion portrayed.

NAME _____



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Setting

◆ Folktales are linked to specific places, cultures, and periods of time. We can learn about the setting of a story by examining the architecture, clothing, food, and relationships between characters. What is the setting for this story? Since this is a comic, pay attention to the visual clues.

This story is a Mexican folktale as we can infer from the physical appearance and dress of the main character, her sisters, and her father. The food, tortillas, is a typical dish from Latin America. The family looks like a peasant family from the late 19th century, but this iconography is mixed with medieval elements such as a king, a prince, a palace, servants, and armored knights. See the introduction by F. Isabel Campoy on page 3, "The Latin American heritage is richly diverse, a unique blend of Old World and New..."



Further Research

RL.4.9 Compare and contrast the treatment of similar themes and topics (e.g., opposition of good and evil) and patterns of events (e.g., the quest) in stories, myths, and traditional literature from different cultures.

RI.4.5.9 Integrate information from several texts on the same topic in order to write or speak about the subject knowledgeably.

W.4.5.1 Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting point of view with reasons and information.

W.4.5.2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.

W.4.5.3 Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.

W.4.5.7 Conduct short research projects that build knowledge through investigation of different aspects of a topic.

Women in Power

◆ Have students research the number of women in leadership positions in the United States. Ask them to brainstorm ideas on why women occupy so few leadership positions. Have them think about powerful women in their lives and their role models.

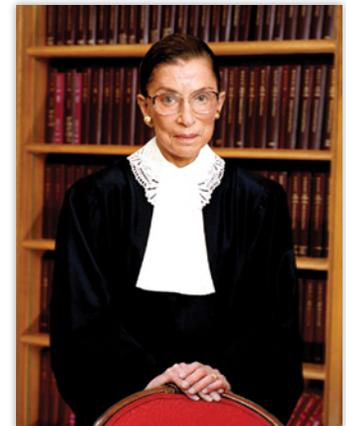
◆ In the classic theme of fighting a dragon, a hero has to save a maiden in distress. However, in *The Dragon Slayer* the roles are reversed. Can you think of any other stories in tales, books, comics, or movies in which traditional male and female roles are presented in a different way?



Media Literacy

◆ Have students analyze how gender is portrayed in the media. Help students discuss common stereotypes. Ask them how they feel when people make incorrect assumptions about them.

◆ As a bonus, have students research the life of Ruth Bader Ginsburg, co-founder of the Women's Rights Project at the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) and the second female judge of the Supreme Court. The documentary titled *RBG* (2018), about her life, may prove especially inspiring for female students. Then discuss the following anecdote. Ginsburg recalls that her mother, who died of cancer when she graduated from high school, gave her two pieces of advice. Be a lady, which meant not giving in to unnecessary emotion, such as anger. And be independent. That meant, Ginsburg said, it will be great if Prince Charming comes along, but be prepared to fend for yourself if not.



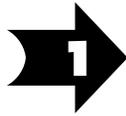
PHOTOGRAPH OF RUTH BADER GINSBURG, IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN UNDER THE TERMS OF TITLE 17, CHAPTER 1, SECTION 105 OF THE US CODE.



The Dragon Slayer: Folktales from Latin America

Story 2: *Martina Martínez and Pérez the Mouse*

The subject of this lesson plan is the value of coming to the help of others rather than just show sympathy.



Verbal Expression

- Black = potential questions for lesson plans
- Gray = feedback for teachers.

Themes & Characters

◆ What is the moral or lesson of this tale?

Sympathy is much easier to give than actual help. In order to successfully care for others, one must practice being less self-centered and more emotionally grounded. That allows you to take a step back and not waste time on tears when action needs to be taken..

◆ How would you describe Martina's personality?

Martina is free-spirited but also vain and self-centered. Most people would probably save their new ribbon to wear on the next appropriate occasion or buy something more practical than a ribbon in the first place.

◆ Martina chooses Ratón Pérez over her other suitors. Why do you think she chooses him and not Señor Gato, Señor Perro, or Señor Gallo?

Because he does not ask her to marry directly, but to go out with him. He has been meaning to ask her for a long time, but he is shy and was afraid of asking her.

It's worth analyzing the animal character types. Señor Gato is a cat. Cats hunt rodents (which protects homes from pests), and they offer companionship. Señor Perro is a dog, so he protects the home from invaders and also offers companionship. Señor Gallo, the rooster, wakes everyone up in the morning and helps to create the next generation of baby chicks. But what does a mouse do for a home?

◆ Why do you think the two birds cut off their beaks, the mourning dove cuts off her tail, the fountain stops her water, and Mariquita breaks her water jar? Are these actions useful to Martina or Ratón Pérez?

To show empathy and sympathy towards Martina's loss and pain. These actions reflect that they feel sorry for her and want to share her pain, but they are not practical because they do not provide any assistance.

◆ What is the twist or surprise ending of this fable?

Ratón Pérez is actually not yet dead yet, and Doña Pepa rescues him.

◆ Match each character with the adjectives that best define him/her, and



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RL.4.2 Determine a theme of a story from details in the text; summarize the text.

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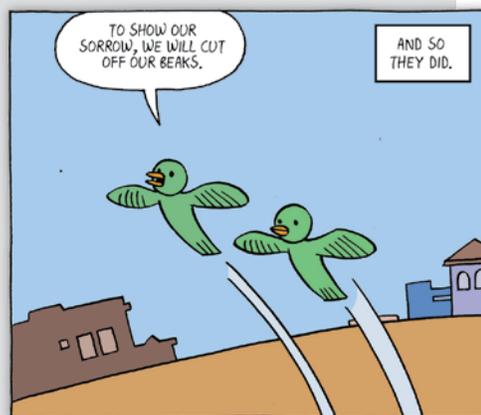
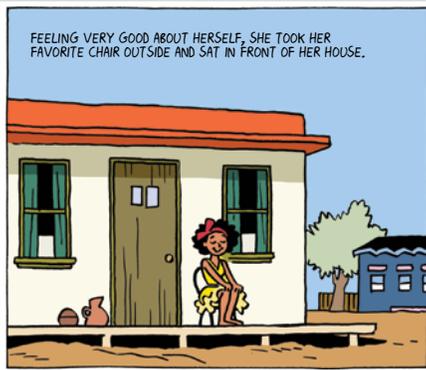
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5.3 Compare and contrast two or more characters, settings, or events in a story, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., how characters interact).

RL.5.7 Analyze how visual and multimedia elements contribute to the meaning, tone, or beauty of a text.





find a panel that support your answer:

CHARACTER	PERSONALITY	SUPPORTING PANEL
Martina Martínez	Vain and shallow	p.17 panel 2
Ratón Pérez	Polite, curious, disobedient	p.19 panel 4
Mariquita	Self-centered	p.24 panel 2
Doña Pepa	Wise and action-oriented	p.25 panel 2

Literary Devices

◆ Fables are short stories that have distinctive features. Look at the list below and discuss how they either apply to or appear in the story.

Moral lesson: The moral of this story is to stay grounded and offer help when action can be taken. To think first of what you can do for others (which is selfless and useful) instead of feeling sorry for yourself (which is selfish and useless).

Humor: Martina, a human, marries a tiny mouse.

Problem or dilemma (usually caused by a character trait or flaw): Ratón Pérez's gluttony and disobedience cause the central problem in the story.

Resolution: Doña Pepa rescues Ratón Pérez and saves his life.

Anthropomorphism (animals and objects exhibiting human characteristics): Fables often use animals who can speak or reason as the main characters. All the animals, as well as a fountain, in this story have human emotions.

Simple structure (a fable follows the classic narrative structure of setup, conflict: and resolution): The setup introduces the main plot elements on pages 16 through 19, the conflict arises on pages 20-24, and a resolution is found on page 25.

◆ As fables are often passed down through oral tradition, poetry helps to make them more entertaining and memorable. Ask your students to write their own poem version of the story.

This example is written from Mariquita's perspective:

*Ratón Pérez fell into the soup,
reaching for a golden onion
Martina Martínez is crying her heart out,
And to show our sorrow,
the little birds cut off their beaks,
the mourning dove her tail,
the fountain stopped her water from flowing,
and I broke my clay jar.*

◆ Ask students to write a poem about the story that utilizes a pattern of repetition.

The three suitors propose to Martina and then are rejected by her in a very similar, almost identical way that is presented to the reader in a recurrent 4-panel sequence pattern on p. 17 panels 2-6 (for the first suitor, Señor Gato), on p. 18 panels 1-4 (for the second suitor, Señor Perro), and last on page 18, panels 5-6, page 19, panels 1-2 (for the third suitor, Señor Gallo). Then, that pattern is broken by Ratón Pérez on p. 19, panels 3-6. This repetition also applies to the way the villagers show sympathy by harming themselves until Doña Pepa breaks the pattern.

Point out to students that poetry often uses repetition and rhyming patterns that work in a similar way..

RL.4.5 Explain major differences between poems, drama, prose, etc. Refer to the structural elements when writing or speaking about a text.

RL.4.7 Make connections between the text of a story or drama and a visual or oral presentation of the text, identifying where each version reflects specific descriptions and directions in the text.

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RL.5.5 Explain how a series of chapters, scenes, stanzas, etc., fits together to provide the overall structure of a story.

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Page Layout, Panels, Balloons & Lettering

◆ Looking at the overall page layout, we see that they are mostly divided into six-panel grids, with some exceptions. What are the exceptions and what is their effect on the storytelling?

The six-panel grid gives a uniform pace to the narrative. Panels 1 through 6 on p. 21 break the grid to show a more fluid sequence. The three panels in a row have the effect of expanding time. They imply that more action occurs within a similar time frame. The last big panel on p. 25, panel 6, also stands out. It shows all the characters together at once, and it shows them in silhouette. It has more graphic weight. In other words, it draws the eye because of the black-filled images, high color contrast, and the different shape and size of the panel.



The 6-panel grid



Page 25, top three panels



Page 25, panel 6



Page 22, panel 4

◆ Which panels in the story would you say have greater graphic weight than the others, and why?

Page 22, panel 4; page 23, panel 5; and page 25, panel 6. The use of black silhouettes creates high contrast that draws the reader's attention. Any panel that grabs the reader's eye more than the rest as a result of distinct visual devices would be a correct answer. Almost all of page 21 is visually distinct because of the break in the grid, the close-ups, and the bold, white plume of steam that runs throughout.

◆ Comics can uniquely depict onomatopoeic sound effects in a way that enhance the sound in the reader's mind. Find the panels in which the cartoonist has used them and discuss the effect they have.

On p. 17 panel 5, p. 18 panel 3, p. 19 panel 1, p. 21 panel 1, p. 22 panel 1. These sound effects provide an aural accompaniment to a narrative sequence and help the reader more fully understand what is happening.

◆ What other sounds effects, apart from onomatopoeic sounds, are used in this book? Musical notes represent the sound of music on page 25.

◆ Motion lines are another useful tool cartoonists use to enhance a story. Ask students to find examples.

P. 16 panel 1, p. 21 panel 7, p. 22 panels 3 and 5, p. 24 panels 2 and 6, p. 25 panel 3.



Color & Drawings

◆ Examine the way the cartoonist, Jaime Hernandez, has depicted the three female characters: Martina, Mariquita, and Doña Pepa. What can you infer about them from their facial expressions, body language, and style of dress?



◆ Ask students to analyze the story's illustration style. It will be helpful to guide them with the following questions.

Is the line art sketchy, with lots of little lines, or fluid strokes?

Are the areas of color shaded or flat?

Is the style old-fashioned (like something from the past) or modern (like images produced more recently)? Remind them that you're referring to the

way it's drawn, not whether the story is from the past.

Are the images cluttered or clean?

Is it playful or serious?



Further Research

RI.4.9 Compare and contrast the treatment of similar themes and topics (e.g., opposition of good and evil) and patterns of events (e.g., the quest) in stories, myths, and traditional literature from different cultures.

RI.4.5.9 Integrate information from several texts on the same topic in order to write or speak about the subject knowledgeably.

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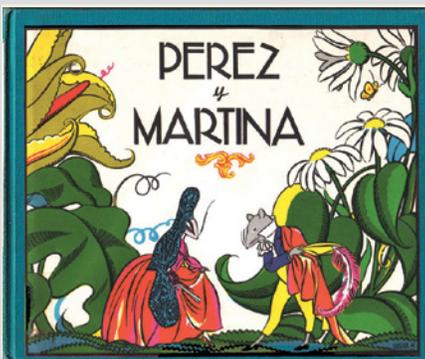
Variations on "Martina Martínez and Ratón Pérez the Mouse"

◆ "Martina Martínez and Ratón Pérez" is a popular Hispanic fable, of which there are many different retellings. In some adaptations Martina Martínez is an ant, a cockroach, or a butterfly rather than a rat, and in others Ratón Pérez is saved by an owl. Ask students to find other versions, then compare and contrast between retellings. How do they think the differences came about, and why? Do these variations change the moral of the story?

Fables vs. Fairytales

◆ Fables and fairytales are both stories aimed at children, but they have some key differences summarized in the chart below.

	Fable	Fairytale	Both
Children are the primary audience.			x
Sharing a moral lesson is the story's main objective.	x		
Entertainment is the story's main objective.		x	
Characters tend to be animals or embodiments of elements of nature.	x		
There tend to be fantastical and magical characters, such as witches, fairies, dwarfs, etc.		x	
Aesop's stories are popular examples.	x		
Grimm Brothers' stories are popular examples.		x	
These stories are present in nearly all civilizations.			x
These stories are examples of traditional storytelling.			x
A battle between good and evil always takes place.		x	

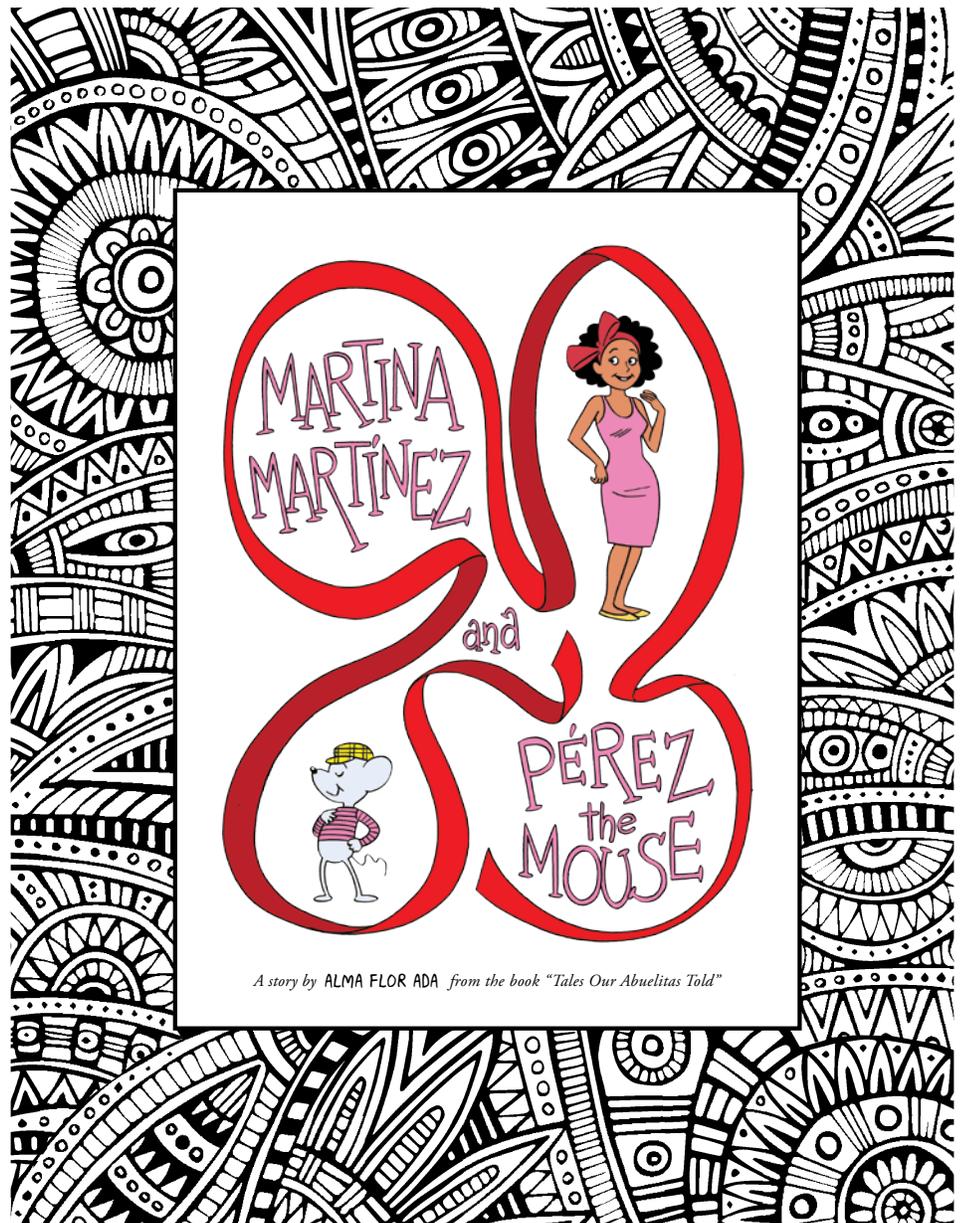




◆ Ask students to research the following stories and explain whether they are fables or fairytales based on the table above.

Beauty and the Beast	Fairytale
The Tortoise and the Hare	Fable
Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs	Fairytale
The Bat and the Weasels	Fable
The Princess and the Pea	Fairytale
The Monkey and the Camel	Fable
The Snow Queen	Fairytale
The Ass in the Lion's Skin	Fable
Sleeping Beauty	Fairytale
Cinderella	Fairytale
The Fox and the Hedgehog	Fable
The Sick Lion	Fable

◆ Point out the role of the title page for each of the three stories in the book. Ask students to conceive of and sketch out ideas for a book cover or title page that would represent this story.



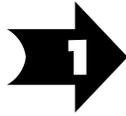
SL.4-5.2
Students summarize a text read aloud or information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.



The Dragon Slayer: Folktales from Latin America

Story 3: Tup and the Ants

The subject of this lesson plan is the value of cleverness and of not following instructions literally.



Verbal Expression

- Black = potential questions for lesson plans
- Gray = feedback for teachers.

Themes & Characters

- RL.4.1** Refer to details and example in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.
- RL.4.2** Determine a theme of a story from details in the text; summarize the text.
- RL.4.3** Describe in depth a character, setting or event in a story, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., a character's thoughts, words, or actions).
- RL.4.6** Compare and contrast the point of view from which different stories are narrated, including the difference between first- and third-person narrations.
- RL.5.2** Determine a theme of a story from details in the text, including how the characters in a story or drama respond to challenges; summarize the text.
- RL.5.3** Compare and contrast two or more characters, settings, or events in a story, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., how characters interact).
- RL.5.7** Analyze how visual and multimedia elements contribute to the meaning, tone, or beauty of a text.
- RI.4.5** Describe the overall structure (e.g., chronology, comparison, cause/effect, problem/solution) of events, ideas, concepts, or information in a text or part of a text.

- ◆ How would you describe Tup's personality? Which panels support your opinion?
Lazy (page 27, panel 6); clever (page 31, panel 4); bold and somewhat violent with the ants (page 30, panel 3)
- ◆ What kind of negative adjectives are used to refer to Tup?
Idle, lazy, worthless.
- ◆ Could you find any other synonyms for lazy?
Inactive, indolent, slothful, workshy.
- ◆ How does Tup's appearance differ from that of his brothers?
Tup is much shorter and less muscular than his brothers. He wears more modern clothes, like a cap.
- ◆ The two older brothers behave in the same way and look almost the same. Why?
They represent people who don't think for themselves. They follow orders literally, even when they don't understand what they have to do. They look almost the same to reflect their lack of individuality.
- ◆ How does Tup's family feel about him and how do they treat him?
Tup's family assumes that he's lazy and treats him accordingly. Even before checking the crops, his father-in-law assumed that he was not doing any work. They punish him through insults and by giving him smaller portions of food.
- ◆ Match each character with the adjective that best defines him/her and find a panel to support your answer: (only one example is given below but there are many more.)



CHARACTER	PERSONALITY	SUPPORTING PANEL
Tup	Lazy	p. 27 panel 6
Brothers	Obedient	p. 28 panel 4
Ants	Hard-working	p. 33 panel 6
Father-in-law	Bossy	p. 28 panel 1

- ◆ What kind of family relationships are portrayed in this folktale? Do men and women have different roles?



It is a traditional farmer family. Men and women have very different roles: men go to work the fields, and women are in charge of household duties. Sons and daughters have to obey their parents or elders and do as they say.

◆ Food is a key and recurring motif in this folktale. Why?

Tup and his brothers are rewarded with food for doing work. The quantity and quality of the food they receive depends on how productive

they've been. Food is a basic need for any living creature, even more so in societies that rely heavily on agriculture to survive. Tup and his brothers have an enormous responsibility: to grow enough corn to feed the whole family. The parents-in-law use food as a tool to control their sons-in-law.

◆ What is the twist or surprise ending of this folktale?

Tup is the only one who has grown enough corn to feed the family. For the first time, they praise him and offer him a big feast and serve him chicken.

◆ What is the moral or lesson of this folktale?

The moral of the story seem a bit ambiguous at first, since the lazy guy gets rewarded. But while Tup's brothers contribute to the family's efforts through their physical strength, Tup contributes by coming up with new ideas. There's something to be said for being smart and using one's mind. Tup is clever enough to trade food for labor. He establishes a partnership with the ants, and eventually this pays off.

◆ Can you think of any other purpose this story may serve beyond its moral lesson?

It serves the practical purpose of imparting the fundamentals of farming techniques that date back to the Mayans and Aztecs. It's an entertaining way to pass on information through generations, and the humor makes the information easier to assimilate.

◆ Can you explain the method Tup's family uses to plant and harvest corn?

First, farmers cut down trees and plants, and the entire area to be planted is burned down. Then, the farmers plant the corn seeds on the resulting rich ash. When the corn is fully grown, it is harvested and roasted in earth ovens

Literary Devices

◆ The ants in this folktale can speak and reason. What is the name of this literary device?

Anthropomorphism: The attribution of human traits, emotions or intentions to nonhuman entities.

◆ A common element in folktales is the repetition of a pattern/action. Does this narrative rule apply to this folktale?

Yes, it does. The three brothers go to the fields four times, repeating the same sequence: first they are sent to the field with food, where they have to complete a task, then they come back and they receive more food. Folktales are passed down orally, and repetitive structures make stories easier to remember. They also help emphasize ideas, and they contribute to dramatic effects.



◆ Folktales tend to share some common characteristics. Do you think the following apply to "Tup and the Ants?"

Flat characters with exaggerated characteristics	Yes
The hero/heroine is usually honorable, courageous, unselfish, and caring	No
The hero/heroine has a special power	No
At the end, the hero is rewarded	Yes
Takes place in the past (usually long ago)	Yes
The plot is simple, though interesting	Yes
It is narrated in the first person	No
It is narrated in the third person	Yes
Reflects on human strengths and weaknesses	Yes
The reader is led to new insights	Yes



Visual Expression

RL.4.5 Explain major differences between poems, drama, prose, etc. Refer to the structural elements when writing or speaking about a text.

RL.4.7 Make connections between the text of a story or drama and a visual or oral presentation of the text, identifying where each version reflects specific descriptions and directions in the text.

RL.5.7 Analyze how visual and multimedia elements contribute to the meaning, tone, or beauty of a text.

RI.5.5 Explain how a series of chapters, scenes, stanzas, etc., fits together to provide the overall structure of a story.

RI.4.4 Determine the meaning of general academic and domain-specific words or phrases in a text. (Here, art and comics vocabulary)

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Color & Drawings

◆ How would you describe the style of the cartoonist's drawings?

Jaime Hernandez uses clean, sharp lines and a spare and elegant drawing style. It's "cartoony" rather than realistic and looks somewhat like animation.

◆ What is the predominant approach to color in this story?

The colorist, Ala Lee, uses a variety of flat colors in pastel shades.

◆ How does the author notice the passage of time?

Some panels have a text box or caption box indicating the passing of time (soon..., shortly after..., the time came to..., to last three days..., several days later..., when it was time to sow..., after planting..., the next day...). In some instances, only the darker colors indicate that it is nighttime.

◆ Comics convey mood, emotion and relevance through both textual and visual elements. Choose a few panels and analyze the use of shading, colors, and shifting perspective to convey the mood and emotion of the different characters. What mood is the cartoonist trying to evoke? How do the mood and emotions change throughout the story? What elements are emphasized by the framing and/or perspective?

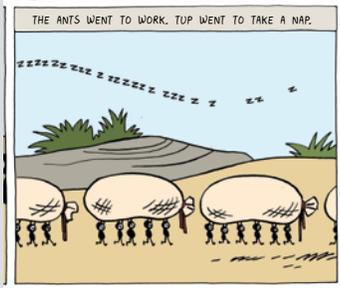
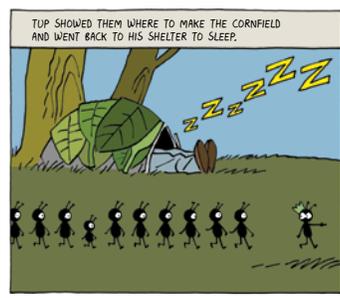


Page Layout, Panels, Balloons & Lettering

◆ By looking at the overall layout of the pages, we can see that they are mostly divided into a six-panel grid with the exception of two big panels. In which pages can you find these two panels? What do they mean?

The six-panel grid gives uniformity to the story and an even pace to the narrative. The first big panel is on page 32, to show the big field burning, and the second one is the last panel of the story, to show the big field again but this time with the corn ready to be harvested, establishing the contrast between the two images.

◆ An important characteristic of graphic stories that is unique to comics is the use of onomatopoeic sound effects. However, there is only one example of onomatopoeia used in "Tup and the Ants," although it's repeated throughout. Find the panels where the cartoonist has used it and discuss its effect.



Further Research

Maize: The Foundation of a Culture



RI.4-5.9 Integrate information from several texts on the same topic in order to write or speak about the subject knowledgeably.

W.4-5.1 Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting point of view with reasons and information.

W.4-5.2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.

W.4-5.7 Conduct short research projects that build knowledge through investigation of different aspects of a topic.



DIEGO RIVERA

Mujer moliendo maíz / Woman Grinding Maize, by Diego Riviera (1924).



The only onomatopoeic sign used is the ZZZZZ to represent the act of sleeping. It is used as a graphic element. The special lettering draws attention to it, and reinforces the impact of what is happening.

◆ The colorist, Ala Lee, decided to style captions in their own boxes with a beige background at the top of panels, whereas in the other two stories they simply float over the existing background. Why do you think Ala made this choice?

There are considerably more captions in this story, which makes the third-person narrator's voice feel more significant. The distinct look reflects this feeling.

Setting

◆ Folktales are linked to specific places, times, and cultures. Can you guess the setting of this story? What clues support your idea?

This folktale takes place in a rural area, probably in Mexico. Tup's father-in-law wears a wide-brimmed straw hat, whose style originated in Mexico. The food they eat is classic Mexican food: tortillas and corn soup. We know they're in a rural area because the characters are farmers. You might also point out the Aztec and Maya motifs on page 3 and throughout the book. (The diversity and widespread geographic distribution of Latin America stories is discussed in the introduction.)

◆ Cultural Heritage

For Mexican people, corn/maize is not just a commodity. Growing maize is a national heritage with deep symbolic values. Research why corn has been the main crop in Mexico since ancient times, and then write a short essay on the importance of corn.

◆ Art

Mexican artist Diego Rivera depicted the traditional methods for farming corn in many of his murals. Research his work to find examples. Describe what you see, what you feel when you look at them, and what you believe the artist is trying to convey. The following two paintings are ideal for this exercise: *La fiesta del maíz / The Maize Festival* (1924); *Mujer moliendo maíz / Woman Grinding Maize* (1924).

◆ Environmental Studies

More and more, the value of ancient techniques of all sorts are being rediscovered in modern societies. Ask students to research the small-scale farming technique called *milpa*, which produces relatively large crop yields while avoiding the use of artificial pesticides and fertilizers. Have them describe the process to fellow students.