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SLIS 5960.001
5/22/02

Multicultural Literature Activity

Elementary Book:

Too Many Tamales - Gary Soto 1992

Notable Children's Trade Book in the Field of Social Studies

This is story of a little girl named Maria who wanted to help her mom makes tamales. Her mom told Maria that she could mix the dough to make the tamales. Maria wanted so much to be like her mom. She even wanted to wear her mom's wedding ring. While her mom left her unattended Maria decides to put her ring. Maria started to mix the dough and later realized that the ring was missing. By then the tamales had been made and she didn't know what to do. She decided that she and her friends were going to eat the tamales one by one to see which one had the ring. Finally all of the tamales had been eaten and no sign of the ring. They had doubt that maybe one of them had eaten the ring while eating the tamales. Maria finally decides to confess to her mom about the missing ring but just as she was going to tell her mom she noticed that her mom had the ring.

Gary Soto- Author

He is known for his writings on the Mexican American cultures. He is from Fresno, California. Gary writes poems, essays, and also right fiction books. Some of these books are "Jesse," "Baseball in April," and many other interesting fictional books. He has received numerous awards such as Discovery – The Nation Prize, The U.S. Award for International Poetry Forum. He is also an ambassador for the United Farm Workers of America.

His official website is www.garysoto.com.

Ed Martinez (Illustrator)

Ed Martinez came to the United States from Argentina. "Too many Tamales" was his first book he had ever painted. An interesting fact about this was that he and his wife actually made some tamales so that he could then have an idea to paint them. Ed has also illustrated other books such as "Tonio's Cat," and "Hurray for Three Kings' Day."

Before Reading Activity

1. First, ask the children if they have an idea of what tamales are?
2. Assuming that they don't start describing what tamales are.
 - History
 - Tradition
 - Ingredients
3. Have the children say simple Spanish words
 - Tamale
 - Tortilla
 - Masa
 - Maiz
4. Have students write each new word five times

After Reading Activity

1. Have the children make tamales with clay.
 - Have the children mix around yellow clay in a bowl (provided) so as to think that they are mixing the masa.
 - Provide the children with a corn husks.
 - Provide different colored clay for different ingredients.
 1. Red for the beef.
 2. Brown for chicken
 - Have the children fold the tamales so they can be ready to be cooked.