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# BORREGUITA AND THE COYOTE

Author: Verna Aardema  
Illustrator: Petra Mathers  
Publisher: Random House

## THEME:

Music, art, stories, and language can reflect culture—in this case, the culture of a Mexican American community.

## PROGRAM SUMMARY:

A little lamb becomes very clever to keep a coyote from eating her up.

This book introduces viewers to Mexican American culture which is reflected in music, art, stories and language. LeVar spends time with a family who has made guitars for three generations, visits a mural painter and her students who are working on self portraits, and joins Los Lobos as they share their music and cultural ties.

## TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION:

Discuss with the students how it is possible that a lamb, an animal that is smaller and weaker than a coyote, was able to save herself from being eaten.

Discuss the meaning of “folktale” and the use of “retold by” in reference to the author. Distinguish this as a type of literature. Have students identify other folktales they have heard. Locate Mexico on a map as the source of *Borreguita and the Coyote*.

As appropriate to the classroom community, discuss students’ individual cultural traditions, especially those relating to celebration of special days, family stories, foods, etc.

Discuss ways in which items from Mexican culture have become integrated into our lives—food, language, music, etc.

## CURRICULUM EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

Obtain a copy of the book and read it to the class. It contains many words and phrases that are sound effects. Allow the students to supply the sound effects as you read the story.

Begin a glossary of Spanish words. List those from the program and those listed at the beginning of the book. Add familiar words such as color and number words, people and animal words, and common phrases. Keep the glossary in a place where it can be added to as students learn new words. Use Spanish words and phrases routinely in the classroom.

Listen to some music by Los Lobos. Have the students describe how the music makes them feel. Invite them to move creatively to the music. Revisit the program segment in which the group describes and demonstrates some of their instruments. Listen to the music again and encourage students to try to pick out the instruments they hear.

Explore the question, “In what ways can we tell stories besides reading them in books?” Identify art and music as two ways. Working with the art teacher, locate photos of paintings or murals that tell a story and discuss them with the class. With the assistance of the music teacher, locate songs which tell a story and listen to and/or sing some of them. Discuss the story elements in the songs.

Working with the art teacher, locate some examples (prints or books) of Mexican art. Compare the features of the artwork with the endpaper illustrations in *Borreguita and the Coyote*. Look for similarities of motifs. Discuss with students how a book illustrator often does research in such areas as landscape, clothing, architecture, people, and cultural traditions, before doing the illustrations.

Have students make stick puppets of the lamb and coyote and scenery cards for individual storytelling. To make a scenery card, they will need a piece of tagboard, approximate size 9 x 12 inches. They need to identify two scenes from the story in which most of the action takes place. In *Borreguita and the Coyote*, an outdoor scene showing the mountains, and a water scene of the river would be good choices. Have them draw one scene on each side of the tagboard. Punch two holes at the top and tie string or yarn cut to a length that allows the scenery card to hang comfortably around the neck of the storyteller, horizontally across the child’s chest. Students then tell the story by holding a stick puppet in each hand in front of the scenery card, flipping the card around when it is necessary to change the scene.

Obtain a copy of the book *The Tale of Rabbit and Coyote* by Tony Johnston (Putnam). In this book, Rabbit uses some of the same tricks (and a few more) that Borreguita uses to outwit the coyote. After hearing both stories, have the class make a chart comparing and contrasting the two stories.

Discuss the concepts of “prey” and “predator.” Have students brainstorm lists of animals that are considered predators and animals that are typically their prey.

Cinco de Mayo (May 5) is a time of fiesta in Mexico, in celebration of a famous battle fought against French invaders on that date in 1862. The Mexican Army, although the underdog, won the battle, and Mexico retained its freedom. Have students compare how the people of Mexico celebrate Cinco de Mayo with ways that people of the United States honor freedom on



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the Fourth of July. Invite them to find out what they can about the history of the day and the foods, decorations, family activities, public events, special performances, and other characteristics of the fiesta surrounding Cinco de Mayo. Use a chart to record their findings about Cinco de Mayo on one side and their experiences with the Fourth of July on the other.

**RELATED THEMES:**

cultural diversity  
food chain  
storytelling  
Spanish language

**RELATED READING RAINBOW PROGRAMS:**

Program #45 — My Little Island  
Program #85 — Sophie And Lou

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR:**

Verna Aardema is a storyteller of traditional tales whose adaptations of cultural variants have won numerous awards. Her *Bringing the Rain to Kapiti Plain* is a **Reading Rainbow** Feature book. She lives with her husband in Florida.

**ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR:**

Petra Mathers grew up in Germany and moved to the United States as an adult. She has no formal training in art, but states that she “has to be painting all the time to be happy.” Her work has also been featured on **Reading Rainbow** in *Sophie and Lou*. Petra Mathers now makes her home in Portland, Oregon.

**BOOKS REVIEWED BY CHILDREN:**

COYOTE DREAMS  
by Susan Nunes, illus. by Ronald Himler (Simon Schuster)

DIEGO  
by Jonah Winter, illus. by Jeanette Winter (Random House)

THE THREE LITTLE JAVELINAS  
by Susan Lowell, illus. by Jim Harris (Northland)

**SUPPLEMENTARY BOOKLIST:**

HELLO, AMIGOS!  
by Tricia Brown, photographs by Fran Ortiz (Henry Holt)

A DAY’S WORK  
by Eve Bunting, illus. by Ronald Himler (Clarion)

THE LITTLE RED ANT AND THE GREAT BIG CRUMB: A MEXICAN FABLE  
retold by Shirley Climo, illus. by Francisco X. Mora (Clarion)

FAMILY PICTURES

by Carmen Lomas Garza (Children’s Book Press)

IN ROSA’S MEXICO

by Campbell Geeslin, illus. by Andrea Arroyo (Knopf)

MY MEXICO-MÉXICO MÍO.

by Tony Johnston, illus. by F. John Sierra. (Putnam)

THE TALE OF RABBIT AND COYOTE

by Tony Johnston, illus. by Tomie dePaola (Putnam)

UNO, DOS, TRES; ONE, TWO, THREE

by Pat Mora, illus. by Barbara Lavallee (Clarion)

UNCLE NACHO’S HAT

by Harriet Rohmer, illus. by Mira Reisberg (Children’s Book Press)

THE OLD MAN & HIS DOOR

by Gary Soto, illus. by Joe Cepeda (Putnam)

SNAPSHOTS FROM THE WEDDING

by Gary Soto, illus. by Stephanie Garcia (Putnam)

LA BODA

by Nancy Van Laan, illus. by Andrea Arroyo (Little, Brown)

