

Diversity Book Review

Title: Too Many TAMALES

Author: Gary Soto; Illustrator: Ed Martinez

Summary:

Too Many TAMALES starts out with Maria and her mother making tamales for Christmas Eve. Maria adores her mother and feels grown-up working side-by-side with her. Maria's mother is sensitive to Maria's growing up and lets her wear lipstick and perfume for this special occasion. Maria and her mother have a loving relationship as can be sensed in the pictures too. Maria loves her mother's sparkling diamond ring and wants badly to wear it. When her mother takes her ring off to knead the *masa* and then leaves the kitchen to answer the phone, Maria seizes the opportunity to "wear the ring for just a minute." Maria continues kneading the dough and enjoys watching the sparkle appear and disappear in the sticky *masa*. Her mother returns and takes the bowl from Maria and asks Maria to go get her father. The three of them finish making the delicious tamales by spreading the *masa* on the corn husks, filling them with meat, and then boiling them in water.

When the rest of the family arrives, Maria goes off to play with her cousins. All of the sudden, she realizes that the ring is missing and she tells her cousins that the ring must be in one of the tamales. They all go down to the kitchen to help Maria and eat all of the tamales one-by-one searching for the sparkly ring.

With an empty plate, unraveled corn husks, full tummies, and no ring, Maria goes in to confess to her mother. As she tells her mother that she had done something wrong, she is startled as she sees the ring on her mother's finger. Her mother knew that Maria had worn the ring and then Maria reveals that they had eaten all of the tamales to try to find it. Maria's mother and aunt smile; everyone goes into the kitchen to make a second batch of tamales! Maria's sadness turns into laughter.

Suggested Grade Level:

 K 1 2 3 x 4 5

Content Connection

 x Geography History Economics Civics

Common Core Connection for the suggested grade level

 x Literature Informational Number of Standard 1

What BIG IDEA about cultural diversity does this book help teach:

Every culture has its own rich and unique traditions, especially at holiday times, but all families are similar in that they provide a support system of love and understanding for its members.

What are two questions you would ask students after reading them the book?

What do you know about Maria's family?

When you gather with your family for an important event or holiday, what are some traditional foods that your family eats? (Note: This question could be made to be broader by asking about all traditions, not just food. I chose to focus on food because this was a central point of this story and different cultural foods are so interesting!)

Suggested Activity to go along with the book

Too Many TAMALES Activity: Let's Get Cooking!

Choose **one** of the following three activities to complete. Recipes should be brought in by Friday. We will write our paragraphs in class on Friday, and then we will do some tasting!

When you write your paragraph, you are to include at least one cultural word or phrase (ex., masa was used in *Too Many TAMALES*.) and be sure to tell what country the recipe is from.

1. Bring in a family ethnic recipe to share. Be sure to include the recipe name and the country that the recipe represents. You will be writing a paragraph on why this recipe is a favorite!
2. Find an ethnic recipe in a magazine or online of something that you would like to try. You will be writing a paragraph explaining why this recipe interests you. (*Note to teacher: Have some cooking magazines in your classroom and/or make computer time available for students who choose this option and are not able to complete this task at home.*)
3. Make a family favorite recipe at home with a family member. You are welcome to bring in samples to share with the class on Friday! You will be writing a paragraph telling about your cooking experience.

Note to teacher: On Friday, it may also be fun to do an ethnic cooking activity with the class—especially if not many students are bringing in samples to share. Maybe a parent will volunteer to come in and do this with the class. If not, there are many great recipes out there to make with the students! I have an electric pizzelle maker that would be fun to bring in to make the Italian cookies with the class. Hummus (Greek or Middle Eastern) is another great idea—a blender, chick peas, olive oil, and some spices are all that is needed. The ideas are endless!

Reviewed by: _____